



GATESHEAD  
safeguarding  
children  
partnership

# Gatehead Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2023/24



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GATESHEAD  
**safeguarding  
 children**  
 partnership

# GSCP - Our Commitment to Safeguarding Children in Gateshead

We are proud to present this year's Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership (GSCP) Annual Report. The content of this report outlines our commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of our children and young people in Gateshead. It reflects the collective work we carried out through the partnership in relation to our agreed plans and priorities, action that we took, successes, challenges and concludes with an outline of our plans for the future.

Over the course of 2023/24 we have worked together to strengthen and develop our practice. This included asking our Scrutineer to conduct a formal review of our arrangements, more of which is outlined later in this report. The review work has led to us reshaping our governance arrangements, increasing our collaborative approach with wider partnerships and boards and the development of workstreams in relation to our priorities and areas of challenge.

The last year has seen organisational restructuring within two of our statutory organisations as well as developments to the partnership itself.

Northumbria Police have recently moved to a six-area command operating model which means that Gateshead is now a standalone area command with the Chief Superintendent for Gateshead now being the Police representative at the Executive Board. This allows sole focus on Gateshead as a community and a locality approach with multi agency relationships that focus on what's important for Gateshead. This model continues to have the support of the force safeguarding leads.

A full review of the operating model and staffing structure for the North-East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) has taken place across 2023-2024 with the new arrangements in place from 1st April 2024. ICB specialist safeguarding and cared for staff are now organised into six new teams across the North-East and North Cumbria, with a new post of Director of Safeguarding. Gateshead has benefitted from maintaining consistent representation within the 'Gateshead and Newcastle' team.



Working together with us are our wide number of relevant agencies who are well represented within our partnership arrangements. Our wider partners work with us to understand what impacts the safeguarding of children and young people in Gateshead, what needs to be done, how we can work together to deliver positive change and help us monitor that our work makes a difference.

The report also highlights the work we have undertaken to ensure that information from children, young people and families about our services and what we do shapes future activity, and this has included the direct involvement of Gateshead Council Young Ambassadors in this year's work. We aim to strengthen and widen our work with children and young people to assist in the development of safeguarding arrangements in Gateshead over 2024/25.

Our dedication and commitment to collectively working together to safeguard the children and young people in Gateshead remains unwavering and our ability to be agile in our work, addressing new challenges or directions of policy alongside our planned work programme is a great strength of our partnership approach to keeping children safe.



**Paul Stewart**

Chief Superintendent - Northumbria Police Area  
Commander for Gateshead  
Northumbria Police



**Helen Fergusson**

Strategic Director Children's Services and  
Lifelong Learning  
Gateshead Council



**Richard Scott**

Director of Nursing (North)  
North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care  
Board

# GSCP - Our Independent Chair and Scrutineer view

This is my second year as Independent Chair and Scrutineer in Gateshead. This has been a busy year for the statutory partners and all organisations who work with children and young people. The demand for service support to families increases year on year and I start my report by thanking all those who have worked hard over the course of the year to ensure that children, young people and families in Gateshead receive the support and care they need.

In relation to the work of the partnership, this year has involved a review of the arrangements which was undertaken, and further work required as a result of the new Working Together 2023 requirements.

During 2023 the leads for police, the ICB and local authority have shown strong leadership to the partnership and worked well together as an Executive group to comply with statutory obligations and statutory guidance. In addition to that however, in my role as scrutineer, I observed a clear and collective mission to identify the best practice that will work in Gateshead to deliver services that keep children and young people safe across Gateshead. As part of this drive, the Executive leads requested a full review of the existing safeguarding arrangements that included the six key areas that were the subject of scrutiny (in line with the Pearce, Stratton, Parker and Thorpe 2022 national review of safeguarding children arrangements). These were – Leadership, Engagement of Relevant Agencies, Outcomes for Children

and Young People, Quality Assurance and Information Sharing, Learning from Local and National Reviews and Research and Multi-agency Training and Workforce Development.

Over the course of some months partnership development sessions took place, and all safeguarding partners were offered meetings to provide feedback on the strengths and areas for development. A significant number of leaders, partners and chairs of other partnership groups contributed to the review and provided some insightful feedback that shaped our new model of working.

Importantly the review considered feedback that we had received from children and young people about service delivery in Gateshead and included meetings with the Gateshead Council Young Ambassadors who provided valuable information gathered from the work with young people across Gateshead that they are engaged in. The review also scrutinised partnership policies and procedures and paperwork used, together with identifying areas of national



good practice. All of this culminated in a report for the statutory partner leads that outlined the findings and recommendations that would strengthen the arrangements and they shared the report with the wider partnership who collectively agreed the recommendations.

The transition to a new structure and new way of working is underway. There has been a slight but understandable delay to the implementation of some of the recommendations due to the publication of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 which was published in December 2023. This requires some changes to be implemented by December 2024 and Gateshead partnership are working through this now through a series of development sessions to agree how the key changes will be delivered.



**Heather Pearson**  
Independent Chair and Scrutineer

In addition to the review of the arrangements, there has been considerable work undertaken by the statutory partners and wider organisations to implement changes to improve how services safeguard children. This report sets out some of the work delivered over the course of the year including work undertaken in relation to priority areas of work.

The report concludes with the priorities set for 2024/25 and outlines the new model for working - one focusing on a learning cycle that delivers young people and practitioner involvement in the learning and development work of the partnership. This will be supported by the introduction of an assurance model and a strengthened performance management framework.



# GSCP - What is Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership (GSCP)?

The government document “*Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2018*” has been the document that all partnerships across England and Wales has used to develop local arrangements – these are known as Multi-Agency Safeguarding arrangements (MASA for short). The government document outlines legal requirements and government guidance in relation to how we should work locally to keep children safe. In each area the police, integrated care board (ICB) and local authority are jointly responsible for ensuring that the legal requirements and guidance within this document are used to develop strong ways of working that protect and promote the welfare of children, make sure that local services are effective, that we listen to children and young people’s views and use this to develop practice, and we consider what has worked well and what could be done differently through reviewing and learning from what we do. The document further advises other agencies and organisations of their responsibility to consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their work, and, to work with the police, integrated care board and local authority as a partnership. This includes schools, colleges and other education providers have a key role in safeguarding children too.

In Gateshead we have written our MASA arrangements, and they are published on our GSCP website. Our MASA document sets out how we ensure that we use the legal requirements and national guidance to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Gateshead. You can access the document by clicking the below link:

[Gateshead Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#)

During 2023/24 we have used the above information to keep up to date with what is required nationally, as well as developing what we agree is required in Gateshead. In December 2023 the government published an updated version of the document “*Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023*”. The latest version provides new guidance and we are working through the changes and will publish an updated MASA document on our website in December 2024 that will outline some new ways of working. Any new changes will only strengthen our work to keep children safe.

Our safeguarding arrangements are designed to offer us the chance to work more effectively and with joint purpose to protect children and young people and support those who most need our help into adulthood.

# GSCP – What information tells us (April 23 - March 24)

Gateshead is located on the southern bank of the river Tyne, opposite Newcastle upon Tyne to the north, and bordering County Durham to the south, Northumberland to the west and South Tyneside/Sunderland to the east. The borough stretches almost 13 miles along the south bank of the river Tyne and covers 55 square miles, making it the largest of the five Tyne and Wear authorities. It is a unitary authority with a population of 197,722.

In Gateshead, socio-economic inequalities exist as illustrated by the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (CLG) and Gateshead is the 47th most deprived of 317 local authorities in England with 21 areas which fall within the 10% most deprived areas in England, (16% of the population). Much of this deprivation is based within the central and eastern urban areas of the borough. Whilst there has been a decrease of children under 16 in Gateshead who live in relative poverty of 7.5% since 2018/19, this figure still stands at 19.6% and the proportion of children entitled to free school meals is 29.06%

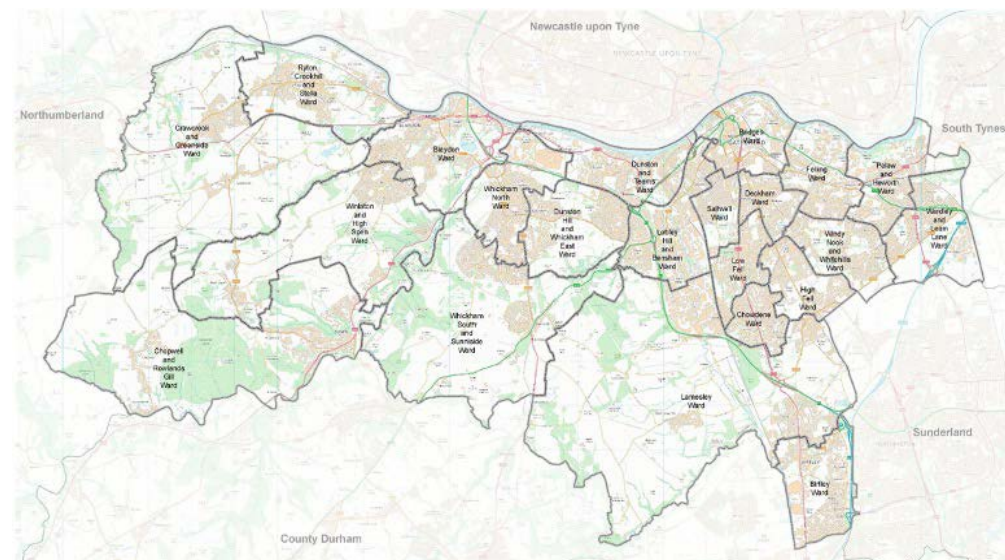
17.48% of pupils in Gateshead schools identify as having a minority ethnic background. The single largest ethnic group (after White British) is White Eastern European, followed by Other Ethnic Group and then Mixed White and Asian. Languages other than English are spoken as a first language by 11.64% (3243 pupils)

Information from the office for National Statistics (ONS) shows that between 2011 and 2022 there has been an increase in the number of

people who are aged over 65 whilst over the same period the number of younger people has reduced:

- aged 0-24 of -6.6% (-3,770 people) and now stands at 56,045 (28.3% of the whole population)
- aged 25-44 of -5.0% (-2,710 people).

We know that whilst the number of children and young people in Gateshead has reduced the demand for services in support of the young people living in Gateshead has increased.







**Number of children in receipt of early help**

**947**

**– in March 2024**  
(a decrease from 978 in March 2023)

**Number of children in need**

**792**

**in March 2024**  
(a slight increase from 766 in March 2023)



**238** children were on child protection plans as at March 2024.

- **17.8% increase** compared to last year. 15.4% increase in rate to 60.5 per 10,000 (stat neighbour average 61)

**Emotional Abuse is the main reason for child protection pla**

**1689** referrals received by CSC during the past 12 months

- **17.9% decrease** (368) compared to the previous 12 months
- **19.6% decrease** in rate of referral to 429.6 per 10,000 (stat neighbour average 636)
- **18.0%** Repeat Referrals

**528** children were in care as at March 2024; an increase of **0.2% (1)** on the same period 12 months ago

- This was **rate of children in care** to **134.3 per 10,000** (stat neighbour av. 105)
- Most children remain in Gateshead Council Placements, better than comparator authorities
- **73.6% of children in long term stable placements** this is an increase from last year (63.0%)
- **9% increase** in **children leaving care** compared to last year

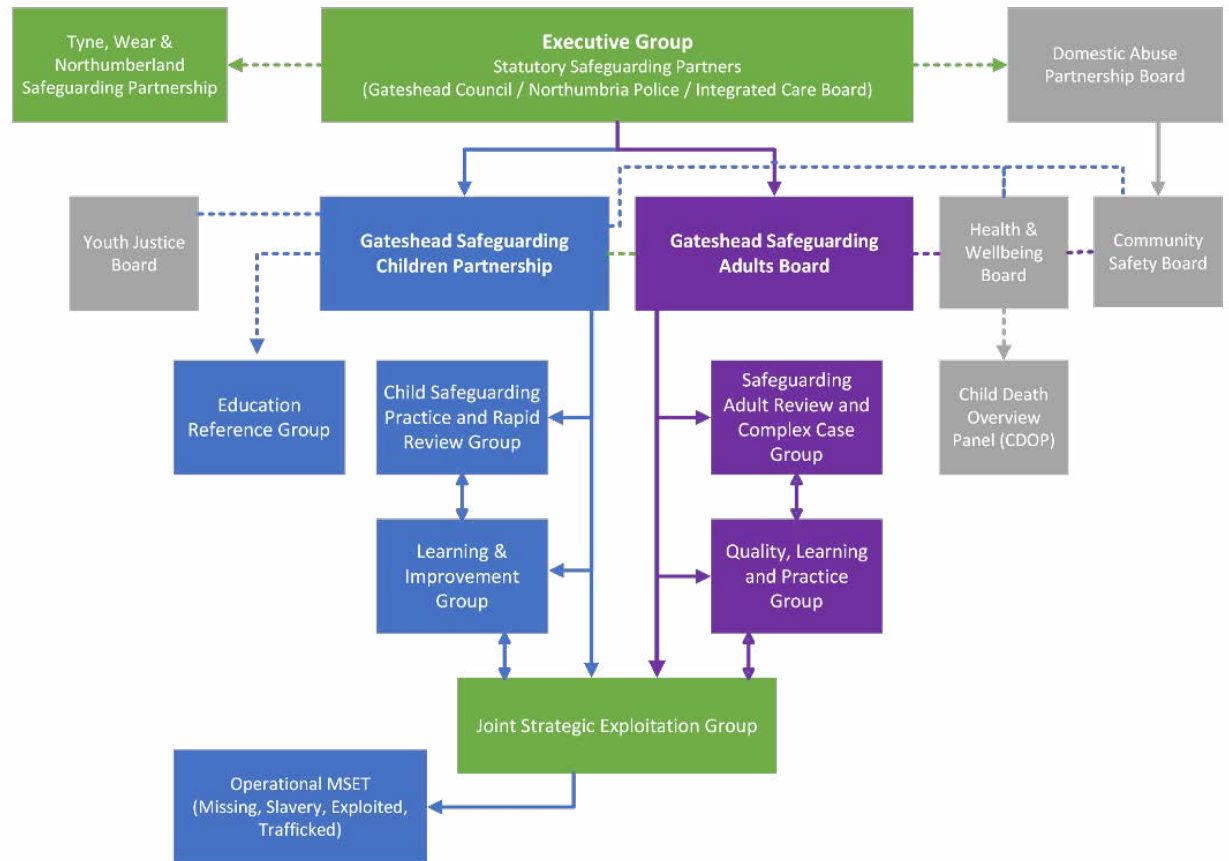
**First time entrants into YJS has remained static since March 2023 at 24 (FTE) during the past 12 months. This equates to 144 (FTE) per 100,000 population**



# GSCP – How do we work together?

During 2023/24 we worked together using this model of meetings. We linked in with other regional and Gateshead wide partnerships and boards in relation to work that we need to work together on (for example we ensured that the Domestic Abuse Partnership considered the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people). We talk about this later in the report. Our Executive Group of police, ICB and Local Authority leads overseas the work of the partnership and work is delivered through subgroups who meet regularly. The subgroups involve police, ICB and local authority and wider partner members. This model makes sure that we work collectively on our priority work and develop and improve practice. The work undertaken over the course of the year is discussed later in the report.

As mentioned earlier, over the course of 2023/24 we have undertaken a review of the model we use and as a result of that review, and required change outlined in the new Working Together guidance we have made some changes to the way we work. The new model for working is outlined at the end of the report when we talk about what we intend to do over the next 12 months.



Our Executive Group is Chaired by our Independent Chair and Scrutineer and our police, ICB and local authority leads meet regularly to make sure that we comply with the legal requirements and national guidance. This meeting is important as they provide leadership, set direction and what is important that we do to make sure children in Gateshead are safe and well.

Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership (GSCP) meeting involves police, ICB and local authority leads meeting with wider partner leads from other services and organisations in Gateshead to ensure that all organisations and staff in Gateshead are focused on keeping children and young people safe and well. We agree and report on priority work, identify areas where we work well and where we need to improve, we also look at things that might impact on children and young people in Gateshead or increases risk. An example of this would be if we heard that children in Gateshead were worried about violent crime – we would work together to ensure children were provided information that could make them feel safer and keep them safe. The meeting brings organisations together at both a strategic and operational level to:

- deliver a focused, co-ordinated response
- innovate system change
- deliver efficiencies
- support effective multi-agency practice

Throughout 2023/24 the Partnership has used the sub-groups to undertake specific work. The sub-groups act on behalf of the Gateshead Safeguarding Partners to assist them to fulfil their responsibilities under the [Children Act 2004](#), [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#) and the statutory guidance [Working Together](#).

The Safeguarding Partners have sub-group chairs who support the work of the groups and report on plans and progress achieved. Regular updates are provided to the GSCP meeting and the Business Manager updates.

Towards the end of 23/24, a new 'Safeguarding Partnership' newsletter was launched. Shared with all partners and made publicly available, this quarterly newsletter enables a far wider audience to receive important updates on the work of the partnerships.



# GSCP – Our People and Budget

The GSCP have a full time Business Manager who co-ordinates the work of the partnership on behalf of the three statutory partners. During June 2023 a Business Administrator was also appointed to work part time for GSCP. The Business Manager works closely with the Business Managers for Safeguarding Adults and Community Safety partnerships in Gateshead. They do further collaborative work with regional and national colleagues. This way we ensure that we develop ways of working that are joined up and consider wider safeguarding concerns. It also means that we can share good practice in Gateshead and learn from others.

The GSCP budget is set by the police, ICB and local authority leads, and spending is monitored throughout the year. The budget is reviewed and set on a yearly basis. Working Together 2023 has identified that the funding should be equitable between the three partners and we are reviewing our budget for 2025/26. The majority of the expenditure relates to staffing the partnership.

| <b>Partner contributions</b> | <b>2023/24 (£)</b> |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Local Authority              | 73,086             |
| Health                       | 28,688             |
| Police                       | 12,167             |
| Probation                    | 2,234              |
| <b>Total Contributions</b>   | <b>116,175</b>     |



# GSCP – Our Priority Work for 2023 / 2024

A development session with all partners, relevant agencies and young people was held at the end of 2022/23 to identify priorities for the partnership. As a result, we agreed the following four areas as areas of concern for children and young people:

## 1) Child Protection - improving CP conferences and plans

Why did we choose this? Information showed us that in 23/24 332 Child Protection Plans were started. This is higher than England and our Statistical Neighbours, and higher than the rate in 22/23. Within this, 4% have had a previous plan within 12 months, 12% within 2 years and 20% ever.

## 2) Domestic Abuse - the impact of this on children and young people

Why did we choose this? Domestic abuse is prevalent in cases dealt with by Children's Services – in terms of the impact of domestic abuse in the household and also for young people directly affected. Domestic Abuse data for 23/24 shows that 1553 referrals (67.7%) stated there was a child(ren) involved / within the household.

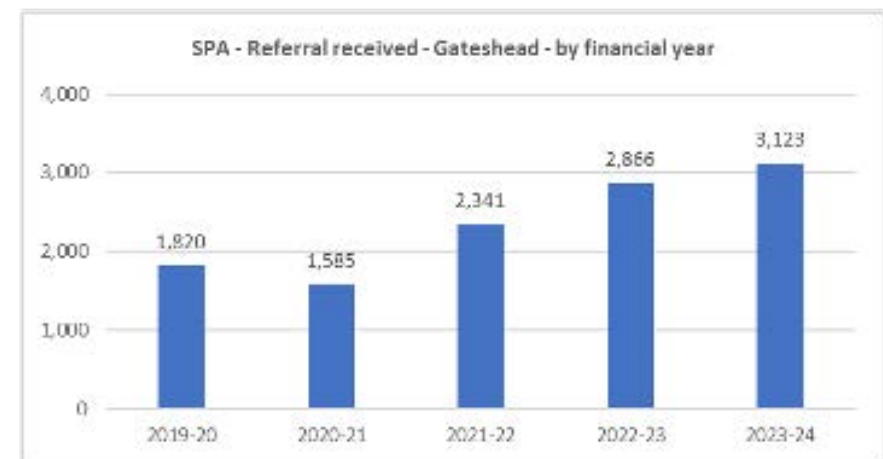
## 3) Serious Youth Violence – and the fear of this

Why did we choose this? During 2022/23 there was a 9% increase in serious violence in Gateshead. The Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) Young Person's Survey on Knife Crime and Feelings of Safety reported that they mostly feel safe during the day but feelings of safety dropped significantly after dark due to seeing gang activity or large group gatherings, alcohol and drugs, unlit

areas of local streets, parks and woods, ASB and the fear of other young people carrying knives.

## 4) Mental Health - ensuring children get access to the right support at the right time

Why did we choose this? Young people in Gateshead were clear that support for mental health needs was a key concern across the board. This corresponded with information that showed a growing increase in referrals into services in Gateshead.





# Priority Action 1: Child Protection Conferences and Plans

In June 2023 the GSCP held a session to understand Child Protection performance information. In addition to the work by Children's Social Care to address this, a **multi-agency deep dive audit** was undertaken to understand practice. This took place in September 2023 and a number of recommendations were made to improve the process.

A multi-agency task and finish group was established to take forward the actions.

## What has been the impact?

Increasing knowledge and confidence of professionals attending conferences was identified as key to improving the quality of plans and core groups. Key actions undertaken to address this has included:

- Developing and sharing an agreed report format for individual agencies.
- Reviewing the training offer. To date two sessions in the new format have been delivered to a wide variety of partners. Feedback is "excellent" with staff saying that they leave feeling more confident and informed.
- The formal escalation procedure has been reviewed and streamlined. Guidance has been developed to support partners, who requested a "dummies guide" to underpin the training.

*66% of children told us their CP review meeting was 'friendly' but it could be made better by 'having chocolate' and 'being made more fun'.*

By April 2023, Repeat Child Protection Plans were at 29.5% this then reduced to an average of 17% in the first 6 months of 2024 calendar year. There has been a focus on ensuring at every delisting conference a contingency plan is agreed and who will support the family longer term. We will continue to monitor our progress

*"The new improved partnership CP training received fantastic feedback. One Police officer said it made them "Think more about the way I, as a professional, present in the conference and how to share information with parents"*

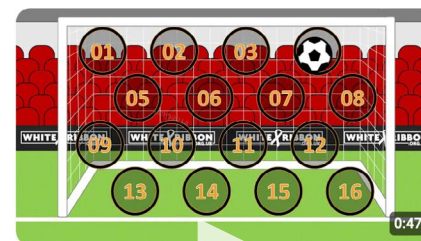
# Priority Action 2: The Impact of Domestic Abuse on Children and Young People

Operation Encompass enables police and social care to raise concerns about domestic abuse with schools for children in their educational settings. In the year October 2022 to September 2023, 1,742 Operation Encompass reports were made to Children's Social Services where schools had concerns about domestic abuse related to children in their settings.

As an identified priority and to align with the independent strategic review commissioned by the Gateshead Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, (which took place in the second half of 2023), a **multi-agency audit** was undertaken by the GSCP in December 2022. A key strength identified the focus around the support provided by all agencies including continued attempts to engage; the development of strong relationships with one user stating: *"The emotional support I received was warm and responsive."* however it was also noted that some groups may have an inherent distrust or anxiety about authorities due to engagement with child in need or child protection services. It was also noted that there was limited provision to work with young people directly involved with Domestic Abuse.

Following the audit and the Domestic Abuse review, the Domestic Abuse Board (DAB) have established a Children and Young People sub-group to prevent harm which will report jointly to the DAB and the GSCP in 24/25. Recommendations from the audit will be taken forward through this and the impact of this will be measured at that time.

Our children have helped us learn from their experience and working in partnership with Digital Voice for Communities and have produced a Digital Me film sharing their experiences of domestic abuse. The film forms part of the partnership training offer across Gateshead. The film was celebrated at the national Social Worker of the Year Awards in November 2023 and won the gold award for 'Digital Transformation in Social Work 2023' -



<https://youtu.be/TCo2VuHequ0>

# Priority Action 3: Serious Youth Violence and the Fear of Violence

## Partnership working in place

2023 saw the development of a multi-agency Vulnerable Adolescence service which brought together the Youth Justice Service, and services for children missing from home or care; prevention of offending; child on parent violence and aggression and serious youth violence, alongside the Trusting Hands service and Contextualised Safeguarding services. The aim was to reduce the number of changes of lead professional, improve relational practice, ensure a robust edge of care offer for teenagers to prevent entry to care; improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of young people and reduce risk of harm outside the home.

A closer working partnership has also developed between the Education Support Services team, Contextual Safeguarding team and River Tees MAT for learners unable to attend school through the Familiar Faces group of evidence, to support children and young people who are involved in serious youth violence.

The Exploitation Safeguarding Nurse is an established role, commissioned by the ICB, leading on health responses to exploitation and a collaborative relationship with partner agencies, in particular the Multi Agency Exploitation Hub and the Prevention Hub. She is an active participant in multi-agency meetings and delivers interventions successfully to children and adults (and where appropriate family members) who are suspected to be victims of exploitation.

Feedback on the role of the Exploitation Nurse from children, young people, and adults at risk and this has been 100% positive with quotes such as:

*"I can talk to Kath about anything – she listens to me and is honest, she doesn't make me feel like I'm too blame"*  
(15-year-old female)

*"I never mind doing work with you, coz you listen to me, and you don't just tell me what I should think or what I should do, we get loads of work done but we can still have a laugh."*  
(17-year-old male)

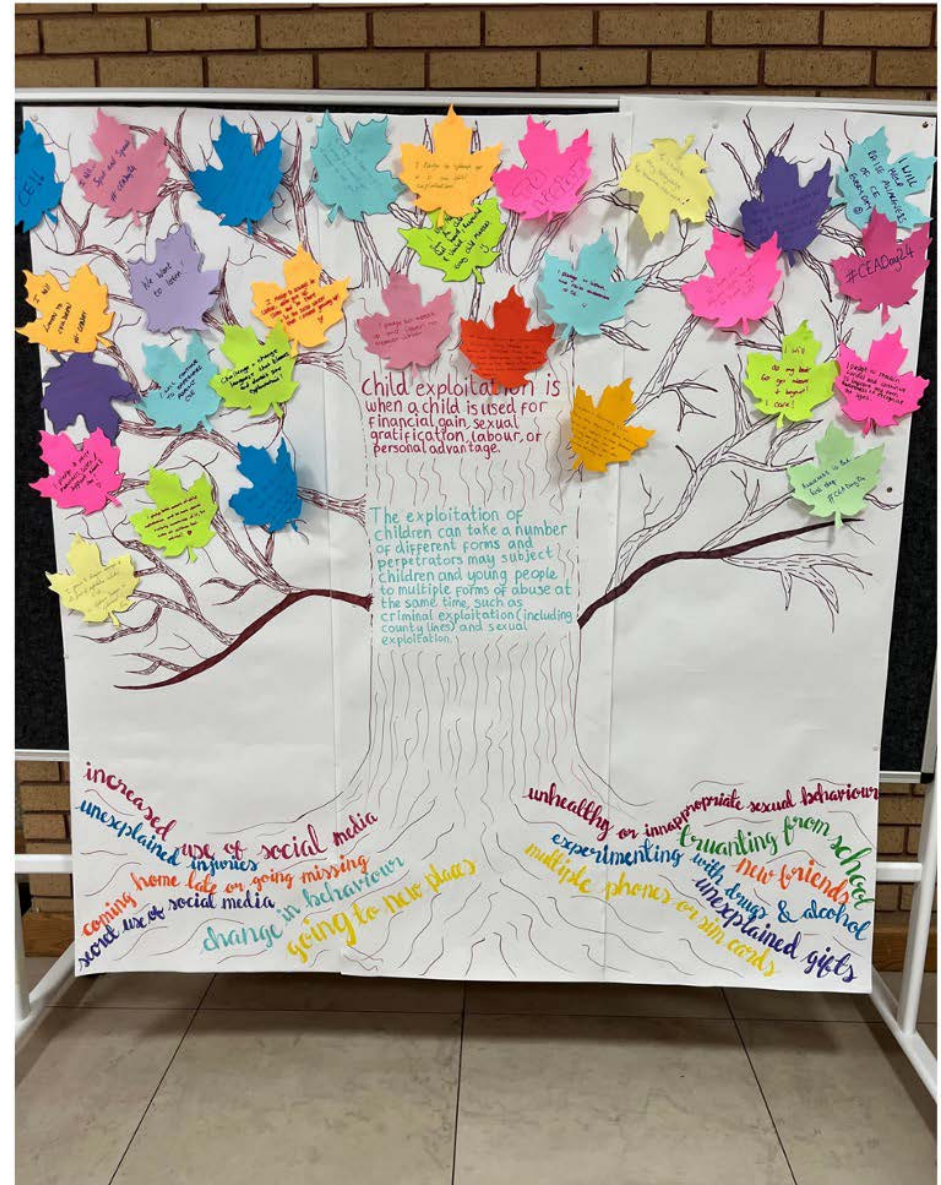
In January 2023 Gateshead Youth Justice Service produced a **Digital Me video** with Digital Voice. Several young people helped to co-produce an animated film capturing their experiences of how they became involved in offending behaviours, their experiences of the Youth Justice Service and what worked for them to stop offending.

The film can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/tnoyL3OhF5A>



YJS Digital Me 2023 (Short)

GSCP was proud to support the 10th anniversary of Child Exploitation Awareness Day in March. This tree, containing messages to encourage everyone to think, spot and speak out against abuse and to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to adults developing inappropriate relationships with children or children abusing their peers was created with young women involved in the service.





A **multi-agency audit** was undertaken in January 2023 using the new 'Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI) for serious youth violence' framework.

Strengths identified were that good multi-agency working with information is shared appropriately, both within Gateshead's organisations and across the wider region, rich information is shared informally. The development of strong, trusted relationships between young people and a particular key worker, leading to disclosures in some circumstances. Support is provided to the wider family, not just young person, and attempts are made to consider any cultural needs.

However, it was identified that as this cohort included young people not open to services there is a lack of 'ownership' by a service.

Voluntary agencies are not always included in the process in a timely way, despite the wealth of information they can hold / support they provide. Young People from non-British backgrounds are over-represented in this cohort and more training and awareness of different cultures and how these impact on families is needed as well as work around supporting transitions for young people who wouldn't be able to continue with support from services.

An immediate action was that a young people's substance misuse worker was co-located within the Vulnerable Adolescence service to break down any barriers to information sharing.

A greater focus on equality and diversity to promote more understanding of different cultures is a focus within Children's Social Care. A new task and finish group led by the Principal Social Worker meets regularly and includes senior leaders within the service and Workforce Development. Northumbria Police's community engagement team promote learning regarding the behaviours required by services when supporting families from different cultures and the Partnership is working closely with the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to promote the number of commissioned interventions they are able to offer.

A Contextual Safeguarding Development Group has been established with five sub-groups of which Serious Youth Violence is one. The impact of this will be measured in 24/25.





# Priority Action 4: Children's and Young People's Mental Health

Pressures upon mental health services, including demand for neurodevelopmental assessments continue to be a challenge in Gateshead. In response to this, a system review of the mental health, learning disability and neurodevelopmental pathway was undertaken in 2023. This has led to the formation of a system response with agreement reached with partners and senior leaders to develop a new commissioned offer in 2024/25.

This new approach will join up support across pathways, improving access to services particularly by providing early intervention support within communities to reduce waits for more specialist services. To support pathways whilst this work is undertaken, additional non-recurrent investment has been made into CNTW to increase access to services which will include where appropriate children & young people involved with the Youth Justice Service (YJS).

To support the system re-design, a Children & Young People's mental health needs assessment has been commissioned by Gateshead public health team and an audit of what is happening in schools to support the Mental Health of children and young people has been undertaken. A health needs assessment focussed specifically on care experienced young people and a revised care leavers strategy are also being co-produced with health colleagues. Findings will be used to work with system partners to develop joined up approaches, including for improving access to mental health services for young people with co-occurring needs.

## Key Actions for 24/25:

- A multi-agency audit on mental health provision to ensure that children can access to the right support at the right time will be undertaken.
- Alternative to Crisis Rapid Response Service to be piloted with Gateshead Council for a 2 year period – to provide an alternative to admission offer for young people experiencing a mental health crisis. This service will be open to young people involved with the YJS experiencing a mental health crisis and will reduce acute hospital admissions.
- Procurement of a new mental health, learning disability & neurodevelopmental offer for Gateshead to be undertaken in 2024/25 by NENC ICB. This offer will provide a needs led and graduated response, including a preventative approach to mental health needs and earlier access to specialist mental health and neurodevelopmental diagnosis services.
- Launch of wrap around support via multi-agency events for children, young people and families awaiting a neurodevelopmental diagnosis to implement a needs led support offer and provide timely access to wider support services.

# GSCP – The work of our subgroups

The **Learning and Improvement Group (LIG)** is chaired by the Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children. Its main purpose is to identify multi-agency training and learning priorities for safeguarding children; consider the implications from new policy, legislation, research, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and themed multi-agency audits; and develop and review policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

In 2023/24, this group commissioned four multi-agency audits to be undertaken by a smaller group of relevant partners. The LIG oversaw the report findings from these (*detailed later in this report*); agreed to the strengths and areas for development to support learning and improvement and considered how information is shared and how partners work together to address the issues raised.

The LIG also considered and oversaw the actions arising from three local learning reviews (*summarised later in this report*) which were undertaken by the **Child Safeguarding Practice and Rapid Review Group**.

It carefully considered regional and national learning including the independent investigation into the West Lane Hospital elsewhere in the North-East; the National safeguarding practice review into safeguarding children with disabilities and complex needs in residential settings; and the themes identified in the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel Annual Report 2022/23 and ensured Gateshead's compliance against the recommendations and issues identified.

The LIG also has responsibility for reviewing policies and procedures and has updated current, and published new, local procedure resources on <https://nesubregion.trixonline.co.uk/resources/local-resources>

The **Strategic MSET (referred to as Joint Strategic Exploitation Group (JSEG) in Gateshead)** is a sub-group of both the GSCP and Gateshead Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB). The Police chair undertakes this role across the Northumbria Police Force footprint (6 LA areas) which promotes sharing of learning and best practice and connectivity across the region in identifying emerging trends or concerns. The remit of the group is to lead on the development of strategic work in relation to all aspects of exploitation, including but not limited to: Sexual Exploitation; Criminal Exploitation; Modern Slavery and Trafficking and Missing.

In terms of children's work in 2023/24, this group oversaw and supported the review of the vulnerable adolescents' services and supported the developing of a new group which will report into the JSEG - the **Contextual Safeguarding Group** which is chaired by the JSEG deputy chair and Local Authority's Practice Lead for Innovation, Transformation and Vulnerable Adolescents. This group collectively informs and influences updates to the JSEG. It focuses on 5 key strands of work: Safeguarding of individual young people; Development of safeguarding places and spaces; Response to child protection; Transitional safeguarding; and Serious Youth Violence.

JSEG was also involved in the review of the MSET arrangements are detailed A regional review of **Missing Sexually Exploited and Trafficked (MSET)** was undertaken towards the end of 2023 and start of 2024. The aim of MSET, introduced in 2018, was to have a corporate approach throughout the 6 LA's to safeguard and protect those children who were regularly going missing and at risk of or suffering from sexual exploitation. MSET provided a value added multi agency response. However, over the years it was recognised that MSET was being used differently by each LA and was beginning to become overrun with referrals. There was an inconsistent approach to children transitioning and adults; an increase in County lines and Criminal exploitation; and a lack of focus on perpetrators and hot spot locations.

Partners in Gateshead were key to a multi-agency task and finish group to consider improvements to the system so that the process was standardised across all six LA's in the Northumbria Police area; to include adults in the process; to be outcome focussed; to not only focus on the victim, but also on the offender to remove/resolve the issue and also the location. As a result, a new process was agreed – **Partnership Reduction of Exploitation and Missing (PREM)** which will put the onus on each local authority to gatekeep cases, which will give a number of hours back to partners and ensure a multi agency problem solving meeting to work together to reduce risk, tackle perpetrators and disrupt hot spot locations. The PREM meeting will be chaired by a Detective Inspector from the Prevention Department, Northumbria Police to ensure a corporate and consistent approach. Following agreement to proceed on this basis in June 2024, a roadshow, training and raising awareness with partners will be undertaken in summer 2024 before the new process is launched in the autumn of 2024. The impact of this new process will be monitored at a strategic level.

The **Education and CSC Safeguarding Group** was re-established in 2023 and is chaired by Local Authority's Strategic Lead for Education Services. The group meets termly to align with the school year. Each school cluster group is represented along with specialist provision, Gateshead College and nurseries alongside colleagues from children's social care and the education team in the local authority to engage with the work of the Safeguarding Partners to enhance collaboration between partners to keep children safe in education. One of our Young Ambassadors is also a member of this sub-group.

Through the connections made in this group, the partnership is able to focus on understanding what education partners tell us affects the safeguarding in education settings. This has led to work focusing on understanding the referral process to ensure more appropriate referrals are made and what can be done in those cases where they are not progressed; understanding the role of school staff in the new Social Workers In Family hubs and supporting the development of the Violence Reduction Unit's (VRU) new knife crime protocol to ensure it meets the needs of Gateshead's schools.

Following the publication of Working Together 2023, the sub-group and role of education within the partnership is subject to review to further strengthen arrangements.



# GSCP – How we work with children and young people

The voice of the child is at the heart of our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Involving children and families is essential to safeguarding in Gateshead both in contributing to delivering the GSCP's vision and in helping to scrutinise and review the partnership arrangements themselves.

## **These include:**

- Multi-agency case audits
- School councils, youth groups, support groups
- Service user panels

## **This is supported from information directly from data sources such as:**

- The Children & Young People's Participation Team (Gateshead Council)
- Performance teams across the partnership
- Commissioning

The views of young people were crucial in the review of the GSCP and these were sought via interviews with the Young Ambassadors to get in-depth and honest feedback in how the new arrangements should be shaped. Whilst the young people had been heavily involved in

deciding the priorities for 23/24 and have a voice through attendance at partnership sub-groups, during the review it was recognised that the involvement of young people in partnership arrangements needed to be strengthened and this is a priority for 2024 with our aims being to make use of the existing systems, groups and forums to gather the views of children and families to encourage children to have their say, share their views and experiences, challenge and support local decision makers and shape and influence strategic planning, commissioning and service provision.

We are working in partnership to review our engagement processes, policies to make sure that all children and young people can be heard. A joint Working Plan, led by the Children & Young People's Participation Team, is being developed to support our young people at all stages of their journey. GSCP will be heavily involved in this work.



## Gateshead Council - The Role of the Young Ambassadors

At the start of 2022, Aisha, Jake and Mariceu were appointed into a 6 hour per week posts as Gateshead's first Care Experienced Young Ambassadors. It was originally planned that these posts would be for 12 months, but they were extended to 18-month contracts.



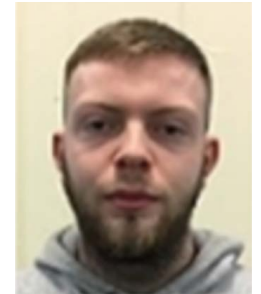
All had an action-packed year from visiting Parliament to delivering sessions to young people, staff and elected Members directly. The ambassadors were each linked to two workstreams of the Corporate Parenting Partnership. Aisha led on participation and placements and accommodation; Jake led on education and health; and Mariceu led on leaving care and activities and leisure.

Mariceu said:

*"My time as a young ambassador has enabled me to grow in confidence and self esteem and has helped me progress to help towards my end goal of being a foster career".*

Non-recurrent funding sourced by the local NHS Integrated Care Board resulted in an employment opportunity for a Special Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Young Ambassador/ Business Admin Apprentice within Gateshead Council's SEND Team. The funding came with the specific caveat that a positive recruitment process is sought for an individual with some form of SEND. The post was open to someone aged 18-25 with experience of the SEND system in Gateshead who were looking for an employment opportunity.

The post was filled in December 2022 by Harry Vincent, who worked in Gateshead Council's SEND Team. Harry used his lived experience of Gateshead's SEND system to help raise awareness and understanding of the issues young people with SEND face. Harry left the SEND team in March 2024 and started work immediately as the social media guru for Learning and Skills





The role of the young ambassador is a pivotal part of the service. In October 2023 we welcomed three new Young Ambassadors to the team. Again, they are care experienced young people who work with services to ensure that children and young people's voices and experiences are listened to. This year the involvement of the Young Ambassadors in the GSCP has been strengthened by their membership in the sub-groups and their involvement in support with specific strands of work including actions from a local learning review.

**Josh:** Since becoming a young Ambassador I have helped deliver training and am currently working on the new Care pledge and a new leaving care form for those who are going into their own tenancy at 18. I have also visited the residential homes and started building relations with young people to see how we can help them more within Gateshead Social Services. Recently I worked with young people on the new Digital me video focused on the educational side on a young person perspective.



The aim is to reach local schools to shine a light on this issue. I am also helping with the design and development of the new care leavers space, this will be a where a young person can go to get help and support from the leaving care team or just to have a place to talk.

**Poppy:** My area for work is health, arts and leisure, and the voice of the child. I am currently also working with the Regional Children in Care Council and our own One Voice group who are working on a pack to be delivered to all the existing children in our care as well as new children coming into care and will form the skeleton of foster care training, so everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet!



**Alexandra:** Since starting my role as a Young Ambassador I've taken part in many things, my favourites so far have been foster carer training, youth justice panels and spending time getting to know some of our young people.



I have joined the Partnership's Education sub-group to share my experiences with members and have been supporting young people in our care to take part in activities with the youth assembly and the young inspectors.

Through doing this I have realised that young women in our care need some extra support and a safe space to share their struggles and I am now hoping to start my own youth group.

# Multi-Agency Training and Workforce Development

Between April 2023 and March 2024, 27 partnership training courses have been delivered covering 16 different topics.

A total of 405 individuals have completed these training sessions.

- An introduction to child and adolescent mental health
- Child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation and trafficking
- Child protection awareness
- County lines
- Effective child protection conferences and core groups
- Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
- Gambling awareness
- Invisible men
- Multi Agency Child protection L3
- Neglect
- Practical applications MCA Children
- Safeguarding babies from abuse and neglect

- Safeguarding children in the digital world
- Safeguarding children with disabilities
- The impact of parental mental health
- Understanding self-harm



## Feedback from sessions includes:

*"A massive new awareness of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Thank you so much."*

(Voluntary sector worker attending Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder)

*"A greater understanding of what to consider when assessing children's need as well as when and how to refer."*

(Gateshead council worker attending An introduction to child and adolescent mental health)

As part of the GSCP Review, a full evaluation of the existing multi-agency training provision and offer was undertaken, following which the training offer now includes a tiered approach of multi-agency training opportunities which provides practitioners and volunteers access to different types of learning and development activities relating to their area of work.

- Dedicated safeguarding training is now delivered by the GSCP and SAB Business Managers to the voluntary and community sector within community settings on a regular basis. Feedback received includes:

*"I wanted to thank both you for the outstanding job in conducting the safeguarding training session with the trustees and key volunteers at our Community Centre. Your expertise and dedication to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our communities is truly fantastic."*

*"The thorough and informative delivery of the session equipped all with the knowledge and skills necessary to create a safe and secure environment for users at the centre and to also help in protecting the integrity of the charity. Your commitment to this important aspect of our work is greatly appreciated."*

- A dedicated Learning and Development post for the GSCP and SAB has also been agreed and will be recruited to in 24/25. This post dedicated to safeguarding will ensure that there is good co-ordination and support to the Business Managers and wider partners and allow the development of greater cross partnership working and development of resources and innovative training methods
- GSCP agreed to fund a new online training programme with Me Learning providing access to 11 different courses to ensure that as many people as possible in Gateshead who wish to, have access to key safeguarding training, and complements our wider offer available to our safeguarding partners. This training can be accessed [here](#). In the first two months, 122 active users joined Me-Learning and feedback has been 100% positive with a youth worker emailing to say "Love the me-learning portal!" Usage and feedback will continued to be monitored as the year progresses to enable the GSCP Executive to consider whether to continue with the site after this year's contract ends in March 2025.



# Learning – Analysis from learning reviews

## Summary of learning reviews undertaken in 23-24.

There were no reviews in 23-24 which met the criteria for national learning but a number were undertaken where it was felt multi-agency learning could be beneficial.

A multi-agency prevent and protect model and guidance was developed with partners to minimise the risk of sudden infant death following the thematic report published by the national panel. This report identified that these tragic deaths occur more frequently in families that are particularly vulnerable, with many of the risk factors associated with SIDS overlapping with those for child abuse and neglect. [Minimising the Risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome \(SIDS\) - Safeguarding in Gateshead \(gatesheadsafeguarding.org.uk\)](#)

**Non-accidental injuries in immobile babies:** The review focused on a case where a baby with a fracture was moved between hospitals and different approaches were taken to safeguarding parental supervision. As a result of this case, in addition to single agency actions, the multi-agency pathway for bruising was updated to include all non-accidental injuries. This was shared across the region and was adopted by a number of the partnership areas: [multi-agency-pathway-for-bruising-in-non-mobile-children.pdf \(trixonline.co.uk\)](#)

**Drug Testing Parents:** The review focused on a case where a child protection plan was put in place but then removed on the basis of a hair strand drug test. Previous work on 'invisible fathers' was revisited across partners; training has been agreed to be delivered on the limitations and results of drug testing and will be delivered in 24/25 and a multi-agency briefing note was developed on hair strand testing: [practice-briefing-hair-strand-testing.pdf \(trixonline.co.uk\)](#)

**Death of care leaver:** The review focused on what was known by agencies and whether any information which could have prevented the care leaver taking their own life could have been shared. In addition to single agency actions regarding contact with birth parents, the Information Sharing Agreement was reviewed and updated: [information-sharing-protocol.pdf \(trixonline.co.uk\)](#)

As a result of recommendations in the GSCP Review, the process for undertaking Serious Child Safeguarding Incident Notifications and Child Safeguarding Practice Rapid Review Pathway was reviewed. As a result, a new procedure and pathway was agreed with neighbouring authority, Newcastle, and a **Joint Case Review Group** between Gateshead and Newcastle has been established to review cases and incidents of importance and to oversee and monitor case review activity where it is agreed that there might be multi-agency learning which could be applied to future practice: [nscp-and-gscp-learning-and-improvement-pathway.june24.docx \(live.com\)](#) and [joint-local-case-review-group-tor.may24.pdf \(trixonline.co.uk\)](#)

# Learning – multi-agency audits

In 2023/24 regular audit was built into process as part of assurance route. Themes will focus on priorities agreed by the GSCP and also inspection frameworks.

Each multi-agency audit was undertaken by the partnership to review practice in relation to multi-agency decision making, specifically around risks to children, how information is shared and how partners work together to support planning. The aim of the audit was to identify the strengths and areas for development which will support learning and improvement.

In 2023/24, the following four multi-agency audits were undertaken.

- SEND (following this an Area SEND inspection of Gateshead Local Area Partnership was undertaken which included a multi-agency audit as part of the inspection. The outcome of this is detailed in the [Final-Gateshead-Strategic-Priority-SEND-Action-Plan-1.pdf \(gateshead-localoffer.org\)](#)
- Child Protection
- Domestic Abuse and the Impact on Children and Young People
- Serious Youth Violence

In doing so, for each one, six records for children / young people were selected for the audit by the Performance and Data team in the Council, other than Serious Youth Violence where Northumbria Police selected the six records.

Agencies were asked to undertake single agency audits prior to the multi-agency audit discussions to ensure that all relevant information was provided to give a holistic view of multi-agency practice.





## Strengths

- There is good evidence that children have positive relationships with workers and they know their children well, this includes social workers, early help workers, teachers and health staff.
- There is good evidence of information sharing between the partnership when risks escalate for children.
- Risks are understood across the partnership
- Support is provided to the wider family, not just young person, and attempts are made to consider any cultural needs.
- Evidence of good strength based discussions and narrative language which would be understood by parents.

## Areas for Learning

- Voluntary agencies are not always included in the process in a timely way, despite the wealth of information they can hold / support they provide.
- Need for more of a trauma-informed approach from all services including support given to parents when they children are removed from their care.
- Clear communication to all services involved when there is a change in family circumstances
- Diversity and cultural needs not always consistently or robustly explored for children including access to services, the impact of poverty and community settings
- Professional accountability, curiosity and challenge could be further strengthened
- Consideration of the lead practitioner role across the partnership and clear understanding of roles and responsibilities in the wider system

The areas for learning are all being addressed either within the specific working groups to take forward actions from the audits or within wider partnership work.



# GSCP - What's Next

**A two year GSCP Business Plan (2024 – 2026) will be developed which outlines the priorities and how we will deliver against those priorities.**

The priorities that we identified in 2023 remain priorities in our 2024 – 2026 business plan. We have developed ways of working with our wider partnerships and boards to improve outcomes for children and young people. Some of the wider partnerships and boards have statutory responsibility for areas we have identified as priorities.

**The GSCP have identified the following as priority areas which will influence the work of the GSCP over 2024/26:**

## **Priority One – Child Protection**

GSCP will have governance, oversight and will lead on this work. The work will focus on elements of child protection including exploitation and neglect, but, will also focus on how we work as multi-agencies to identify and manage risk and plans.

## **Priority Two – impact of Domestic Abuse on Children and Young People**

GSCP will have a particular focus on how effective partners are in reducing impact and supporting children and young people who are exposed to harm through domestic abuse. We will work with the Domestic Abuse Partnership to prevent harm to children and young people impacted by domestic abuse. A subgroup of the Domestic Abuse Partnership has been developed to look at this. GSCP members are involved in this work.

## **Priority Three – Serious Youth Violence and the Fear of Violence**

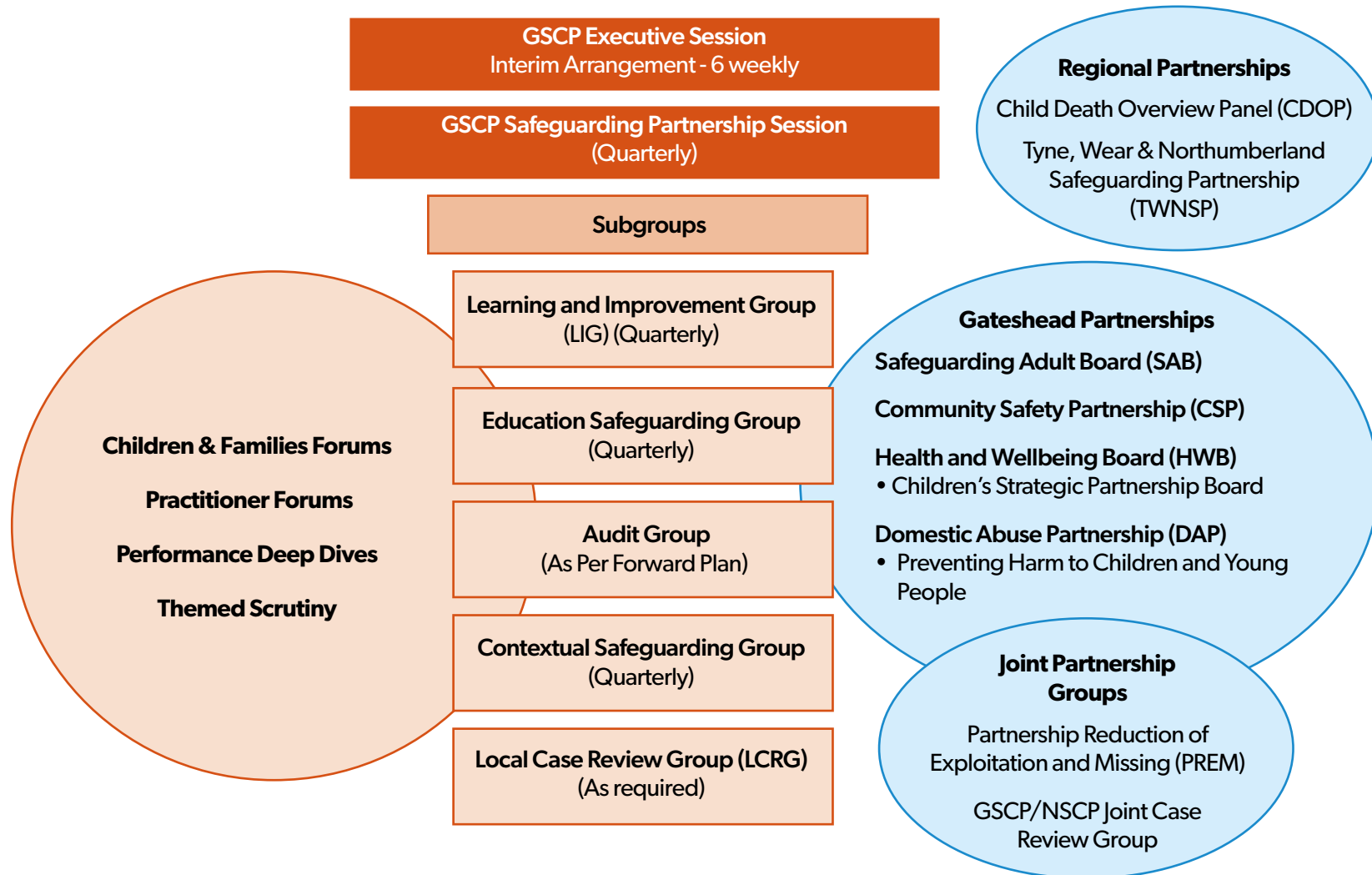
We know from the feedback we receive from young people and the work we undertake that this remains a concern in Gateshead. The GSCP will understand the work undertaken through the Community Safety Partnership and through the Violence Reduction Unit who have oversight of this. GSCP are developing a strengthened arrangement with the Community Safety Partnership to work together to ensure there is joined up work in relation to this key area of concern.

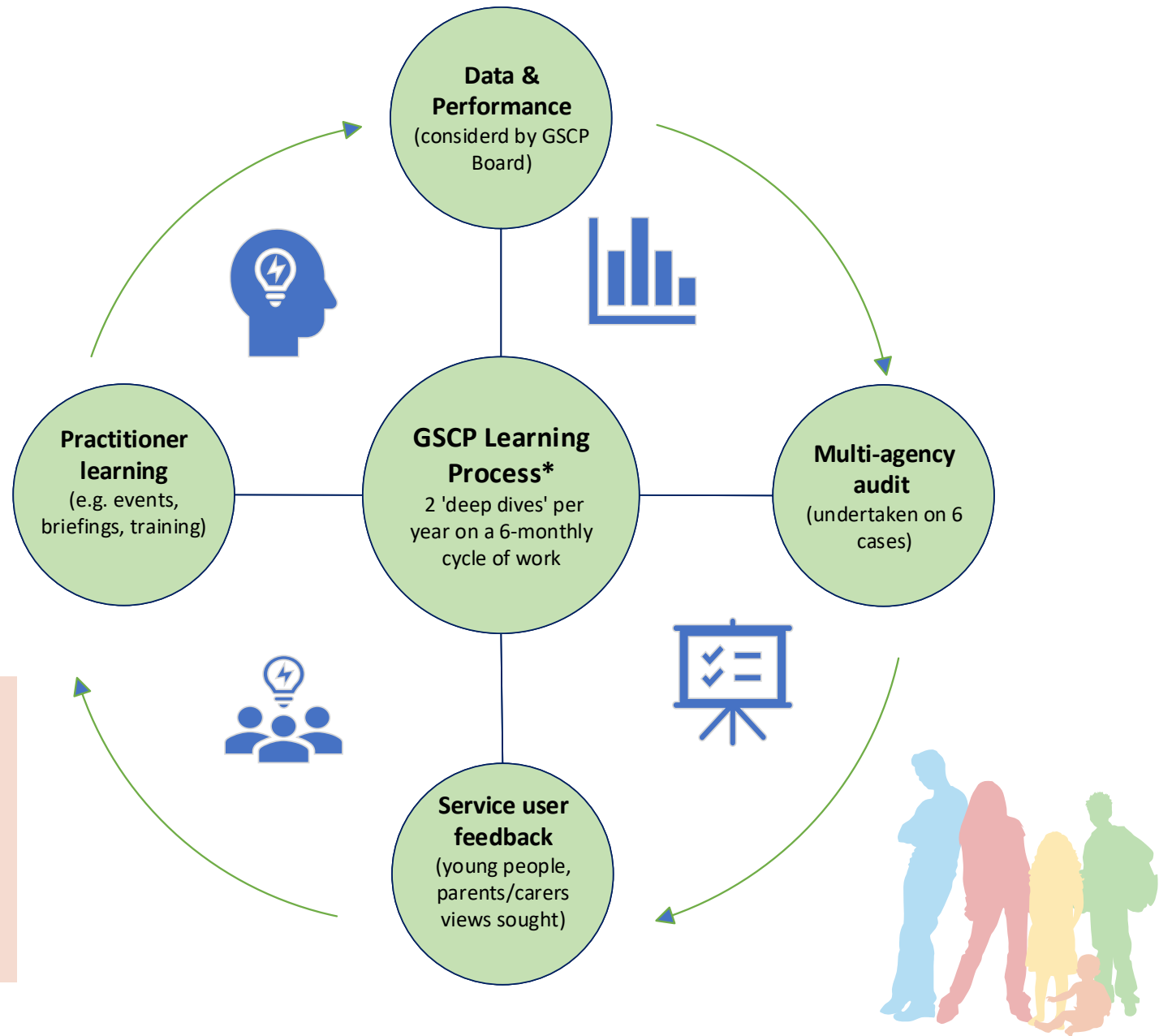
## **Priority Four – Children's and Young People's Mental Health**

We know from direct work with children and young people, feedback we have received from those working with children and families, but, also from the increased demand for support that this remains an area of concern in Gateshead. We will work with the Health and Wellbeing Board in relation to their strategy which includes work relating to the mental wellbeing of children and young people.

The revised version of the arrangements is outlined below. These will be finalised ahead of publication of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements and operational by the end of 2024. A key development is the inclusion of the Director of Education on the GSCP Executive group to reflect the inclusion of education at a strategic level. Membership of each sub-group is also being reviewed to ensure all relevant agencies are appropriately engaged and that education representatives are included throughout as well as on the Education sub-group.

## GSCP Structure - Interim Arrangements 2024





A Statutory partner to lead on this work and chair delivery group to be identified based on theme of deep dive.

Delivery group to produce report with recommendations for GSCP Board who will agree how to take forward identified actions.