

# Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership

## Annual Report 2022-23

Hartlepool & Stockton-on-Tees  
**SAFEGUARDING  
CHILDREN  
PARTNERSHIP**



# Executive Summary

As the Independent Chair and Scrutineer for the Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children's Partnership (HSSCP), it is a privilege to introduce our Annual Report for 2022-23.

The Annual Report sets out the key successes and achievements over the last year, to collectively drive our aspiration and vision that, 'Every child in Hartlepool and Stockton feels safe, secure and protected from harm, enabling them to reach their full potential'. These achievements are against a context of the national cost of living increases, poverty, local deprivation rates and workforce challenges across the public sector, post the global pandemic.

Despite these challenges, the HSSCP has grown increasingly stronger. There has been a shared endeavour to strengthen even further, our governance arrangements, focusing on the difference that the Partnership makes to improving outcomes for children and young people.

The Annual Report sets out the breadth of training, development and learning that has taken place over the last year. Equally, the outcomes of the Independent Scrutineer's Annual Report and the HSSCP Executive Section 11 Challenge Event, where we collaborated with South Tee's Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

Whilst we remain sighted on all aspects of safeguarding, our priorities for 2023-24 are:

- That we continue to work together, to reduce the impact and harm that Neglect has on children's lives.
- That we Strengthen Assurance, embedding the learning from case reviews into practice and, identifying the difference made by the partnership, to improve children's' outcomes.
- That we strengthen the Engagement of Children and Young People, ensuring that children's voices and lived experiences influence and steer the work of the HSSCP.

Finally, on behalf of the HSSCP, I wish to thank all the skilled and highly committed practitioners, managers and colleagues across the partnership, as well as the dedicated HSSCP Business Unit.



Mel John-Ross  
HSSCP Independent Chair  
and Scrutineer



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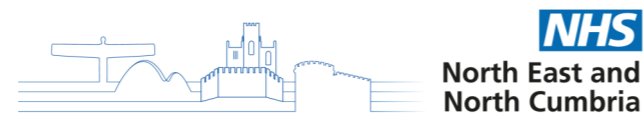
# About The Partnership

## HSSCP MEMBERSHIP

### HSSCP Safeguarding Partners

HSSCP covers the two local authority areas of Hartlepool and Stockton-On-Tees Borough Councils, with a co-terminus Integrated Care Board and Police force. The four statutory safeguarding partners of the Hartlepool and Stockton-On-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership, in accordance with Working Together 2018 (and Children and Social Work Act 2017), therefore include:

- Hartlepool Borough Council
- Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council
- North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
- Chief Officer of Cleveland Police



The four safeguarding partners retain an equal and joint responsibility for local safeguarding arrangements. They agree on ways to co-ordinate safeguarding services; act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others; and ensure the implementation of local and national learning. In situations that require a single point of leadership, safeguarding partners will decide on which partner will take the lead on relevant issues that arise.

The safeguarding partners have identified other agencies that are required to work as part of the HSSCP's arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children. These agencies are referred to as relevant agencies and have a statutory duty to cooperate with the HSSCP's [published arrangements](#).

### HSSCP Relevant Agencies



*N.B: The full list of relevant agencies can be found in HSSCP's published arrangements.*

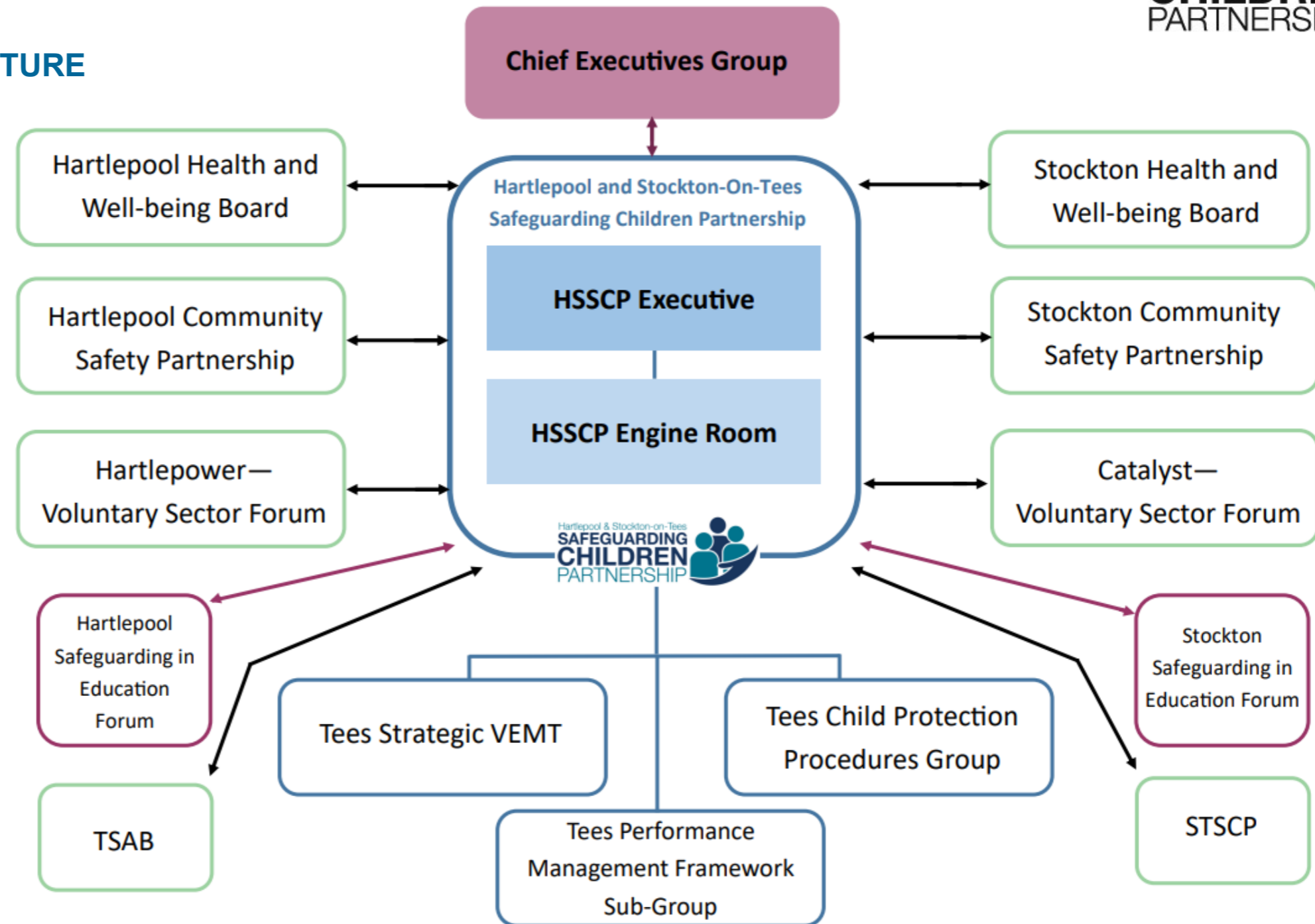
## HSSCP GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

### The HSSCP Executive

The HSSCP Executive, made up of representation from the four statutory safeguarding partners and selected relevant agencies, meet bi-monthly to provide strategic leadership and oversight to the partnership arrangements. The Executive is accountable to the Chief Executives Group and is responsible for ensuring delivery of the HSSCP business plan and priorities.

The Executive:

- Share and co-own the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children
- Ensure that services are commissioned in a co-ordinated way; through liaison with other key partnerships and Boards
- Oversee core safeguarding functions of the partnership arrangement
- Scrutinise reports on learning activity presented to them by the 'engine room'
- Provide further challenge where necessary when seeking assurance, evidencing impact and improvement
- Liaise with other key local partnerships and boards; feeding back any relevant information to the 'engine room'
- Ensure all statutory function and requirements are met; and
- Approve the appointment of reviewers for local case reviews



### The HSSCP Engine Room

The Engine Room, made up of representation from the four statutory safeguarding partners and selected relevant agencies, meets every 6 weeks and is accountable to the HSSCP Executive. The functions of the Engine Room carried out on behalf of the Executive include:

- Planning and undertaking learning activity; including Rapid Reviews, learning reviews and multi-agency audits
- Identifying and commissioning training following findings from review activity
- Identifying and ensuring dissemination of learning and good practice
- Identifying task and finish groups needed to deliver work on behalf of the partnership
- Impact testing – monitoring and reviewing change for improvement / learning
- Reporting learning and impact to HSSCP Executive



## HSSCP VISION, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

**Every child in Hartlepool and Stockton will feel safe, secure and be protected from harm, enabling them to reach their full potential.**



HSSCP's vision is to ensure that **“Every child in Hartlepool and Stockton feels safe, secure and protected from harm, enabling them to reach their full potential”** and aims to ensure that everyone who works with children across Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees has the protection of vulnerable children and young people at the heart of what they do.

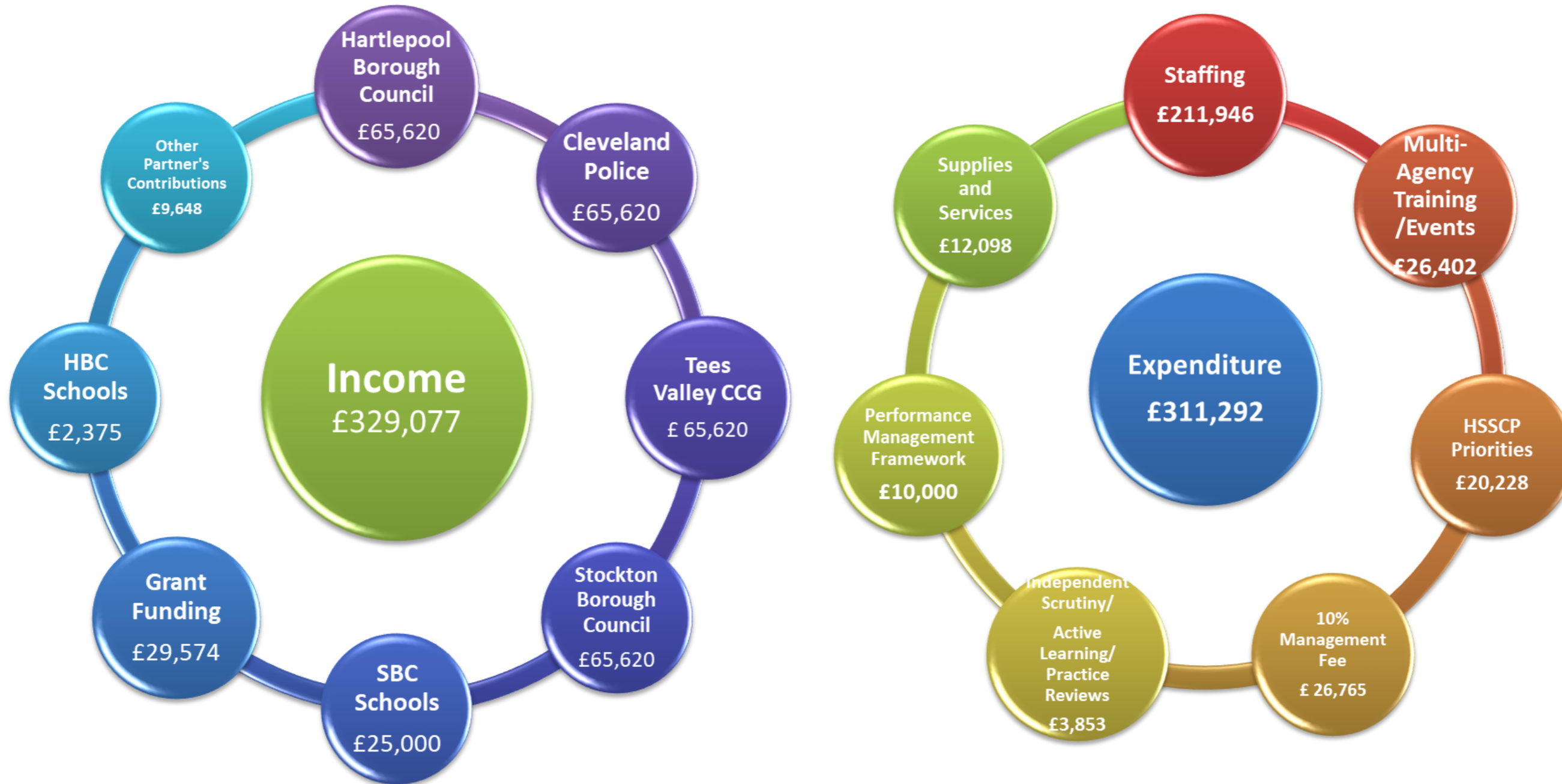
In order to achieve this the Partnership aims to understand what is working well in its collective safeguarding practice, to identify what needs further development and to ensure effective and co-ordinated multi agency working across our whole system. This 'Active learning' approach has the child at its core and harnesses the importance of working with practitioners to influence front line safeguarding practice in order to learn and improve together.

### The Partnership's Objectives are to:

- achieve the best possible outcomes for children and families and provide the right services that meet need in a co-ordinated way;
- improve safeguarding practice across all partners thus impacting positively on the lives of children;
- improve safeguarding practice, via identification and analysis of issues/ threats / barriers to effective multi agency working;
- enable shared learning with front line staff across all partner agencies;
- establish and embed peer challenge as a process for learning and improvement;
- embrace a culture of challenge with organisations and agencies holding one another to account;
- share information effectively to facilitate more accurate and timely decision making for families; and
- deliver on key elements that inform the basis of effective safeguarding practice i.e.:
  - ◊ Effective governance
  - ◊ Quality assurance and intelligence; and
  - ◊ A culture of learning and improvement



## FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS





# About Hartlepool

## HARTLEPOOL DEMOGRAPHICS



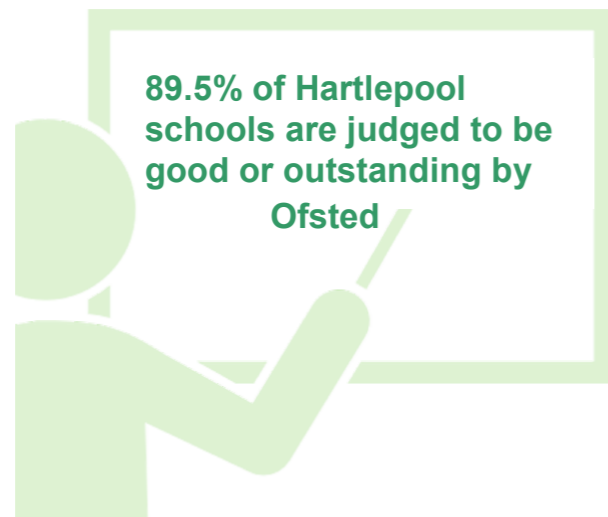
Hartlepool has  
a population of  
**92,300**  
living in...



With...



and...



### Hartlepool Context

There are **39 schools** in Hartlepool with 30 mainstream primary, 5 mainstream secondary, 2 special schools (one primary, one secondary), 1 Independent School and 1 Pupil Referral Unit. With **89.5%** of Hartlepool schools judged to be good or better by Ofsted, the potential for children achieving positive outcomes is high. The **number of children who are home educated is 154** which, although small when compared to all children accessing school, is monitored and reviewed by the Partnership annually to ensure oversight of this cohort of children and young people. Based on 2023 January School Census, **19%** of the Hartlepool compulsory school age population were **SEND** (EHCP and SEN Support). As at 31st March 2022 the number of children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans or Statements of SEN issued by Hartlepool is 579 (233 primary age, 301 secondary and 45 post 16).

In 2023, the End Child Poverty data shows the proportion of **children living in poverty being 35.3%**, compared to 35% across Teesside and 31% nationally. Living in an area of high deprivation, the children and young people of Hartlepool, their families and the professionals who work to support them, therefore face many challenges. There is a large body of evidence and research to show that **children who live in poverty are more likely to face additional traumatic experiences** or be exposed to a range of risks that can have a serious impact on their mental health and life chances. With Hartlepool's deprivation being higher than the national average for children already living in poverty and many families experiencing uncertain employment prospects as a result of COVID-19, the research suggests that the impact is only likely to increase; putting further pressure on families. It is therefore important for the Safeguarding Partnership to be fully aware of this cohort of children and young people and ensure that these are considered within aspects of the partnerships work programme.



## HARTLEPOOL SAFEGUARDING SNAPSHOT



Throughout 2022-23 there were approximately:

**19,829** children & young people under 18

Which equates to:

**21.5%** of the total population

**35.3%** of children living in poverty

**37.3%** of primary school children in receipt of free school meals (the national average is 23.8%)

**593** average contacts to the Children's Hub\* per Month

**2122** referrals to children's social care



**27.7%** were re-referrals

**618** Early Help assessments completed

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

**1431** open Child in Need cases

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

**2870** children and young people receiving services through Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) support

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

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

**762** missing episodes by 262 young people

**254** missing episodes by 45 Hartlepool looked after young people

**321** children and young people looked after



**1267** children present during a domestic abuse incident

**294** domestic abuse incidents witnessed by children within 12 months of a similar incident

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

**268** children involved in MARAC

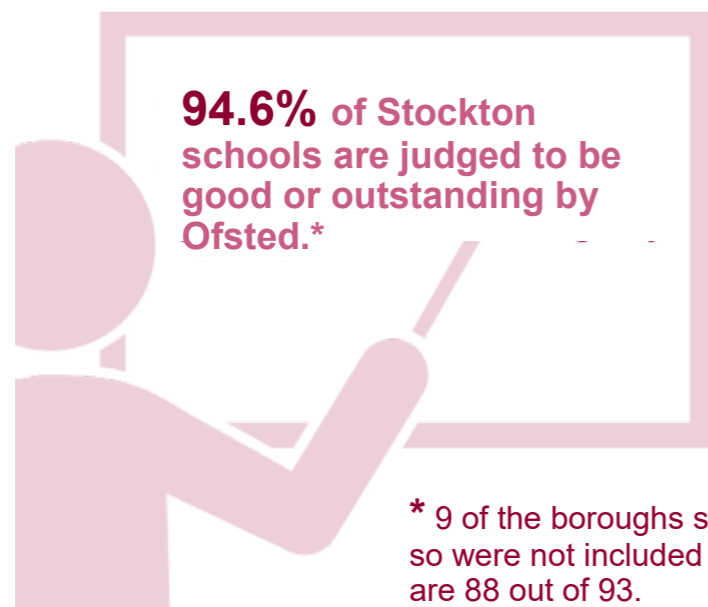
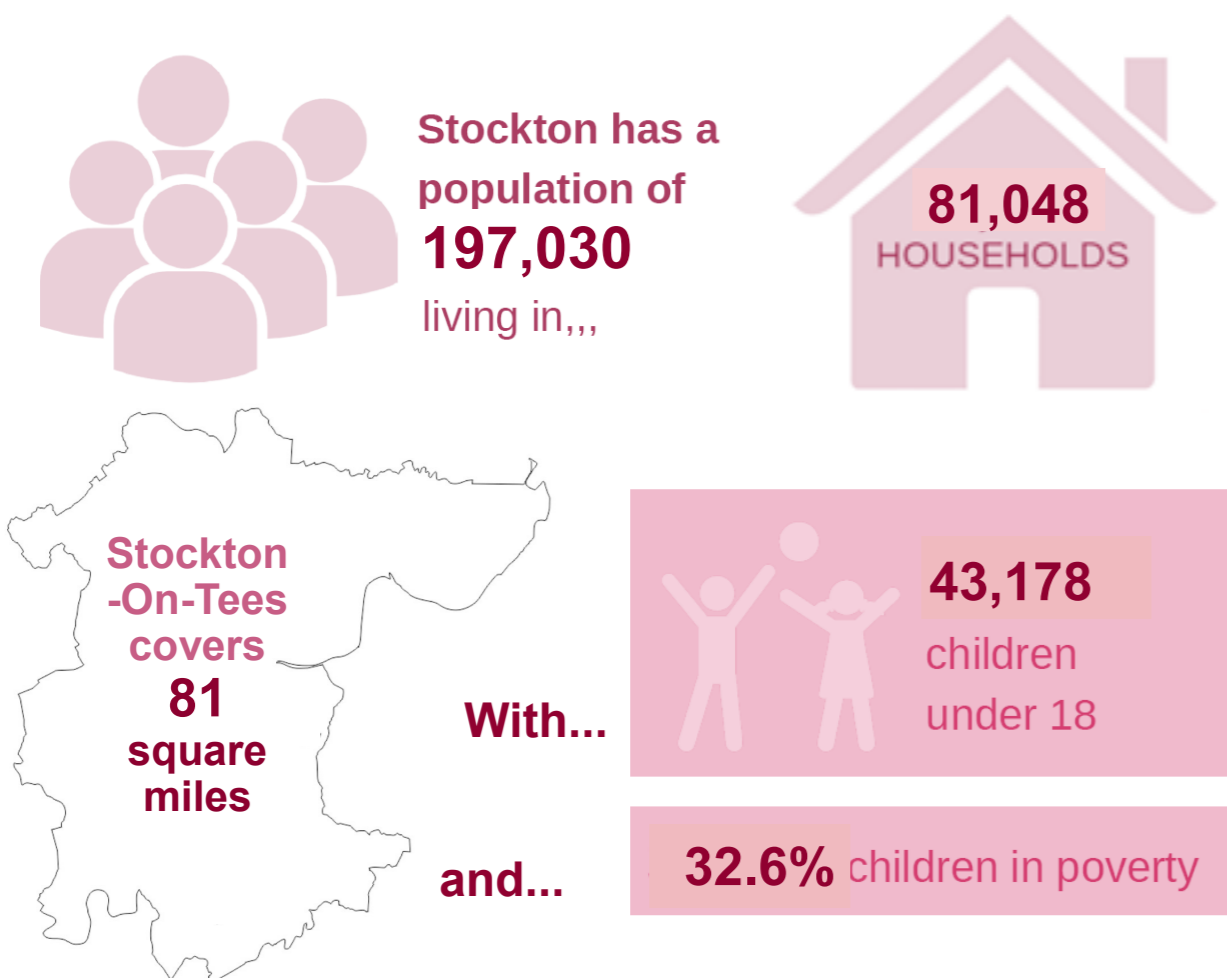
**46** referrals in relation to allegations against staff working with children and young people

**1** new Private Fostering arrangements reported

\* NB: The Children's Hub is the multi-agency front door for referrals into Children's Social Care.

# About Stockton-on-Tees

## STOCKTON-ON-TEES DEMOGRAPHICS

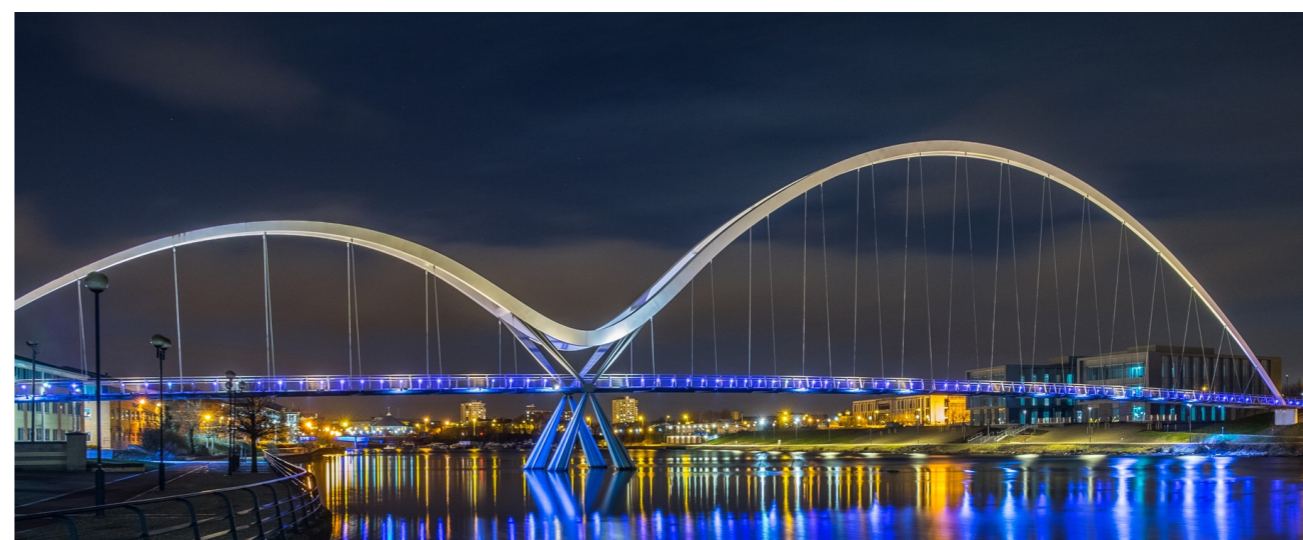


\* 9 of the boroughs schools had no rating and so were not included in this calculation, figures are 88 out of 93.

### Stockton Context

There are 102 schools in Stockton with 85 primary (42 academy, 34 maintained, 6 special and 3 independent schools), 23 secondary (13 academy, 1 maintained, 6 special and 3 independent schools). With 94.6% of Stockton schools judged to be good or better by Ofsted, the potential for children achieving positive outcomes is high. The **number of children who are home educated is 272** which, although small when compared to all children accessing school provision, is monitored and reviewed by the Partnership annually to ensure oversight of this cohort of children and young people. Based on the January 2021 school spring census **16.85% of the school population were SEND** (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities). This figure includes those that had an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) and those that have SEN support. The number of children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans or statements of SEN in Stockton is 2001 (814 primary age children, 826 secondary, 361 post-16) .

The latest available data from End Child Poverty (May 2021) shows **32.6% of children are living in poverty in Stockton-on-Tees** (after housing costs are included), compared to an average of 35% in the North East and 31% nationally. Living in an area of high deprivation, the children and young people of Stockton-on-Tees, their families and the professionals who work to support them, therefore face many challenges. There is a large body of evidence and research to show that **children who live in poverty are more likely to face additional traumatic experiences** or be exposed to a range of risks that can have a serious impact on their mental health and life chances. With Stockton's deprivation being higher than the national average for children already living in poverty and many families experiencing uncertain employment prospects as a result of COVID-19, the research suggests that the impact is only likely to increase; putting further pressure on families. It is therefore important for the Safeguarding Partnership to be fully aware of this cohort of children and young people and ensure that these are considered within aspects of the partnerships work programme.



## STOCKTON-ON-TEES SAFEGUARDING SNAPSHOT





Throughout 2022-23 there were approximately:


**43,178** children & young people under 18


Which equates to:


**22%** of the total population


 **2283** open Child in Need cases

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

 **32.6%** of children living in poverty  
(Source - End Child Poverty data May 2021)


 **26.8%** of mainstream primary school children in receipt of free school meals (the national average is 23.8%)


 **1138** average contacts to the Children's Hub per month

 **3914** referrals to children's social care





 **25.9%** were re-referrals


 **5259** children and young people receiving services through Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) support


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


 **1828** missing episodes by 504 young people


 **684** missing episodes by 119 Stockton looked after young people


 **574** children and young people looked after

 **4** new Private Fostering arrangements reported

 **2058** children witnessing a domestic abuse incident

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

 **466** children involved in MARAC

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



\* 2022-23 Early Help data not available due to data migration.

# Key Successes and Achievements

## PRIORITIES

### KEY PRIORITY - NEGLECT

#### PRIORITY 1: Evidencing the Child's Lived Experience

##### What did this priority entail?

This priority involves ensuring the multi-agency workforce understand and focus on what life is like for the child; describing their lived experience and how neglect is impacting upon their health and development.

##### What has been done?

- Each partner agency has identified a 'Neglect Champion' for their organisation
- Delivered a Masterclass event on ACE's, trauma-Informed Practice and neglect
- Delivered a programme of ACE's, trauma-Informed Practice and neglect for frontline practitioners
- Held neglect active learning sessions with a focus on seeking, capturing and evidencing the child's lived experience
- Refreshed and relaunched the Neglect Framework (Statement of Intent) and Six Question Tool

#### PRIORITY 2: Assessing and Intervening with Neglect – Understanding and responding to the Impact of Neglect

##### What did this priority entail?

For the multi-agency workforce to focus on cumulative vulnerability and risk, on addressing the root causes of neglect and on evidence-based interventions.

##### What has been done?

- Refreshed and relaunched the programme of neglect training
- Delivered neglect active learning sessions with a focus on assessment, cumulative vulnerability and risk and evidence-based planning and intervention.
- Promote the key messages of HSSCPs Neglect priority via a communications / marketing campaign



#### PRIORITY 3: Neglect Communication and Engagement

##### What did this priority entail?

For HSSCP to reinforce and strengthen communications and engagement with a stronger focus on the activities and progress of the partnership .

##### What has been done?

- Commissioned and delivered a marketing / communications campaign with a focus on neglect.
- Reviewed the HSSCP Communication strategy
- Commissioned the development of a mechanism for communicating and engaging with children and young people



## CASE REVIEWS - Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review

### LCSPPR - Riley

#### Context

Riley was 17 years old when he was hit by a car and suffered significant life-threatening injuries. After hitting Riley with the car, the driver exited the vehicle and assaulted Riley before driving away. Riley was found with a quantity of cannabis on his person and later admitted to having taken this from a cannabis farm before being followed and attacked by the perpetrator of the incident.

Riley was open to children's social care on a child in need basis at the time of the incident and had a number of missing from home episodes. Services had been involved with Riley since he was around 3 years old.

The initial focus for this review was to look at the way that partners across the system worked together when a child is identified at risk from exploitation. However, it was clear once Riley's life was explored that Riley's potential exploitation was inextricably linked to his childhood experiences. Riley has additional needs and had witnessed and was subject to domestic abuse. These needs were not met and these experiences shaped Riley as he grew up and he ultimately became at risk of exploitation.

#### Learning Themes

Three key systemic learning themes were identified which were explored from a 'best practice' lens. They were:

- Identifying Need
- Responding to Need
- Meaningful and Effective Engagement

The review highlighted the importance of the workforce understanding a child's lived experience to ensure that children are supported at the earliest opportunity in order to reduce the risk of children being at risk of exploitation as they become adolescents. The workforce must also be aware that a child with additional needs is at a potential greater risk than those of their peers.

#### What is being done?

- A task and finish group was established to explore the use of a communication passport which can be reviewed at key stages in a child's life, so all agencies understand the strategies needed to engage with child/ young person with additional needs. This led to a checklist being developed and rolled out.
- A deep dive took place around children that have disengaged with school/ learning to ensure that robust multi-agency plans are in place to meet their needs.
- A safeguarding SEND multi-agency audit took place to seek assurance that risk for children with additional vulnerability is being identified and responded to within the child's timeframe.
- Best practice examples for agencies 'was not brought' policies have been shared.

**Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review - Riley**

**The Life of the Child and the Child's lived Experience**

The initial focus for this review was to look at the way that partners across the system worked together when a child is identified at risk from exploitation. However, it was clear once Riley's life was explored that Riley's potential exploitation was inextricably linked to his childhood experiences. Riley has additional needs and was subject to domestic abuse. These needs were not met and these experiences shaped Riley as he grew up and ultimately became at risk of exploitation. It is important that the workforce understand the importance of understanding a child's lived experience to ensure that children are supported at the earliest opportunity. This will reduce the risk of children being at risk of exploitation as they become adolescents. The workforce must also be aware that a child with additional needs is at a potential greater risk than those of their peers.

**Identifying Need**

Best practice in identifying need would be a workforce that was professionally curious. The workforce will be looking at all children's and family's needs including understanding capacity in the context of their history. Workers would listen intently to children and young people to understand what life feels and looks like to them and ensure that children and young people's voice is valued, a way for them to communicate. Workers would keep checking in with children and young people to ensure that assessments are dynamic as needs change. If there were concerns raised about any learning needs workers and the strategies needed to engage with these children would be recorded.

Best assessments are based on a positive relationship with child and family and recognise the importance of valuing the time needed to build these relationships; acknowledging that assessments need to be timely but not to the detriment of quality. Professionals should seek to:

- recognise and reflect on cumulative risk including parenting history, ACEs
- actively communicate between agencies in assessing need
- undertake joint assessments to ensure identifying all needs
- see a child's behaviour as their way of communicating and be reflective about what the behaviour could be telling us
- be mindful of and use verbal and language that recognises the behaviour as a means of communicating; ensuring the child is seen as troubled rather than troublesome
- be curious about the context / root causes behind presenting issues
- recognising the cumulative impact of neglect on a child and the impact of trauma on brain development; understanding how this can manifest in adolescence

**Responding to Need**

Best practice in responding to need involves, in the first instance, building effective relationships both the child and family but also within the team around. Practitioners who communicate effectively with each other to ensure that everyone understands the bigger picture and knows about changes as they occur are more likely to do so what their responsibilities are, are more likely to engage with the plan and to make the changes required. Organisations that do not have effective evidenced-based policies and understand what practitioners are going to do to support with the plan and to make the changes required. Organisations that do not have specialist services to support the worker. This maximises trusted relationships leading to more successful engagement and intervention. A workforce that understands that a child's behaviour is a way for vulnerability and does not see children/ young people as trouble-makers but actively seeks the reasons why they are behaving that way in order to match response to need. A workforce that fully understands the impact of trauma (such as Domestic Abuse) on brain development and how this may affect learning needs are more able to respond effectively to need. Support is based on meeting needs rather than a label or diagnosis. Learning needs and the way to engage children with these needs are shared across the multi-agency team around to ensure that we are working with children in a way that they can access. Substantive issues and mental health services work together to deliver shared plans to support young people to improve their emotional wellbeing and reduce their substance misuse. Professionals should seek to:

- place high importance on relationships - allowing themselves time to build trusted relationships
- where child is not brought to appointments, be creative in how and where these are offered to maximise possibility of engagement in these (assertive outreach)
- coordinate with team around - not overloading a child with referrals / workers but considering what needs to be prioritised and who is the best person to deliver
- be needs led rather than service led
- workers working together to be able to respond to multiple issues such as underlying learning needs and child protection concerns

**Meaningful and Effective Engagement**

Best practice in meaningful and effective engagement means that the workforce is creative, innovative and persistent in engaging with children, young people and their families. It is built on the development of positive relationships which can take time however we commit to that approach. Workers ensure that the right people are supporting the child and young person. The workforce work together as a multi-agency team around to identify the worker that has the best relationship with child and family, 'has not enough' processes are robust and workers tirelessly follow up if children are not brought for appointments and escalate as required. Cases are not closed for non-engagement and workers seek support from the team around to support engagement.

The child knows we listen to them and act on what they say and we also feedback to child/ young person to ensure that they understand why we have done something. Professionals should seek to:

- be creative about where and how appointments take place to maximise possibility of engagement and attendance
- be up to date / creative when working with / engaging young people and have appropriate systems / resources / technology (Snap Chat) in place to talk to children in the way they prefer
- The team around are consistent in their approach to engage young people and regularly review this to adapt their approach to meet the needs of the young person

## CASE REVIEWS - Multi-Agency Audit

### Contextual Safeguarding Audit

Contextual Safeguarding was one of HSSCP's four key priorities for 2022-23. As part of this priority, new Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) hubs were established for Hartlepool and Stockton-On-Tees, replacing the existing VEMT Practitioner Group process. A Contextual Safeguarding Multi-Agency audit took place in November 2021 to act as a baseline for these new arrangements. This was repeated in December 2022 with a view to demonstrating impacts of the new MACE hubs and model.

#### What is working well:

- Timely information sharing
- POI and LOI processes embedded
- PIS form processes embedded and intelligence sharing is strong
- Peer group mapping is well-established and working well
- Harm Outside of the Home Conference / processes (Hartlepool)

#### Areas for Further Development:

- Training and development around what exploitation can look like in a family setting
- Awareness-raising around NRM
- Review of Tees risk assessment / screening tool
- Barriers in organisations re technology to communicate with young people
- Consideration of a 'Claire's Law' for exploiters
- ICS – record of child's plan to link to LOI / POI / Disruption
- Stronger links between MACE and Social Care re planning and intervention (Stockton)

#### Findings

The audit demonstrated professionals' understanding of exploitation and of the importance of early intervention. Referrals for intervention and support were timely. Positively, all 6 cases all showed a reduction in risk through interventions.

The audit concluded that the new MACE arrangements are making a difference to Children in Stockton and Hartlepool with clear enhanced recognition and understanding of exploitation signs and indicators. There is clear awareness of single agencies' referral pathways to support the multi-agency engagement for children at risk. It is also clear of enhanced information sharing between agencies and the use of the Partnership Information Sharing form.



## CASE REVIEWS - Multi-Agency Audit

### Safeguarding SEND – Themed Audit

The 'Riley' LCSPR published by HSSCP in 2022 identified seven areas around which the partnership should seek assurance. Four of these were in relation to safeguarding children with SEND. They were:

- Children with disabilities workers fully understand safeguarding concerns in all cases and act as appropriate to safeguard children (SPRR4.2)
- Assessments take into account all vulnerabilities at the earliest opportunity – ensuring the Right Support at the Right Time (SPRR4.3)
- Agencies work together to understand the needs of a child and the strategies needed to work with them if they have learning needs. Ensure this is clearly recorded in all agency records (SPRR4.4)
- Workforce know that learning needs can be a risk for young people to be exploited and the team around a child/ young person with learning needs consider this within their planning (SPRR4.6)

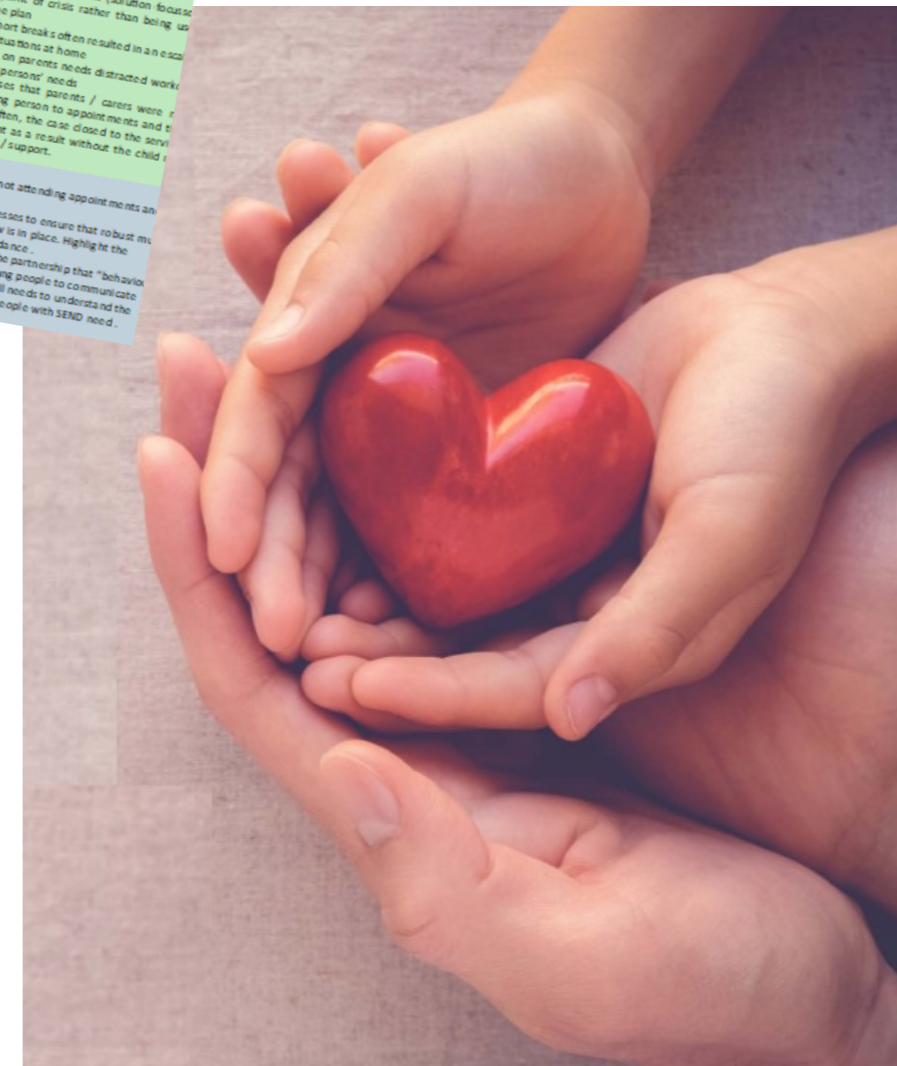
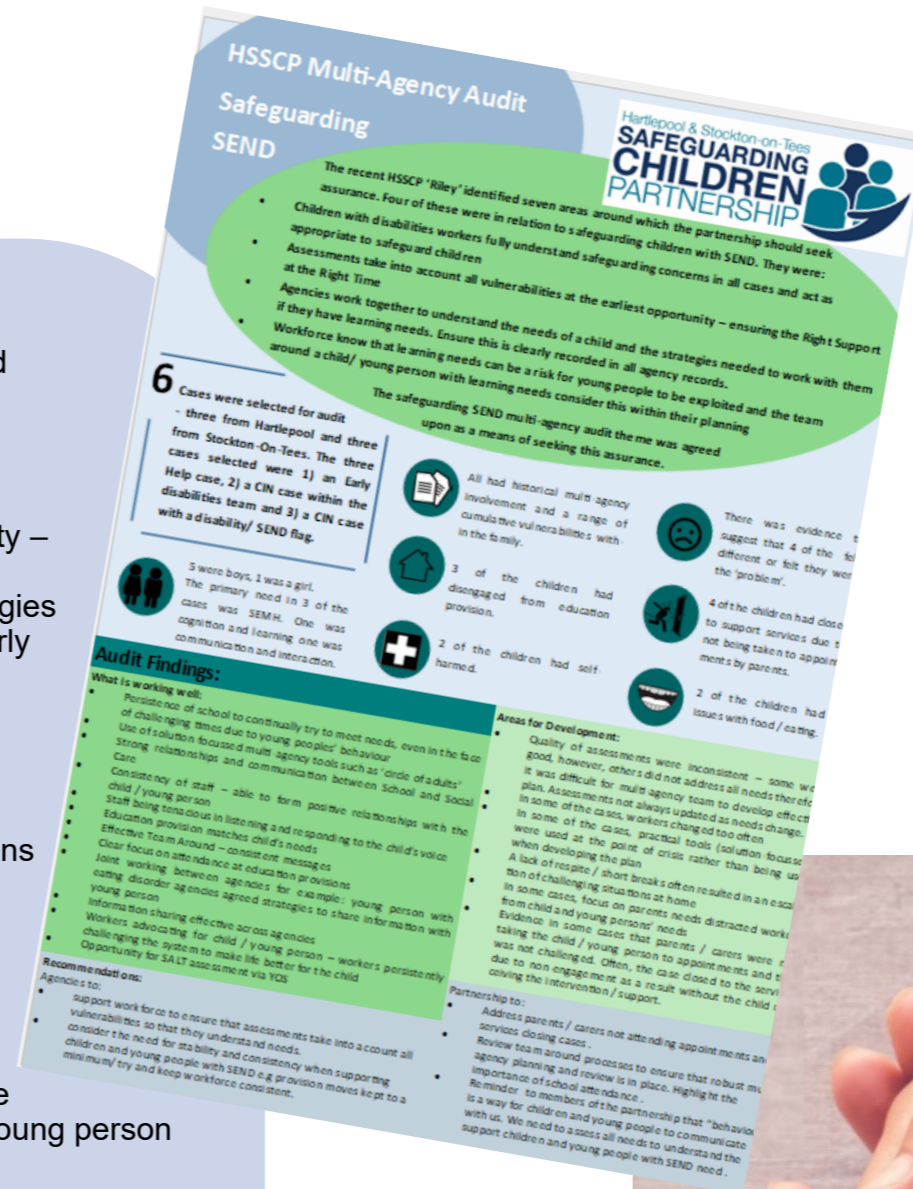
The safeguarding SEND multi-agency audit theme was agreed upon as a means of seeking this assurance.

#### What is working well:

- Persistence of school to continually try to meet needs, even in the face of challenging times due to young peoples' behaviour
- Use of solution-focussed multi-agency tools such as 'circle of adults'
- Strong relationships and communication between School and Social Care
- Consistency of staff – able to form positive relationships with the child / young person
- Staff being tenacious in listening and responding to the child's voice
- Education provision matches child's needs
- Effective Team Around – consistent messages
- Clear focus on attendance at education provisions
- Joint working between agencies for example: young person with eating disorder agencies agreed strategies to share information with young person
- Information sharing effective across agencies
- Workers advocating for child / young person – workers persistently challenging the system to make life better for the child
- Opportunity for SALT assessment via YOS

#### Areas for Further Development:

- Quality of assessments were inconsistent –
- In some of the cases, practical tools (solution-focussed) were used at the point of crisis rather than being used when developing the plan
- A lack of respite / short breaks often resulted in an escalation of challenging situations at home
- In some cases, focus on parents needs distracted workers from child and young persons' needs
- Evidence in some cases that parents / carers were not taking the child / young person to appointments and this was not challenged. Often, the case closed to the service due to non-engagement as a result without the child receiving the intervention / support they needed.



## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT



**66 multi-agency training sessions delivered**



**9,738 e-learning sessions completed**

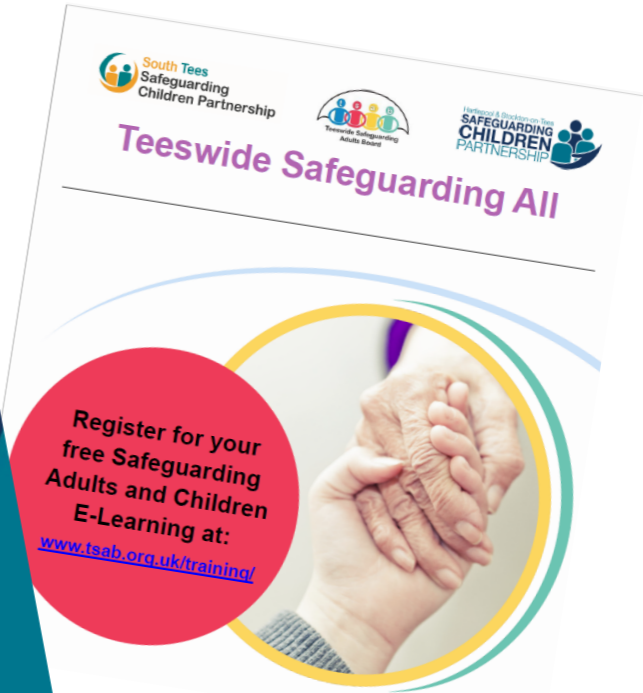
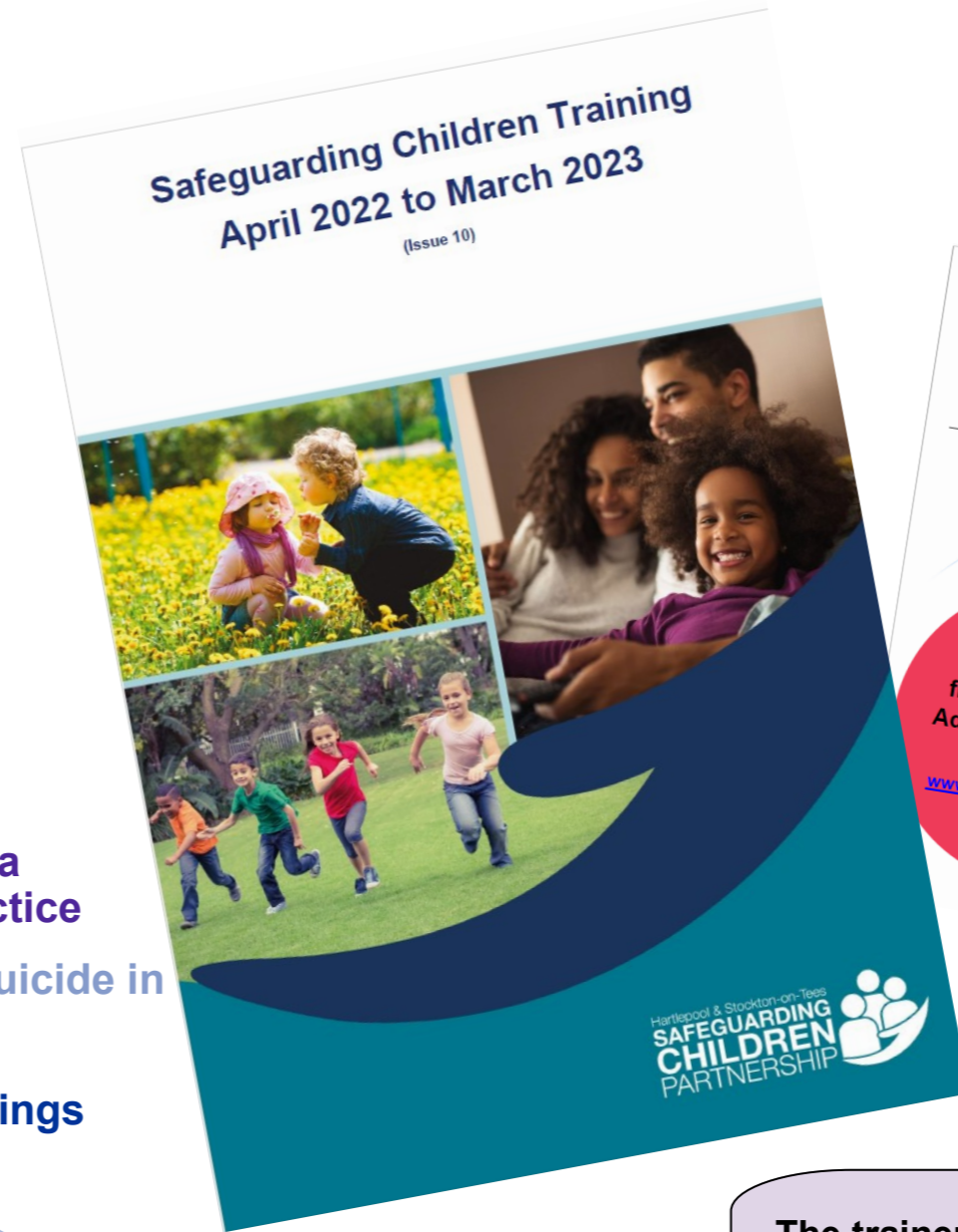
**1,741 people attended multi-agency training**



**157 managers/strategic leads attended a masterclass on Trauma Informed Practice**

**440 people attended the Preventing Suicide in Adolescents Conference.**

**131 people attended Learning from Reviews Briefings**



Well done and thank you to all involved in ensuring such an impactful and valuable learning event.

The guest speakers were phenomenal.

The trainer was very knowledgeable about the topic and the examples she provided helped me to understand the topic more.

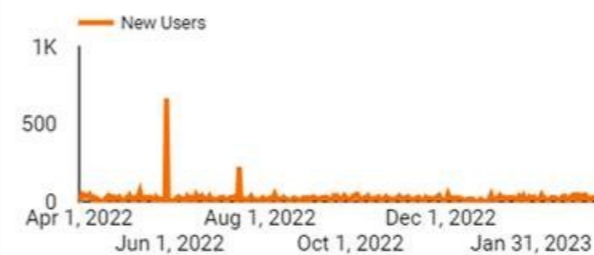
It was so profound and educational, I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Mixing up tables with a range of different services and professionals and giving each service an opportunity to speak about how they would have managed the referrals based on the case review discussed was invaluable.

All training is worthwhile and even if it is one piece of information or one technique that my team members return with then it has been beneficial.

## COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

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



**7741** visitors to the HSSCP website



**27,832** page views on the new HSSCP website



Monthly e-bulletins were circulated to **1146** partner representatives for wider distribution. These outlined key messages around pertinent safeguarding themes.



**6** Termly Safeguarding Forums were delivered to Designated Leads and Head Teachers across Hartlepool and Stockton Schools.



**4** Quarterly newsletters were circulated to partner agencies to communicate HSSCP activity.



HSSCP **Twitter** account - [@HSSCP1](https://twitter.com/HSSCP1)



# Independent Scrutiny

## Independent Scrutiny

The role of independent scrutiny is to provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area, including arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases. The HSSCP Independent Scrutineer has been completed a 6-month review using an evidenced based methodology, as set out under the Six Steps for Independent Scrutiny: Safeguarding Children Arrangements by Pearce, J (2019), Institute of Applied Social Research; University of Bedfordshire.

### Areas of Strength

**Step 1:** The four core statutory partner leads are actively involved in strategic planning and implementation.

**Step 2:** The wider safeguarding partners (including relevant agencies) are actively involved in safeguarding children.

**Step 5:** There is a process for identifying and investigating learning from local and national case reviews.

**Step 6:** There is an active program of multiagency safeguarding children training.

### Areas for Continuous Improvement

**Step 3:** Children, young people and families are aware of and involved with plans for safeguarding children.

**Step 4:** Appropriate quality assurance procedures are in place for data collection, audit and information sharing.

The HSSCP Independent Scrutiny Report and Action Plan 2022 – 2023 identified areas of significant strength, where there is strong evidence providing assurance of the effectiveness of the partnerships multi-agency arrangements, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in Stockton and Hartlepool.

Equally, there are opportunities to strengthen even further, assurance to evidence the impact and outcomes of the partnership, and work much more collaboratively, as a partnership with children and young people. As a result, recommendations to 'Strengthening Assurance' and 'Engagement with Children and Young People' are to be included into the HSSCP Business Plan for 2023-24.

## Tees Section 11 Audit Activity for 2022-2023.

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to make arrangements for ensuring that their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

In 2022 a [S11 Self-Assessment Audit](#) was sent out to all key partner organisations and Health Trusts involved in the delivery of mental health services, across Tees. The S11 Self-Assessment Audit Tool provided a means of self-evaluation, aimed to help partner agencies identify areas of good practice and areas for improvement.

Following the completion of the S11 Self-Assessment Audits, HSSCP together with STSCP held Challenge Events on Wednesday 8th February 2023 and Thursday 9th February 2023 to respectfully challenge, support and share learning from across the Partnership's.



# Next Steps



## NEXT STEPS

### HSSCP Priorities for 2023-24

#### Key Priority: NEGLECT

Since going live as a partnership in April 2019, HSSCP has reviewed 16 serious safeguarding incidents. Neglect featured in all of these cases and in seven of them was the cause of the serious injury or death. The pressures on services across Hartlepool and Stockton-On-Tees in relation to neglect are significant; with the numbers of children becoming Looked After by the Local Authorities due to neglectful parenting at a high (approximately 69%). It has been agreed that HSSCP's agreed key priority for 2023-24 will continue to be **neglect**. This key priority has been broken down into three key areas.



#### Neglect Priority 1: Evidencing the Child's Lived Experience

Neglect can be devastating for children yet it can be difficult to identify as its effects are cumulative. Workers often get snapshots of information about a situation for the child but this does not give a full picture of the neglect a child may be subject to. It is important for all members of the workforce to understand what life looks like for a child in order to effectively identify neglect at the earliest possible opportunity.

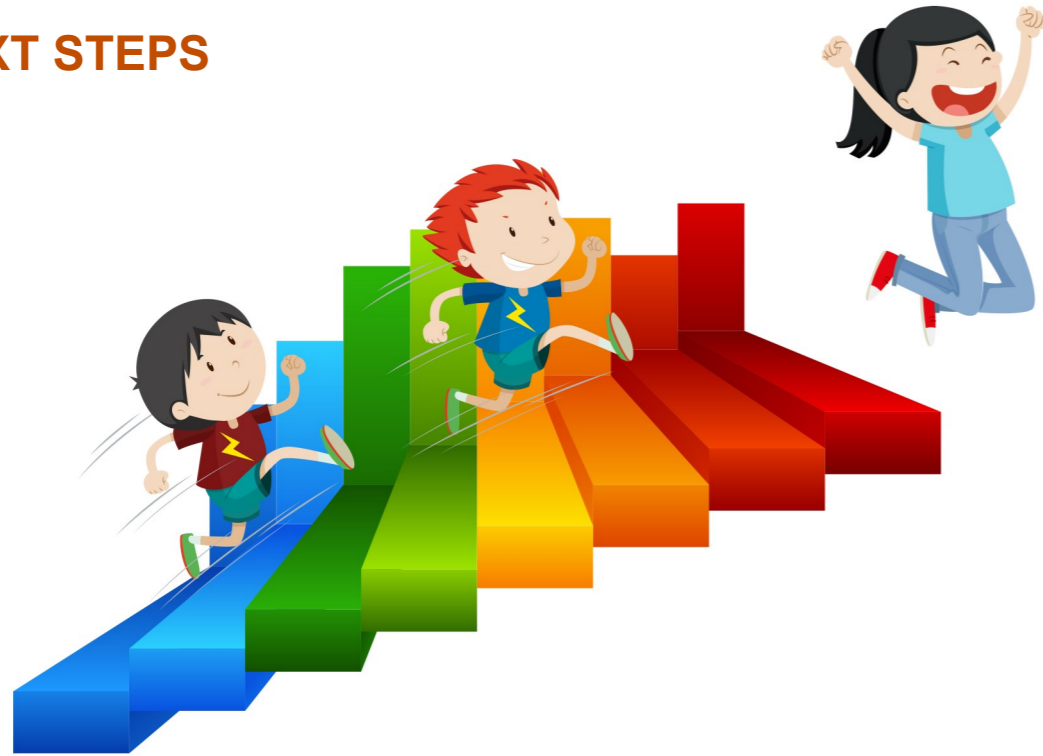
Learning from HSSCP Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews undertaken over recent years has indicated that children's lived experiences need to be better sought, captured and understood by professionals. Professionals need to be more curious in their questioning and exploration; to go beyond what is on the surface and build a bigger picture and understanding of the persistence and cumulative impact of the neglect children are experiencing.

Findings from a recent neglect-themed audit supported this learning. Professionals told us that gaining the 'voice' of non-verbal children and of individual children where there are large sibling groups and understanding the impact neglect is having on their day to day life, was difficult. HSSCP recognise the need to support the multi-agency workforce in evidencing what life is like for the child and in identifying neglect at the earliest opportunity. This key area aims for the multi-agency workforce to focus on what life is like for the child; describing their lived experience and how neglect is impacting upon their health and development. It will seek to achieve:

- An improvement across the multi-agency workforce on understanding the child's lived experience
- A strengthened understanding across the multi-agency workforce of:
  - ◊ how to evidence what life is like for a child living with neglect
  - ◊ how to fill the gaps in what is known to build a bigger (cumulative) picture
  - ◊ how to evidence the impact of neglect on children
  - ◊ the impact of ACEs on parenting
  - ◊ how to evidence cumulative vulnerability and risk



## NEXT STEPS



### **Neglect Priority 2: Assessing and Intervening with Neglect – Understanding and responding to the Impact of Neglect**

Neglect is notoriously difficult to define as there is no common view across cultures as to what are desirable or minimally adequate child rearing practices. There is no single cause for neglect. Most neglectful families experience a variety and combination of adversities and it is important for workers to undertake a thorough assessment leading to an analysis of needs in order to implement evidence based interventions. Addressing the causes and not the symptoms through assessment of the specific circumstances is always necessary to establish the difficulties that underpin the neglect.

Learning from HSSCP Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews undertaken over recent years has indicated that assessments need to be more holistic; with deeper analysis of long term chronology and family history as an indicator of future risk. The impact of parental cumulative vulnerabilities on parenting and on parental ability to change needs to be explored within assessments and plans need to be based on a change journey for children with an understanding and use of evidence-based interventions. A large proportion of plans focus on compensatory care without fully addressing the parental actions needed to improve the lives of their children. This does not promote positive change.

Findings from a neglect-themed audit supported this learning. Assessments showed a lack of understanding about the parents' historical ACEs and cumulative vulnerability and how these impact upon their ability to parent and ability to change. Professionals recognised the need to dig deeper and be more curious in their questioning and assessments. Plans appeared to be addressing the symptoms of neglect and not the root causes. There weren't always clear, realistic, achievable goals agreed and understood by the family. HSSCP seeks to achieve:

- An improvement in the understanding of and response to cumulative vulnerability and risk (including the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences upon ability to parent) in assessments across partner agencies and the multi-agency workforce
- A stronger approach to addressing the root causes of neglect and evidence-based interventions within plans and multi-agency meetings
- A strengthened understanding across the multi-agency workforce of:
  - ◊ how to analyse cumulative vulnerability and risk
  - ◊ how to evidence parental motivation and ability to change
  - ◊ the impact of neglect on children and the impact of ACEs on parenting
  - ◊ how to work in a trauma-informed way



## NEXT STEPS

### Neglect Priority 3: Priority Communication and Engagement

In a governance review undertaken by the partnership, HSSCP identified the need to develop a clear set of priorities each year, and to communicate how these are going to be addressed. It set out the need for HSSCP to re-inforce and strengthen communications with a stronger focus on the activities and progress of the partnership. It was felt that this would assist in the engagement of partners especially on key thematic priorities. It would improve the visibility of HSSCP, galvanise partners, become the key points of focus of effort and enable a sense of purpose.

The review also identified the need to develop clear objectives for engagement, focusing on groups, organisations and communities; to identify who HSSCP should be talking to, why, how and with what messages based on an assessment of which geographies, communities, organisations ought to be the focus in order to extend the partnerships reach and engagement. In particular, HSSCP wish to develop a specific ongoing mechanism for engaging children and young people, hearing their views, engagement and input into priorities. It is felt that this would have a significant input into the outcomes / impact work above. HSSCP seeks to:

- Strengthen lines of communication from HSSCP to the multi-agency workforce and partner agencies
- Develop mechanisms of communication with children and young people
- Strengthen communication with the public to make HSSCP a recognised body within the community
- Strengthen engagement of partners in the work of the partnership

For more information about HSSCP, visit the HSSCP website by clicking the image below:



## NEXT STEPS

### Additional HSSCP Priorities for 2023-24

In addition to the key priority of neglect, two additional priorities have been included into the HSSCP Business Plan for 2023-24 as recommendations of the Independent Scrutiny Review. These are:

- ➔ **Strengthening Assurance**
- ➔ **Engagement of Children and Young People**

### Priority 2: Strengthening Assurance

**Aim: To better understand the impact and quality of the partnership.**

The HSSCP Independent Scrutiny Report and Action Plan 2022/23 identified that an area for continuous development, was strengthening our assurance. This is in the context of recurrent themes from Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Multi-Agency Audits. Our objectives include, agreeing an integrated data set which is focused on HSSCP's priorities, providing data and intelligence about what we really need to know. Equally, evidencing learning, improved practice and outcomes for children, through a strengthened Quality Assurance framework.

### Priority 3: Engagement of Children and Young People

**Aim: For the partnership to systematically seek, hear, capture and act upon the views of children and young people.**

The HSSCP Independent Scrutiny Report and Action Plan 2022/23 identified that an area for continuous development, was for an agreed framework and programme for children and young people to be routinely consulted, so that they actively influence, shape and contribute to the development of the local safeguarding strategic priorities and, the work of the HSSCP.





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