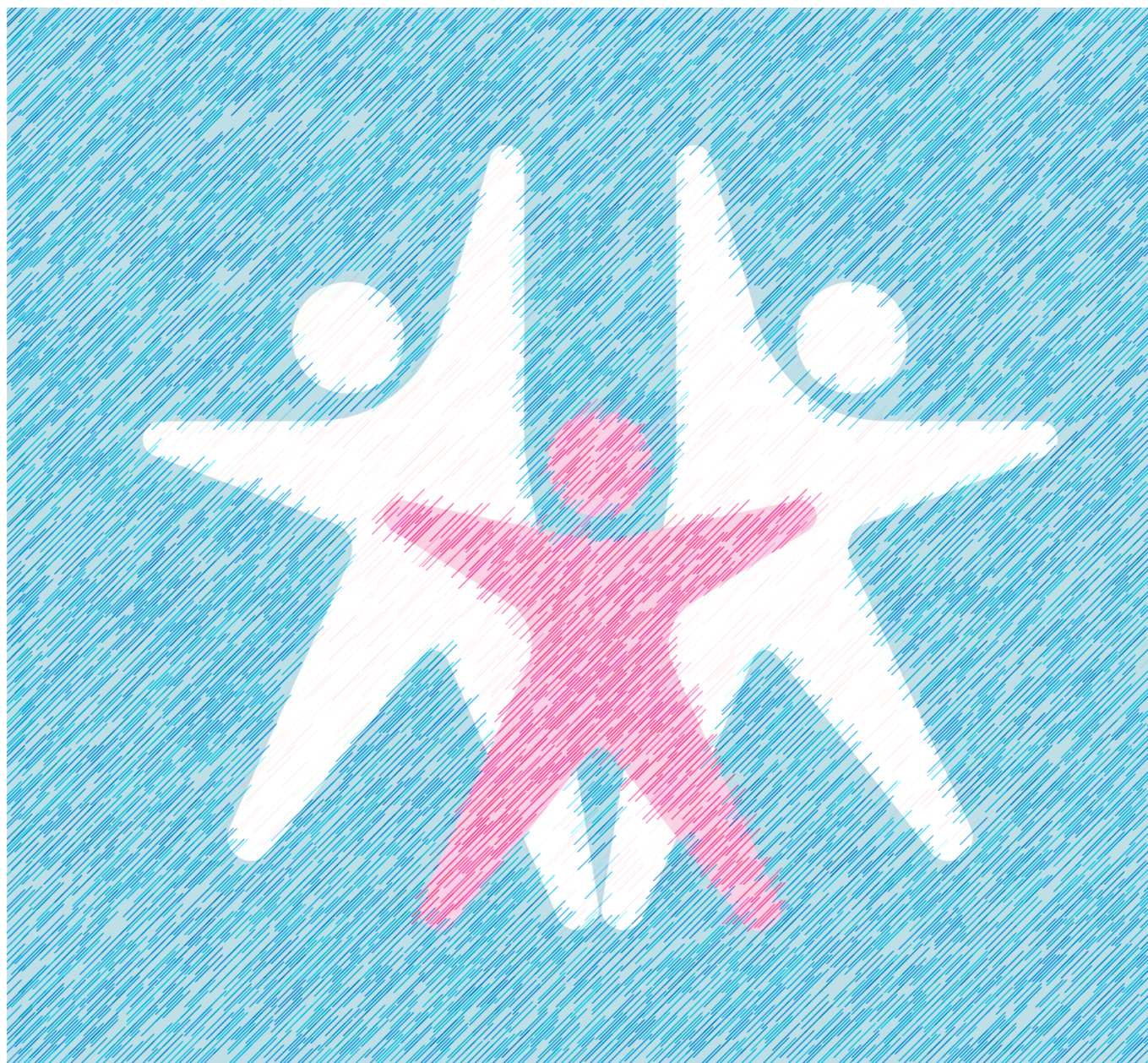




**East Sussex Safeguarding
Children Partnership
Annual Report 2024-2025**

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Foreword

We are delighted to present the 2024-25 annual report on behalf of the three statutory partners of the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership.

We hope you find the report useful in understanding the partnership's work, the challenges the children's safeguarding system faces and celebrating some of the successes. These successes are only possible through the dedication and diligence of the many people working with children, young people and families across a range of agencies.

Through promoting professional curiosity across the multi-agency workforce and ensuring the lived experience of the child is recognised, we strive to keep children at the centre of our thinking and delivery at all levels.

On behalf of the partnership, we hope you find this report to be informative, and open and honest regarding our achievements and challenges over the last financial year.



Becky Shaw

**Chief Executive, East Sussex
County Council**



Adam Doyle

**Chief Executive Officer, NHS
Sussex (Sussex Integrated Care
Board)**



Chief Constable Jo Shiner

Sussex Police

1. Introduction

Welcome to the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership 2024-25 annual report. As Delegated Safeguarding Partners we are committed to improving outcomes for children and families in East Sussex by embedding learning and sustaining improvements in our local safeguarding system by ‘holding up a collective mirror’ to practice on the ground.

Since we published our revised pan Sussex and local Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements, in response to Working Together 2023, we have developed and strengthened several areas of the partnership. Education partners are now fully embedded in the partnership, and robust risk analysis and decision making at the right levels are effective in identifying emerging challenges and responding as a multi-agency group.

The partnership delivers and supports extensive activities to meet statutory requirements and support positive outcomes for children. Throughout this report you will see the evidence and impact of these endeavours.

In 2025-26 we are excited to further explore the partnership’s role in the oversight of how safeguarding partners seek and utilise feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision, with the use of ‘Young Scrutineers’. We are also actively developing our engagement with Voluntary, Charity, Social Enterprise organisations.

A priority for the remainder of 2025 is to respond to challenges of the Sussex Integrated Care Board reconfiguration, how local partners will support the implementation of national reforms, and the further development of our scrutiny programme.

Thank you for your ongoing support, your hard work and commitment to this vital area of work to improve the lives of our children and their families in East Sussex.



Naomi Ellis

**Deputy Chief Nursing Officer,
Director of Patient Experience
& Involvement, NHS Sussex**



Carolyn Fair

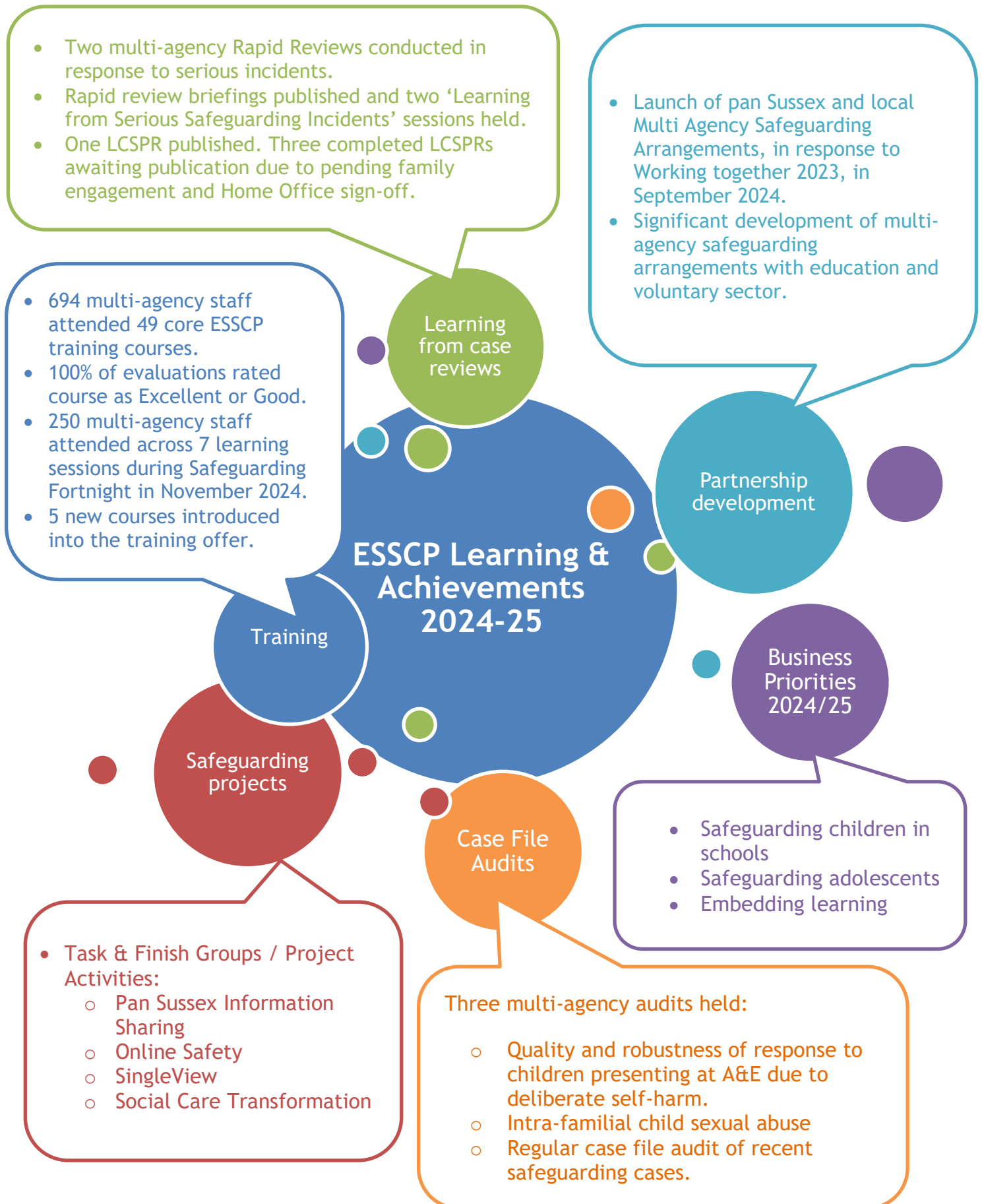
**Director of Children’s
Services, East Sussex County
Council**



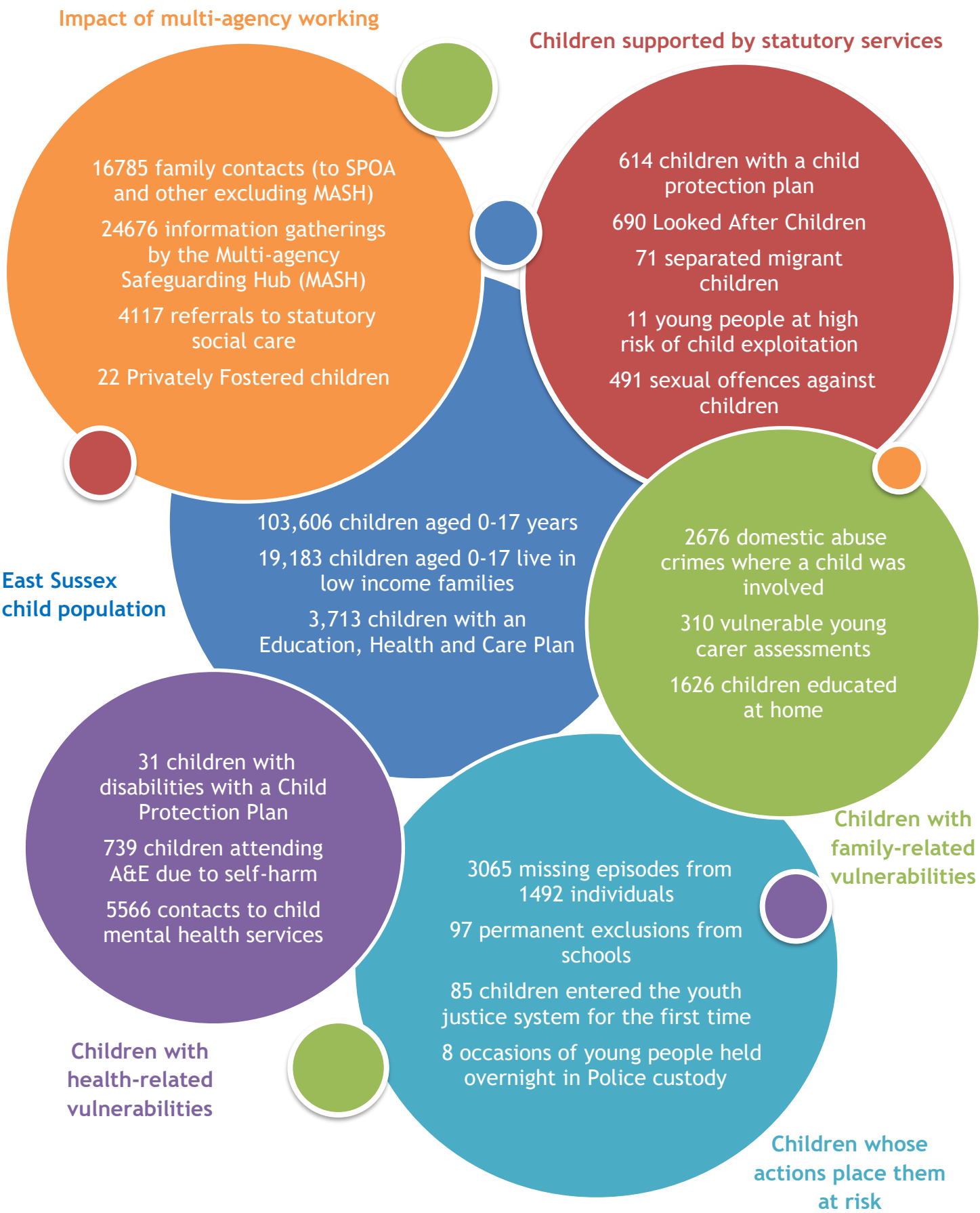
Richard McDonagh

**Chief Superintendent, Head of
Public Protection, Sussex
Police**

2. Key Learning & Achievements 2024-25



3a. Safeguarding Context 2024-25



See **Appendix A** for more detailed information.

3b. Safeguarding Context - Rapid Reviews 2020-2025

March 2020 to
March 2025:
22 Rapid Reviews
undertaken
9 LCSPRs initiated

A total of 39 children are the
subjects of the 22 Rapid
Reviews.

56% male, 44% female.

Under 2-year-olds represent
28% of all children.

Primary types of abuse recorded in
Rapid Reviews:

non-accidental infant injuries
(fractures and/or head trauma)
featured in 8 of the cases,
followed by;

- neglect (4)
- domestic violence (3)
- suicide (3)
- sexual abuse (2)
- criminal and/or sexual exploitation (2)

**Safeguarding Learning
themes:**

Parental conflict
Poor parental mental
health
Parental substance misuse
Hard to reach families

System Learning themes:

Lack of whole family
approach
Procedures not followed
Professional curiosity
Information sharing
Private proceedings

**Safeguarding Learning
themes:**

Hidden children (EHE and
children missing education)
Mental health
Sexual harm
Child to parent abuse/violence
Non-accidental injury
Cumulative risk of harm -
neglect and domestic violence

4. Partnership Arrangements

4.1 Overview of the Partnership

The East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (ESSCP) acts as a forum for the lead safeguarding partner organisations ([Sussex Police](#), [East Sussex County Council](#), and the [NHS Sussex](#)) to:

- provide strong, collaborative leadership and timely decision-making to ensure the effectiveness of multi-agency working to protect children from abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- engage with, and develop the role of, wider local organisations and agencies in the coordination of safeguarding services in (the geographical local authority borders of) East Sussex.
- implement local, regional, and national learning, including from serious child safeguarding incidents.

4.2 Partnership Structure and Subgroups

From September 2024 the statutory safeguarding partners across Sussex (NHS Sussex ICB, Sussex Police, West Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove City Council, and East Sussex County Council) agreed a partnership structure with the following components:

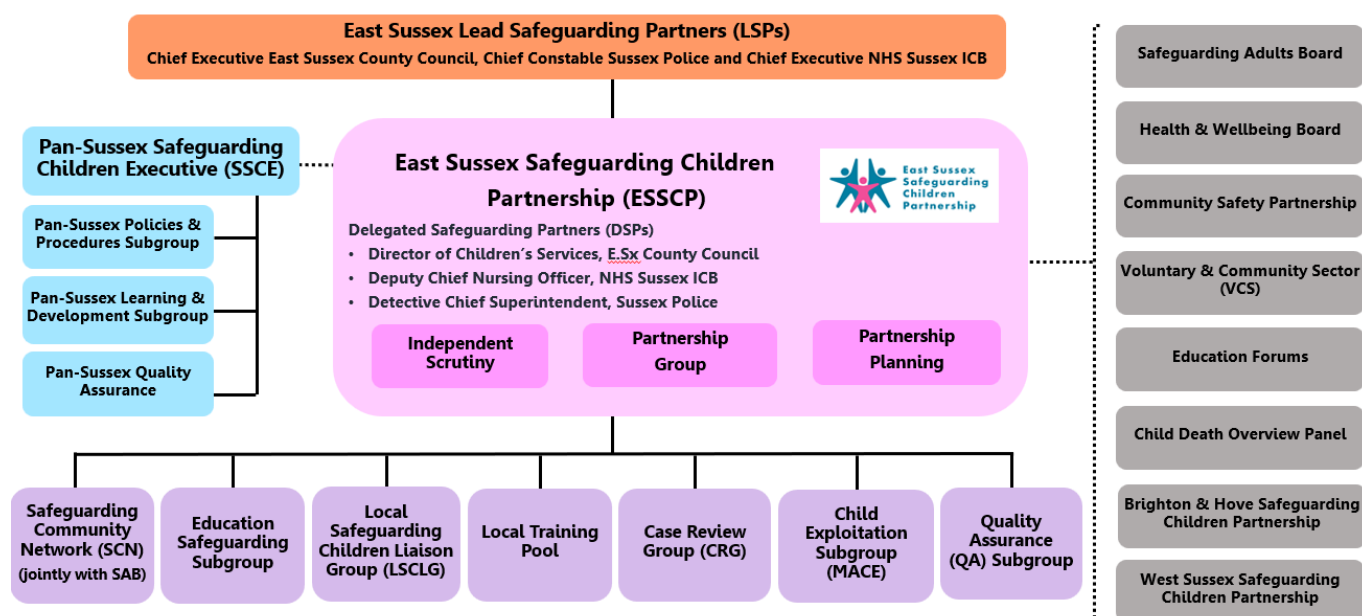
- (i) **A single Sussex Safeguarding Children Executive (SSCE)** responsible for determining multi-agency safeguarding strategy and agreeing models for multi-agency working to safeguard children and young people. The Executive meets at least twice yearly and includes the Delegated Safeguarding Partners from across Sussex. The SSCE determines the regional strategic approach to all issues requiring multi-agency safeguarding action, including responses to reports published by the child safeguarding practice review panel (National Panel). The SSCE can request assurance from partners agencies, if required, that resource allocation meets the needs of children and secures effective discharge of their statutory duties.
- (ii) **Three Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships (LSCPs)** which each reflect the role of the SSCE while exercising separate responsibility for decision making about individual cases of serious incidents, rapid reviews and local practice reviews, through Case Review Groups. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) report annually to the Sussex Lead Safeguarding Partners, meeting together as a group to review the effectiveness of arrangements across Sussex. The relevant DSP is the formal Partnership Chair.
- (iii) **Three local area Partnership Groups** which support the work of each LSCP, chaired by the Partnership Chair. These groups replaced the Boards and Steering Groups held under previous arrangements. The broad membership of the Partnership Groups is consistent across Sussex comprising representatives of local statutory, education, voluntary and community sector organisations.

More details on multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA) across Sussex can be found in the ESSCP published arrangements here: [ESSCP Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#)

East Sussex arrangements

The ESSCP's area-based core partnership functions are: providing **leadership** to all safeguarding partners by promoting a culture that supports critical thinking and professional challenge; promoting and embedding a culture of continuous **learning** which supports local services to become more reflective and implement changes to practice; and providing **oversight & assurance** on single agency and multi-agency safeguarding practice.

The below structure sets out how the ESSCP supports the delivery of these key functions:



Partnership Group is chaired by the Partnership Chair, who for 2024/25, is the Chief Superintendent, Head of Public Protection, Sussex Police. The Partnership Group meets twice a year and includes the Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs), the ESSCP Lay Members and relevant agencies (full list of board members is included in Appendix B). The Partnership Group provides a forum to support and enable local agencies and organisations to work together in a system where:

- There is a shared understanding of safeguarding practice in East Sussex
- Safeguarding assurance is promoted at single agency and multi-agency levels
- Learning and improvement is promoted through a reflective approach to bring change

Partnership Planning is also chaired by the Partnership Chair and meets twice a year. The Planning Planning's purpose is to discuss and agree the short-term agenda for the work of the partnership and address any emerging safeguarding risks and issues requiring strategic input. The DSPs (and their representatives), Education Safeguarding subgroup Chairs, Case Review Group Chair and Business Managers attend Partnership Planning.

The Partnership has a range of **subgroups** that lead on areas of ESSCP business and are crucial

in ensuring that the Partnership's priorities are delivered. These groups ensure that the Partnership really makes a difference to local practice and to the outcomes for children and young people. Each subgroup has a clear remit and a transparent mechanism for reporting to the ESSCP, and each subgroup's terms of reference and membership are reviewed annually. New subgroups for 2024/25 are the Education Safeguarding Subgroup and Safeguarding Community Network joint group with the Safeguarding Adults Board.

Until September 2024 the ESSCP had an Independent Chair that delivered '**independent scrutiny**' for the partnership. Between March - July 2024, in partnership with the ESSCP business unit, the Independent Chair consulted with partnership agencies on what independent scrutiny should look like in the new MASA from September 2024. Further details on ESSCP independent scrutiny can be found in Chapter 5 (Leadership).

Development in the East Sussex multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in 2024/25 include:

- establishment of Education Safeguarding Subgroup to maximise the voice of education partners
- merger of the Safeguarding Adults Board Safeguarding Community Network group with ESSCP Voluntary, Charity, Social Enterprise representatives to form an 'all age' group
- development of the pan Sussex Learning & Development and Quality Assurance functions
- development of Lay Members - establishing Lay Member network across Sussex
- pan Sussex section 11 scrutiny completed by independent scrutineer

Further development in 2025/26 to include:

- strengthen both local and pan Sussex Quality Assurance arrangements
- strengthen independent scrutiny - including the appointment of young scrutineers
- embedding the 'all age' Safeguarding Community Network group

4.3 Review of Partnership Arrangements

In previous years the Partnership has undertaken a self-assessment as part of the activity to review the effectiveness of local partnership arrangements, using approaches such as the '*six steps for independent scrutiny of safeguarding children partnership arrangements*' developed by the University of Bedfordshire and the National Safeguarding Panel's '*reflective questions for safeguarding partners*', as set out in their annual report.

When the MASA arrangements were initially published in September 2024, and then the final version in December 2024, there was agreement from the LSPs and DSPs that they will be reviewed annually and take in to account any future updates to Working Together to Safeguard Children.

A pan Sussex evaluation of the pan Sussex and local MASA's will take place in quarter four 2025/26. This evaluation will be undertaken by an external scrutineer, and the partnership Lay Members, with the intention of using the Multi-Agency Child Safeguarding (MACS) Evaluation Framework developed by The Association of Safeguarding Partners (TASP). This framework provides a method of structured self-reflection on the effectiveness of LSCP operations across:

- Leadership

- Accountability
- Participation
- Collaboration
- Culture

The ESSCP MASA will be refreshed with the outcome of the evaluation and reported in the 2025/06 Annual Report.

4.4 ESSCP Priorities

In March 2023 the ESSCP held an extraordinary Board meeting to discuss local evidence - including learning from case reviews, quality assurance activity, and the voice of children - and propose future priorities for the partnership. Proposed priorities were scoped which clearly identified the evidence to choosing as a priority, the intended impact on practice and outcomes for children, and how success would be evidenced. From the priorities proposed, the DSPs agreed on the following priorities for 2023 -2026:

- **Safeguarding in education** including safeguarding children who are electively home educated, excluded from school, and missing education.
- **Safeguarding adolescents** including adolescents who are criminally exploited, self-harm and/or express suicidal thoughts, child to parent abuse, and transitional safeguarding.
- **Embedding learning** and evidencing impact from case review and audit work, including ensuring that learning from the 2020-23 priority on safeguarding infants was embedded.

More information about the current priorities can be found in Chapter 5 (Leadership).

Looking forward, the DSPs and wider ESSCP partner agencies, will continue to work collaboratively to focus on the complexities of transformation in relation to government reforms. A priority will be to consider the risks and opportunities brought by significant national changes, including NHS reform, Families First Partnership Programme, Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, SEND reform and Devolution.

The ESSCP will focus on building on the stable children's safeguarding system in East Sussex to respond to the changes required, whilst maintaining a robust service to local children and families. Extensive multi-agency work has already been undertaken on a transformation plan to ensure that the development and implementation of transformation in East Sussex is a shared endeavour that's makes a positive difference to children and families. DSPs monitor the progress of this work via the ESSCP Risk Register and pan Sussex oversight is provided via the Pan-Sussex Strategic Transformation Group.

4.5 Pan Sussex Working

Following the introduction of the pan Sussex Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA 2024) local Learning & Development subgroups were replaced in September 2024 by the **pan Sussex Learning and Development (L&D) subgroup**. This regional subgroup provides strategic oversight to enable us to work collectively across Sussex to maximise our wide-ranging expertise and resources to best safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children and families.

The subgroup monitors multi-agency training and encourages a learning culture to support multi-agency local services to reflect, respond and implement changes to practice. The subgroup is currently chaired by the ICB Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children and is accountable to the Sussex Safeguarding Children Executive (SSCE). Each local Partnership is still required to provide high quality, up to date safeguarding training to enable practitioners to keep safeguarding at the centre of their work.

Activity from the pan Sussex Learning & Development subgroup in 2024/25 include:

- Development of a pan Sussex Learning & Development Strategy and Delegation of Task process.
- Increase in the pan Sussex training offer, multi-agency conferences and briefings to share learning across the Sussex footprint and gain resource efficiencies.
- Adopting a joint training charging policy to ensure equity and accessibility across Sussex for both statutory and non-statutory organisations.
- Refresh of the safer sleep campaign from 2023, with a follow up 'Every sleep must be a safer sleep' campaign in summer 2024. Safer Sleep courses are available throughout the year for practitioners as a part of the pan Sussex Learning & Development Programme.
- Support for public health messaging, including; Sea/water safety, Beach safety and safer bathtimes with reminders of the risks of drowning, scalds and poisoning.

Further development in 2025/26 to include:

- Develop an approach to evidence impact of training on practice through evaluation
- Consider the value of a pan Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership website to optimise efficiency and consistence
- Develop local and Sussex wide communication campaigns and align with national campaigns including seasonal campaigns and public health messaging

The Pan-Sussex Procedures subgroup co-ordinates the development and timely review of policies, procedures and guidance for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people across the three pan Sussex Safeguarding Partnerships. The subgroup is currently chaired by the Brighton & Hove Local Authority Head of Safeguarding and is accountable to the Sussex Safeguarding Children Executive (SSCE). The group is well attended, with all participants engaging proactively and meaningfully with policy reviews. Where possible the policy authors/practitioners are invited to the meeting to demonstrate the value and impact of working together across the Sussex footprint. The webpage is publicly accessible [Sussex Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures](#)

Since March 2024 several new policies were developed to enhance safeguarding practice in response to local child protection issues. These policies include:

- Contextual Safeguarding of Children and Young People
- Pan Sussex Complaints Procedure
- Pan Sussex Escalation Procedure

Over 50 policies and procedures were reviewed, including the in-depth review of 6 chapters, to ensure they remain current and effective for practitioners across the multi-agency safeguarding partnership. During 2024/25 the group prepared and implemented a new website provider to host the Sussex Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures. Initial

feedback on the new platform is positive. We currently benefit from a jointly funded position to co-ordinate the procedures - recruitment for this role would be particularly challenging if it were to become vacant, as the success of our initiatives heavily relies on this post. Although limited analytics show visit statistics to the procedures website, assessing the actual impact on safeguarding practice remains challenging. To gather qualitative insights from practitioners on the impact of policies and procedures, the group plans a user survey at 6 months post new website implementation.

As part of the Sussex MASA, East Sussex SCP take a lead on **Pan Sussex Quality Assurance**, including the collation and analysis of data relevant to multi-agency safeguarding responsibilities, the delivery of the Sussex wide Section 11 audit how agencies are fulfilling their duties in relation safeguarding and child protection, and additional Sussex wide audit activity, as directed by the SSCE. During 2024-25, activity led by the ESSCP business unit has included:

- Leading the coordination of a Pan Sussex Information Sharing Agreement, which has been signed by the key statutory and relevant agencies, represented on the three Sussex SCPs.
- Coordinating the 2024 Pan Sussex Section 11 self-assessment which was completed by all agencies who are represented on more than one of the Sussex SCPs. In spring 2025 an Independent Scrutineer, commissioned by the Sussex DSPs, held individual 'challenge' conversations with thirteen pan Sussex agencies who had completed their section 11 self-assessments. This process was supported by the introduction of a 'staff survey' for front-line staff and managers about their perception of safeguarding practice in their organisation. More information about the section 11 process can be found in the Assurance section of this report.
- Engagement with all Sussex Quality Assurance subgroups on how best to take a Sussex wide approach to audit and data analysis. There was strong support for local QA subgroups to continue to oversee local audit and performance dashboards, to ensure that QA robustly held up the 'mirror to safeguarding practice', and that any pan Sussex QA should clearly add value to existing work. DSPs agreed to trial a pan Sussex audit in 2025-26, aligned to future JTAI themes and to develop a core dataset relating to shared Pan Sussex priorities and/or themes raised by the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.
- A priority for 2025-26 will be to explore the options for developing a Sussex system to better support the tracking of action plans and analysis of data arising from rapid reviews and LCSPRs. This could be used to help inform Pan Sussex learning and development and improve understanding of agency performance.

Coordination of work between partnerships and subgroups is managed effectively via workplans, action logs and delegation of task requests. Partnership members across Sussex are encouraged to propose agenda items, suggest learning themes or initiate policy reviews, in response to local issues, audit findings, and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. The majority of these requests are initiated by local Child Protection Liaison Groups/Child Safeguarding Liaison Groups and Case Review Groups, reinforcing the pan Sussex subgroup's alignment with frontline operational needs and regional safeguarding priorities.

4.6 Links to Other Partnerships

The Partnership has formal links with other East Sussex and pan Sussex strategic partnerships, namely the Health and Wellbeing Board; pan Sussex Child Death Review Partnership (CDRP), Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB); Safer Communities Partnership; West Sussex and Brighton & Hove Safeguarding Children Partnerships; the Sussex Integrated Care System Children and Young People's Board, Children and Young People Trust (CYPT) and Local Head Teacher Forums.

The **East Sussex Partnership Protocol**, which includes a number of the aforementioned partnerships, was refreshed for 2024-2026. The protocol is intended to support effective joint working between strategic partnership boards in East Sussex, working together at every level to keep people in East Sussex safe from harm and abuse and improve their health and wellbeing. Links to significant partnership documents are highlighted in Appendix C.

The ESSCP annual report is presented to the East Sussex County Council People Scrutiny Committee and Health and Wellbeing Board, and the East Sussex SAB. The report is also shared with the Safer Communities Board, the Police and Crime Commissioner and other ESSCP member organisations' senior management boards.

The **Child Death Review Partnership (CDRP) Annual Report** was presented to the SSCE in January 2025. Pan Sussex Local Authorities and Integrated Care Boards (NHS Sussex ICB) hold legal responsibility for reviewing child deaths in Sussex as set out by the Children Act 2004, amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The Panel conducts statutory reviews on behalf of the Partners to provide independent multi-agency scrutiny for the deaths of all children living in Sussex. The reviews take place once all other child death processes, including coronial inquests and local child safeguarding practice reviews (LCSPR), have concluded. [CDOP - 7 Minute Briefing](#).

The key learning and actions arising from child deaths in 2024-25 relate to: information sharing, safeguarding, sudden unexpected deaths in infancy (SUDI) and unsafe sleeping, road safety, asthma, and bereavement support. More information is available as part of the CDOP Annual Report 2024-25 is available at: [Pan-Sussex-CDOP-Annual-Report-2024-25](#). Action undertaken in response to the CDOP Annual Report include activity by the Learning & Development subgroup to share communications on water safety and suicide prevention, and embedding the learning from the 'out of routine' report on sudden unexpected deaths in infancy into the training programme.

During 2024/25 the ESSCP offered events on a range of relevant safeguarding subjects outside of the 'core' programme. Free Webinar events were delivered by **SEROCU (Southeast Regional Organised Crime Unit)** seeking to reduce criminal computer use in young people and to avoid criminalising them where possible. '*Cyber Choices to help children becoming involved in Cyber Crime*' was delivered in July and August 2024 and '*Cyber Protect Webinars for Parents and Carers and The Digital Dilemma: Keeping your Kids Safe Online*' ran between December 2024 and January 2025.

Through ongoing partnership working with **Adult Social Care (ASC)** and the **Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB)**, the ESSCP have offered free training to the multi-agency audience on the *Mental Capacity Act (MCA)* and *Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS)*. Additional ESSCP/ASC/SAB

training courses that are relevant to the ESSCP audience regularly appear in ESSCP training publicity, such as: *‘Modern Slavery; Impact of Sexual Violence and Abuse; Responding to First Disclosures’* and *‘Coercion and Control’*.

5. Leadership

Strong, collaborative leadership and clear accountability are crucial for effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and the capacity of agencies to identify and address system issues.

This section of the ESSCP Annual Report sets out how the partnership has delivered its core 'leadership' function to:

- Ensure that there are arrangements in place for effective independent scrutiny.
- Develop and deliver local business plan priorities.
- Address and escalate strategic and operational multi-agency barriers.
- Promote and embed a culture that supports critical thinking and professional challenge.
- Ensure all relevant local agencies are engaged with the partnership and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children.

5.1. Independent Scrutiny

The purpose of independent scrutiny in partnership arrangements is to drive continuous improvement and provide assurance that arrangements are working effectively for children, families, and practitioners. Until September 2024 the ESSCP had an Independent Chair that delivered 'independent scrutiny' for the partnership. Between March - July 2024 in partnership with the ESSCP business unit, the Independent Chair consulted with partnership agencies on what independent scrutiny should look like in the new MASA from September 2024. The following priorities were agreed:

- While the role of the Independent Scrutineer was valued as a critical friend by agencies there was recognition of the need to diversify the scrutiny 'offer' in East Sussex to be more dynamic, evidenced based, and responsive to trends.
- Strengthen the focus of scrutiny on front-line practice with the flexibility to conduct discreet scrutiny projects as agreed by DSPs.
- Strengthen the voice of child / 'experts by experience' as an explicit part of the scrutiny programme. As part of this, the ESSCP should consider the use of 'young scrutineers', providing input of their ideas into projects, gathering feedback from other young people, reviewing partnership documents and policies, and feeding back to senior stakeholders.
- Ensure a balance between scrutiny at a local and pan Sussex level.
- Explore options for alternative scrutiny approaches, such as peer scrutiny, National Safeguarding Facilitators, etc.

DSPs agreed to a revised scrutiny approach in October, utilising the previous Independent Chair budget to deliver a range of flexible and responsible scrutiny. New elements included:

- **Appointment of an independent chair for the Quality Assurance Subgroup**
- **Commissioning an independent scrutineer** to provide scrutiny of Pan Sussex agency's section 11 self-assessment.
- **Appointment of young scrutineers** to work alongside Independent Reviewers on pieces of scrutiny, attend high level meetings, help involve other children in the partnerships work, take the lead on special projects, and design or review partnership communication.

- Commissioning up to **two pieces of independent scrutiny** a year, providing independent challenge, at both strategic and operational levels, and identify recommendations for improvement.
- **Strengthening the role of Lay Members** within and across the partnership by establishing a Sussex Lay Member network, adding lay members as standing members of the QA and Education subgroups, and creating opportunities for direct engagement with children and families, and practitioners, on key safeguarding topics.
- Introduction of a '**best practice in safeguarding conversation**', aligned with WT23 national child protection standards, foster greater awareness of different roles, raise awareness of the partnership with front-line teams and staff, and provide solid best practice examples of multi-agency working.

5.2. Delivery of business plan priorities

ESSCP priorities for 2023-26 were chosen because they include the highest risk children in the county, where multi-agency working is essential and where significant change and/or commitment is necessary to reduce risk. It is in such areas where the partnership can be most effective in scrutinising and supporting practice. Towards the end of 2025-26 the partnership will consider priorities going forward.

- ✓ **Safeguarding in education**
- ✓ **Safeguarding adolescents**
- ✓ **Embedding learning**

Safeguarding in Education

Everyone who encounters children, and their families, has a role to play in safeguarding children. Early years, school and college staff are particularly important as they see children daily and can identify concerns early and provide help for children, to prevent concerns from escalating. Education partners, and their staff, form a key part of the wider safeguarding system for children.

The ESSCP agreed that by making this area a priority for 2023-26, there is a continued focus on effective joint working between local agencies and education settings, strategically and at a setting level. Key areas of practice, highlighted in the last annual report, remain for educational establishments: School attendance, mental health and emotional wellbeing and harmful sexual behaviours. The impact of the COVID-19 national lockdowns is still evident within education settings, with 'School Readiness' a priority for the Education Division. In the last year, 3 reception aged children were permanently excluded from their schools, the first time this has happened with children of that age in East Sussex. The exclusions were linked to the children's behaviour and dysregulation.

The focus of the partnership in this priority is to:

- Provide **multi-agency expertise and support** to education settings to effectively respond to safeguarding concerns.
- Ensure that all educational settings have the **right information** to support their pupils.
- There is a **multi-agency informed preventative curriculum** available for education settings to access.

- The partnership responds to the requirements in **Working Together 2023 to engage education as a fourth safeguarding partner.**
- There is a partnership wide approach to **safeguarding vulnerable children who are not in education.**
- **Education settings effectively respond to learning identified by the Partnership.**

The ESSCP works closely with the Education Safeguarding Team to use evidence to deliver safeguarding in education, via:

(i) Reviews in schools

85 Reviews were undertaken by the Education Safeguarding Team in maintained primary and secondary schools from September 2024 to April 2025: 11 in state-funded special schools and 14 in Independent non-maintained special schools.

Undertaking comprehensive reviews in all maintained primary and secondary schools over the past 2 years has created a baseline for positive practice. The new Quality Assurance Support visits offer a very useful intervention for schools to seek reassurance and/or development points with a focus on specific areas and provide challenge and support.

New commissioning arrangements for academic year 25-26: The Primary and Secondary Improvement Boards have commissioned the Education Safeguarding Team to complete a focused Quality Assurance visit to every primary and secondary school (including maintained and academies).

All state-funded specials and 15 identified INMS schools will also receive a focused Quality Assurance and support visit in the next academic year.

(ii) Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) Network meetings

In the last academic year, the DSL Networks were revamped to link directly with the new ESSCP Education Safeguarding subgroup to provide improved communication /feedback mechanisms. Topics for discussion and review have included Social Care Transformation Programme, Single View, Operation Encompass.

New Early Years DSL networks have been established for all settings. 60 settings attended each network which is a positive new development.

(iii) The Schools' Annual Safeguarding Audit

98% of school self-evaluation audits across all school types have been returned to date (DRAFT-TBC)

Many areas of strength identified were identified, and key issues identified as needing further development include: capacity of the DSL Team, dealing with on-line harms, records of restrictive physical intervention, plans for risk assessments such as for Harmful Sexual behaviour are reviewed and updated, co-produced with parents. Schools identified the need for Managing Allegations training.

Key achievements in 2024-25 include:

- Establishment of the ESSCP Education Safeguarding Subgroup (see 5.5. Engagement of relevant agencies for further details).

- The Schools' Safeguarding Conference (October 2024) had specific input on 'safeguarding for the under 6s, and the Early Years Safeguarding Conference (February 2025) included newly developed guidance on attendance (which is non-statutory at that age). This content was programmed in response to an East Sussex Rapid Review involving a pre-school aged child with irregular attendance at nursery. Both conferences also included content on online safety.
- All 23 state-funded secondary schools, along with 3 special schools, had a funded Theatre in Education performance for year 9 students (approximately 4800 students across the 26 schools). The performance addressed healthy relationships, harmful sexual behaviours and online safety, and were accompanied by lesson resources and a briefing for staff. This was funded and facilitated by Public Health in partnership with the Education Safeguarding Team and PSHE Hubs.
- New multi-agency support programmes were developed in response to critical incidents and suspected suicides of young people. These included using the Unexpected Death Toolkit and suicide prevention training. Loss and Bereavement training was delivered to 28 schools.
- The East Sussex Early Years Improvement Team supported the roll out of Operation Encompass to Early Years Settings. Settings and Childminders are now included within Police processes for notifying attendance at an incident of domestic violence or abuse where children (over the age of two) are present or normally resident.
- In response to feedback from schools, the Education Safeguarding Team worked with colleagues from the Attendance Team, SPOA and Early Help to establish a guidance document "Children not in regular attendance at school". This promotes understanding across teams/agencies/schools as to the need, frequency and purpose of completing 'welfare checks' for children who have unexplained absences from school for extended periods.

Safeguarding Adolescents

During adolescence, the nature of the risks faced by children, and the way that they experience these risks, can differ from earlier childhood - as do their needs. Specifically, children may be faced with a new set of complex risks - ones not posed by families, but instead by peers, partners, and adults unconnected to their families in communities and online. Peer and social relationships become more central to children's lives and their identity. For many young people adolescence can also be a challenging time. Alongside the many physical and emotional changes that are part of adolescence, growing up also involves changes in roles, relationships, expectations, and status within family, amongst friends and the wider community of home, school, and work.

The focus of the partnership in this priority is to work collaboratively to **safeguard children from all forms of exploitation** and oversee the effective service provision and support for victims of exploitation, and their families; ensure a **coordinated multi-agency response when child suicides** occur, which also identifies any at risk children within the wider network; and develop a **Transition to Adulthood protocol** that outlines key principles for joint working across agencies when supporting vulnerable young adults.

Key achievements in 2024-25 include:

- Children's services successfully applied for **Youth Endowment Funding** to deliver a placed based whole systems approach to tackling exploitation and serious youth violence. As part of the project significant focus was made on earlier intervention, recognising the transition from primary to secondary school as a risk area for children. A targeted PHSE curriculum was delivered in four primary schools supported by a drama production, and partnership with voluntary sector agency Fellowship at Saint Nicolas to deliver a positive activity programme. Over 140 children and families have been supported through the project in just over a year. The project is currently being externally evaluated by John Moores Liverpool University. Early reports from the evaluation evidence that it was impactful in reducing incidences of serious youth violence and exploitation and in improved emotional well-being and confidence in the families engaged.
- Between April and October 2024 Sussex Police (East Sussex Division) piloted a '**Discovery Child**' team co-located with the youth justice team, focused on early identification, rapid intervention, and disruption of child exploitation. An evaluation of the project, in November 2024, highlighted a number of key outcomes, including: a significant reduction in time taken from submission of exploitation related intelligence to multi-agency assessment, action and rapid intervention with partners; weekly partnership intelligence meetings also support the earlier identification of victims, perpetrators and locations of exploitation; and there was a proactive approach to disruptions resulting in clear and sustained increases in disruption for child exploitation on the East Division (a total of 85 disruptions were recorded in East Sussex compared to 67 in West Sussex, 42 in West Surrey, and 26 in Brighton & Hove). There were also 59 protect disruptions recorded in East Sussex during 2024-25 compared to 16 in West Sussex and 10 in West Surrey. The evaluation recommended the continuation of Discovery Child co-located with YJS and Exploitation Team and that the model should be adopted across Sussex.
- YMCA Wise **Project SOLAH** accepted over 60 referrals to the service in 2024-25 for children and young people living in East Sussex. Standing for 'Safer Online at Home', SOLAH began in November 2021 as a pathway for the Sussex Police Online Investigation Team to refer children and young people into especially where they were either uploading self-generated images to the internet or sharing indecent images of children between themselves, in person or online. Children and young people who have been identified as being at risk are offered safeguarding advice and online education sessions delivered by specialist staff at YMCA DownsLink Group's WiSE project. As well as an increase of harmful sexual behaviour support needs. YMCA Wise have delivered 15 professional consultations to staff with East Sussex children services creating tailored tool kits for staff to take direct work forward.
- East Sussex, in partnership with Brighton and Hove, continues to be part of the **National Referral Mechanism (NRM)** devolved decision making Pilot. Locating decision making about whether a child has been the victim of modern slavery within local safeguarding structures ensures that decisions are more closely aligned with the provision of local needs-based support and law enforcement responses. It has also significantly reduced the time taken to reach decisions. Between April 2024 and March 2025, 35 children were discussed at the local NRM panel, with the average decision-making time being 24 days for Reasonable Grounds decision and 44 days for a Conclusive Grounds decision.

Learning and recommendations from the May 2024 Self-harm attendances at A&E audit were shared with the East Sussex Children and Young People Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Partnership Group. Next steps were aligned to respond to the concerning rise in suspected child suicides, with a multi-agency workshop held in January 2025 to identify immediate and longer term action to reduce serious self-harm and suicide. The workshop made six recommendations for multi-agency action to prevent serious self-harm and suicide:

- **Recommendation 1: System Response to Risk** Explore the benefits and feasibility of implementing a Multi-Agency Mental Health Education Triage (MAMHET) style approach in East Sussex.
- **Recommendation 2: Mental Health Awareness, Resilience and Safety Planning** Safety planning features in the self-harm toolkit and guidance for schools. The Pan-Sussex Self-harm Learning Network has created a consistent pan-Sussex resource and extensive training has also been provided to schools to support implementation of the guidance.
- **Recommendation 3: Peer Support** The East Sussex Mental Health Prevention Group has agreed to examine the role of peer support in preventing mental health problems and promoting good mental health. The timescales for the draft report are Autumn 2025. The evidence review is underway.
- **Recommendation 4: PSHE Curriculum** The Education Division and Public Health plan to develop a comprehensive suicide prevention package for secondary schools and post-16 Colleges to support them in implementing the new statutory RSE guidance from Sept 2026, as it relates to suicide and self-harm.
- **Recommendation 5: Support for Schools** Undertake a review of the multi-agency support measures available to schools in the medium to long term, following the unexpected death of a child. Including, what additional training might be provided to help schools prepare for bereavement.
- **Recommendation 6: Online Harms** The funding was agreed by Public Health and the University of Brighton to bring together current evidence to gain an understanding of the online lives of young people, including harms and benefits. The project will also gain insight from young people about what would help them to manage their digital lives, and from parents and schools about how we can support them with this issue; and bring together professionals across Sussex to share learning about the digital lives of young people, existing services supporting young people and to develop future plans.

Embedding Learning

The ESSCP is committed to creating and strengthening a learning culture across all agencies in East Sussex who work with children and young people. A culture which is open, and able to challenge all partner agencies, will be able to identify learning, improve, and then evaluate effectiveness. The ESSCP agreed to make 'embedding learning' a priority to ensure that the partnership becomes better focused on learning with the following three aims: the learning reaches the right people; there are effective mechanisms for sharing learning; and learning is embedding into practice and outcomes for children.

It is the focus of the partnership in this priority to ensure: Mechanisms to **disseminate learning** from Rapid Reviews, Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and audits (multi-agency and single agency), and national reviews are reviewed and improved; **training** delivered by the ESSCP is effective, responds to local learning, and is having a measured impact on safeguarding practice; the ESSCP is able to evidence that **ESSCP learning is impacting on safeguarding practice** and is making a positive impact on outcomes for children; the ESSCP promotes a **culture of learning from experience**, including the experience and views of children and parents/carers; The ESSCP promotes a culture of learning through **effective scrutiny of safeguarding practice** which is transparent and recognises the importance of challenge to drive improvement; and Learning regarding the **safeguarding of infants** is embedded into practice.

Key achievements in 2024-25 include:

- The ESSCP Business Unit has supported the Case Review Group to develop and publish two learning briefings, which concisely highlight key learning for professionals arising from rapid reviews, and one LCSPR, and one evidencing impact briefings from a previously published LCSPR.
- The business unit has also coordinated multi-agency learning events, on the rapid reviews, and contributed to materials, for the annual **Schools Safeguarding conference**, the **Early Years Safeguarding Conference**, responding to suspected child suicides, safeguarding and domestic abuse, and Pan Sussex Conference on neglect.
- **Pan Sussex Safeguarding Fortnight** ran from the 18th to the 29th November. The ESSCP led a series of taster/Brief Bytes sessions across seven subject areas. 250 practitioners attended across a range of agencies.


East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership

Safeguarding Fortnight (18 – 29 November 2024)

The East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership is excited to announce its FREE multi-agency SAFEGUARDING FORTNIGHT range of taster learning events.

We have organised 8 one-hour-long taster learning events, between Monday 18th and Friday 29th November 2024, on a range of safeguarding topics from 'child to parent abuse' to a deep dive into 'extreme misogyny'. The events are open to all professionals working with children and families, are free to attend, and are all online.

To sign up all you need to do is click on the below links to register your details.

 Select tickets – Safeguarding Fortnight: Introduction to Child and Adolescent to Parent Abuse and Violence (CAPAV) – MS Teams (tickettailor.com) Monday 18th (10am)	 Select tickets – Safeguarding Fortnight: How to make a referral for neglect – MS Teams (tickettailor.com) Tuesday 19th (9am)
 Select tickets – Safeguarding Fortnight: Working with the Gypsy Roma Traveller community – MS Teams (tickettailor.com) Wednesday 20th (12 noon)	 Select tickets – Safeguarding Fortnight: Safeguarding Infants - Learning from local and national safeguarding reviews – MS Teams (tickettailor.com) Thursday 21st (2pm)
 Select tickets – Safeguarding Fortnight: Professional Curiosity and Professional Challenge within a Safeguarding Context – MS Teams (tickettailor.com) Tuesday 26th (10am)	 Select tickets – Safeguarding Fortnight: Harmful Sexual Behaviours – A Multi-Agency Briefing – MS Teams (tickettailor.com) Wednesday 27th (9.30am)
 Select tickets – Safeguarding Fortnight: Safeguarding electively home educated children – MS Teams (tickettailor.com) Thursday 28th (9.30am)	 Select tickets – Safeguarding Fortnight: Incels - A Deep Dive into Extreme Misogyny – MS Teams (tickettailor.com) Friday 29th (9.30am)



LEARNING FROM SERIOUS SAFEGUARDING INCIDENTS IN EAST SUSSEX
TUESDAY 18 MARCH 2025 (3-4 PM) & MONDAY 24 MARCH 2025 (1-2 PM)

When a child dies or is seriously harmed, as a result of abuse or neglect, a review may be conducted to identify ways that professionals and organisations can improve the way they work together to safeguard children and prevent similar incidents from occurring.

This one hour briefing sessions will be delivered by colleagues from the ESSCP Case Review Group. The event will cover the themes and learning from three 'rapid reviews' that were conducted in 2024, following serious safeguarding incidents in East Sussex. The reviews featured a three week old baby, a four year old child, and a sixteen year old child.

It is really important that you know about these reviews, and the learning from them, so that the service improvements identified become embedded in to practice.

This event is FREE to attend.

To register your place at the learning briefing session go to the below link:
<https://buytickets.at/eastsussexsafeguardingchildrenpartnership>


East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership

- **Impact evaluations** are being developed pan Sussex, with a pilot being undertaken in 2025/26 in relation to neglect resources and training.
- The ESSCP Business Unit has continued to ensure that learning regarding the **safeguarding of infants** is embedded into practice. Examples have included:
 - Presentations on local and national learning regarding safeguarding infants during Safeguarding Fortnight and senior social worker forum.
 - Updating the section 11 self-assessment audit tool to provide assurance that agencies are robustly delivering on learning regarding safeguarding infants.
 - Supporting the delivery of three briefing sessions on safer sleeping, in particular in out of routine situations, over the past year.
 - Coordinating East Sussex multi-agency input into the pan **Sussex ICON Steering group**. The purpose of the group is to ensure that the ICON message is embedded across agencies in the partnership, support practitioners in their role with families, and to ensure consistent messaging across the partnership.

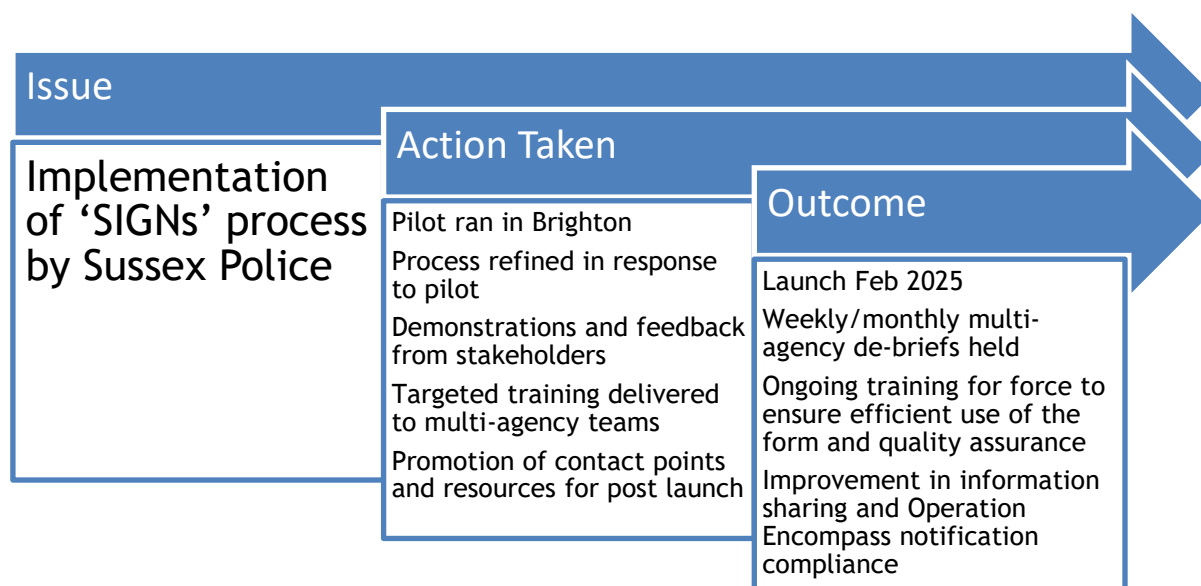
5.3. Escalating and addressing risks & issues

The ESSCP holds a Risk and Issues Register, which is reviewed regularly by the Business Unit and DSPs. Partnership members can request for risks and issues to be added to the log, however most additions are escalated via subgroup chairs and from discussions held at Partnership and Planning Group meetings.

During 2024/25 the ESSCP has monitored risks in relation to the ESSCP budget contributions and the transition to a new Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) provider from April 2025.

During 2024/25 the ESSCP has monitored issues in relation to:

- Levels of children subject to child Protection plans
- Capacity of multi-agency staffing in MASH
- Staffing in midwifery services
- Implementation of 'SIGNs' process by Sussex Police:



From January 2025 the Business Unit introduced a monthly briefing for DSPs. This efficient approach allows the Business Unit to escalate emerging issues and barriers in progressing partnership work areas to the DSPs for a swift response. The monthly briefing is RAG rated with items for decision, action or for information. This has allowed the Business Unit to maintain the flow of work within the partnership and keep a record of decisions made by the DSPs.

5.4. Critical thinking and professional challenge

Critical thinking and professional challenge are essential to securing good outcomes for children. It requires safeguarding leaders to model effective multiagency leadership, ensuring that the right and necessary capacity and resources are in place. Leaders need to demonstrate, through engagement with practitioners, children, and families, that they have good knowledge about the quality of multiagency practice and its impact on children. They also need to be assured that practitioners have access to high quality supervision with managers providing robust oversight, good support and challenge.

However, safeguarding practice reviews nationally and locally continue to identify that good ‘professional curiosity’ and critical thinking is not always underpinning work with children and families, resulting in assessments and interventions that are not as robust and effectively focused on potential risks of harm to children as they need to be. Previous national panel reports have also highlighted a lack of challenge between professionals and an apparent reluctance to escalate concerns.

ESSCP 2024 Rapid Review for Child 5 (as detailed in the Learning section of this report) highlighted learning locally about the importance of convening complex case meetings to address escalating and enduring risks where current service provisions are unable to reduce risk and support continuity of service delivery. Senior Managers directly involved in complex or long-standing cases at the right time can help in progressing necessary action by addressing any blockages and supporting practitioners who may need additional assistance. The visible involvement of senior leaders in complex practice dilemmas and decision making can be of real benefit and impact. By modelling reflective and analytic thinking when making complex decisions in high-risk situations, organisational leaders can demonstrate their support of practitioners.

Critical thinking and professional challenge examples in 2024-25 include:

- In spring 2025 an Independent Scrutineer, commissioned by the Sussex DSPs, held individual ‘challenge’ conversations with thirteen pan Sussex agencies who had completed their section 11 self-assessments. The scrutiny of the Section 11 returns, when triangulated with challenge conversations and staff survey findings, provided an overall **high level of assurance** for the capacity to critically evaluate strengths and areas for improvement. A high level of assurance was observed in standards such as senior management commitment to safeguarding, the availability of clear organisational responsibilities, and effective safer recruitment practices. However, areas requiring further improvement included the need to integrate the perspectives of children and families from strategic to the frontline.
- Professional challenge training is offered as part of the core offer and was included as a bite-size session within Safeguarding Fortnight.

- In collaboration with the Safer Communities Team and the East Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board, the **Professional Curiosity Resource Pack** was updated and republished. Professional curiosity was an area identified as a common theme across East Sussex reviews. The resource pack was based on the Swindon Safeguarding Partnership resource pack. This resource aims to raise awareness of professional curiosity and how being professionally curious is necessary to fully understand a situation and the risks an adult may face, which are not always immediately obvious. The expectation is that practitioners will share the resource pack and use it in team meetings and as part of group/individual supervision or for their own development.
- In March 2025 Sussex Police implemented a 'partnership escalations' inbox so that partners are able to escalate issues more directly with divisional teams and staff, via divisional command, so that there is an appreciation with respect the type and volume of escalations being received. This inbox will be monitored by divisional secretariat who will receive and distribute messages appropriately across the division.
- The Local Safeguarding Children Liaison Group (LSCLG) is a multi-agency subgroup of the partnership that meets on a quarterly basis. The group act as a forum for multi-agency discussion to explore any learning or potential improvements to multi-agency work, such as procedural and practice development, across the children's safeguarding system.

Next steps in 2025-26 include:

- Celebrate good practice - through annual best practice in safeguarding awards. Publicise examples where professional challenge led to better outcomes for children to reinforce the desired culture.
- Better integration of learning regarding critical thinking and professional challenge - this should include the use of the partnership's communication networks and tools to reinforce value of respectful challenge and critical thinking.

5.5. Engagement of relevant agencies

Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider are required to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children. When the ESSCP published its new MASA all relevant agencies, who were previously members of the ESSCP, continued to be included as critical members in delivering a strong and effective partnership which can respond to existing and emerging needs.

Through the partnership induction programme, all relevant agencies have a clear understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children locally, including:

- How they will coordinate with safeguarding partners to improve, implement, and monitor effectiveness of the local safeguarding arrangements (engagement in MASA)
- sharing information and data about safeguarding issues and concerns affecting the children involved in their organisation to contribute to local priorities (Pan Sussex Information Sharing Agreement)
- ensure local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are fully understood, and rigorously applied within their organisation (section 11 self-assessment)

Examples of how the ESSCP has strengthened engagement of relevant agencies during 2024-25 includes:

NEW! Education Safeguarding Subgroup

The ESSCP has benefited from solid engagement with education partners including independent settings, special schools, maintained settings and Elective Home Education services. To further embed this the ESSCP undertook a Safeguarding Planning Workshop for education partners in October 2024, attended by representatives from all areas of education and facilitated by the DFE National Safeguarding Education Facilitator. Following recommendations from this group, DSPs agreed the local approach to achieving the effective engagement and contribution of education providers through the initiation of an Education Safeguarding Subgroup.

The first Education Safeguarding Subgroup was held in January 2025, again facilitated by the DFE National Safeguarding Education Facilitator, to develop and agree the group's terms of reference and to start considering the priority areas to address. Education partners and DSPs are firmly committed to embracing the active role of education partners in engagement and decision making at an operational and strategic level within the partnership. This new subgroup provides a communication and engagement channel between the partnership and wider education partner networks, including local Designated Safeguarding Leads, Head Teacher forums, Governors etc.

Co-Chairs: Executive Primary Headteacher and Strategic Lead - Safeguarding and Emotional Wellbeing, Education Division, Children's Services Department

Membership: includes representatives from Early Years, Primary, Secondary, Further Education, Independent, Special, Multi Academy Trust, Alternative Provision, Governors, Lay Member, Local Authority, including: Safeguarding Education, Early Years, Elective Home Education, Virtual School for Children in Care.

Purpose (from ToR): *'Alongside their core purpose of teaching and learning, educational providers, from Early Years to Further Education, play a pivotal role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. By uniting the collective voice of education across all settings we proactively work collaboratively to solve safeguarding challenges, ensure authentic education perspectives are heard throughout the safeguarding partnership, and actively contribute to forward thinking strategic decisions that enhance the safety and well-being of every child.'*

Priority areas for 2025/26 were defined by the group to be aligned with Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2023 Expectations.

NEW! Safeguarding Community Network Subgroup

WT2023 highlights that VCSE organisations play an important role in building relationships, identifying concerns, and providing direct support to children. They can often be the first trusted adult to whom a child reports abuse. Therefore, many of these organisations will have a crucial role to play in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Through further development of a recent Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review action to improve voluntary sector agencies in the multi-agency safeguarding processes, East Sussex are exploring options to collaborate with the Safeguarding Adults Board to expand the VCSE network group and develop resources in collaboration with VCSE organisations:

Chair: Healthwatch

Membership: Originally a subgroup of the Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB), the membership has been expanded to 'all age' so the subgroup will reach across both the SAB and the ESSCP. Members are from Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations.

Purpose: The group's terms of reference were discussed at a workshop in June 2025 and will be finalised in September 2025.

Priority areas of work for 2025/26 include: Embedding the voice of lived experience, including children and families, case discussions, addressing emerging risks and issues, promotion of learning from reviews and sharing of good practice.

6. Learning

The ESSCP is committed to creating and strengthening a learning culture across all agencies in East Sussex who work with children and young people - a culture which is open, able to challenge all partner agencies, able to identify learning, improve, and then evaluate effectiveness.

Below are examples of ‘learning’ within and across the ESSCP in 2024-25.

6.1 Learning from Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Case Review Activity 2024/25

In 2024-25 the ESSCP undertook two Rapid Reviews following serious safeguarding incidents, where a child had died or been seriously injured, and where abuse or neglect was known or suspected. Neither Rapid Reviews led to Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPRs) as the Case Review Group (CRG) recommendation to DSPs was that LCSPRs were unlikely to provide any significant additional learning. The Rapid Reviews had sufficiently drawn out the learning from the cases, with clear areas of multi-agency improvement and appropriate learning themes and actions provided through single agency returns.

In these two cases, learning was shared via learning briefings and two multi agency events in March 2025, alongside multi and single agency action plans monitored by CRG.

Child 4 Rapid Review	Child 5 Rapid Review
Learning Briefing - Child 4 (esscp.org.uk)	Learning Briefing - Child 5 (esscp.org.uk)
✓ Convening a multi-agency strategy meeting when significant events or new disclosures occur. ✓ Risks assessed at the pre-birth to be reviewed regularly, in particular for premature babies. ✓ Support for isolated single carers of vulnerable premature babies to transition from a highly supportive hospital environment to the home environment. ✓ Appropriate and equal consideration to be given to fathers when considering the benefits of utilising parent and baby assessment placements. ✓ Multi agency awareness and understanding of how Family and Criminal court parallel processes interplay.	✓ Balancing the view of the child, regarding their preference to work with a specific gender practitioner, with the professional view of continuity of case management. ✓ Professionals to ensure they have clarity on the child’s ethnicity and culture, and that this is considered in their approach to practice. ✓ GP engagement and information in strategy meetings and section 47 enquiries to gain a holistic view of the child’s lived experience. ✓ Moving placements in and out of county disrupted the continuity of care and relationships for child 5 impacting on her engagement and wellbeing. ✓ Convening a complex case meeting to address escalating and enduring risks where current service provisions are unable to reduce risk. ✓ Ensuring that appropriate language is used by the multi-agency system in exploitation cases

✓ Importance of parents/carers receiving ICON materials, and in particular appropriate ICON materials for prem babies.	to ensure victims are not recorded as putting themselves at risk through their choices and behaviours, rather than the responsibility being placed on those doing the exploiting.
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There was one additional Serious Incident Notification made in summer 2024 in relation to the death of a Looked After Child, in accordance with Working Together 2023. At postmortem the pathologist gave a natural cause of death. The CRG reviewed the available information and agreed that they were satisfied that the case did not require a Rapid Review and would be most appropriately reviewed through the statutory Child Death Review processes, which was reported to the National Panel.

During 2024/25 the ESSCP published one LCSPR:

Child Z (delay in publication was due to gaining parent input into the review and criminal proceedings, with sentencing in late July 2024)

[ESSCP Child Z LCSPR Report 13.03.25](#)

[ESSCP Child Z LCSPR Partnership Response - Feb 2025](#)

[Child Z Learning Briefing 2022 \(esscp.org.uk\)](#)

Key learning:

- ✓ The legacy of relationships characterised by domestic abuse
- ✓ Information sharing about adults who may pose risks to children
- ✓ The importance of assessing background information
- ✓ Assessing risk to children from risky adults who are not household members, but part of the child's wider network

Unpublished LCSPRs:

Three completed LCSPRs awaiting publication due to pending family engagement and Home Office sign-off.

Family D: Joint LCSPR and Domestic Homicide Review (DHR). This large complex review, adhering to both LCSPR and DHR requirements, involved an extensive period of information gathering from single agencies and is working alongside a number of parallel procedures. The report is with the Home Office awaiting Quality Assurance.

Child E: final report anticipated August 2025 following completion of private law proceedings. Report to be shared with family prior to publication, anticipated in Autumn 2025.

Child F: Report complete and with family for review, anticipated publication Autumn 2025.

For all three reviews, action plans are in place and learning themes will be shared in advance of publication.

6.2 Learning from National Reviews

How the ESSCP responds to the learning from national reviews has become an integral part of the partnership's scrutiny programme. Generally, the ESSCP business unit and CRG are the leads to ensuring that the learning from national reviews is disseminated, that the learning and recommendations are considered in the context of safeguarding in East Sussex, and that appropriate actions are identified and taken forward. In response to national reviews published in 2024-25 the ESSCP:

- [Safeguarding children in Elective Home Education - Panel Briefing 3](#) tasked the 'education' lead in the CRG to undertake a desktop analysis of the effectiveness of local systems regarding safeguarding practice for children electively home educated, which was reviewed by CRG. Strengths and gaps were highlighted and shared with DSPs.
- [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel - I wanted them all to notice](#). CRG reviewed the learning and recommendations, noting similar learning identified through the local Child E and Child F LCSPRs. The ESSCP agreed to coordinate a Pan Sussex Workshop to explore national learning, learning from local reviews, and consider a pan Sussex approach to the recommendations. The workshop was held in June 2025 with recommendations for action to be shared at the at Sussex Safeguarding Children Executive in July 2025.
- ["It's Silent": Race, racism and safeguarding children - Panel Briefing 4](#) was published in March 2025. The report was considered by CRG in May 2025 and later agreement was taken by the Sussex DSPs to take a similar approach to the Sussex response to the national panel's report on CSA. CRG have also commissioned the QA Subgroup to undertake an analysis of the impact of race, culture and ethnicity in the context of safeguarding in East Sussex.

6.3 Quality Assurance Audits

The QA subgroup held **three audits** during 2024-25: an audit on the quality and robustness of responses to children who present at A&E due to deliberate self-harm; and audit on intra-familial child sexual abuse, with a particular focus on testing if learning from the Child Y LCSPR (published in 2023) has been embedded in to practice; and an audit on the quality and effectiveness of s47 strategy discussions.

Learning from the audits is shared at the ESSP Steering Group and one page learning briefings are shared with the wider ESSCP network and on the ESSCP website [Quality Assurance Group - ESSCP](#). QA audit reports are routinely shared with the Learning & Development Subgroup and Local Safeguarding Children Liaison Group to ensure that learning arising from audit activity is more efficiently and effectively embedded into local training and learning activity.

Key learning across audits include:

- That there are strong systems and multi-agency working in place to deal with the immediate needs, and safeguarding concerns, of children presenting at A&E due to self-harm.
- learning points from Child Y had been successfully embedded into practice: procedures were followed; relevant agencies were invited to attend or contribute to multi-agency meetings; there was clarity in the plan regarding how the child's needs were to be addressed; and ABE interviews are appropriately documented
- The explicit reason for a child not undertaking a Health Needs Assessment should be documented. This should include how the individual's sexual health needs have been, or will be, met by other means.
- The timing of a sexual abuse incident should not prevent the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) from being involved. Regardless of whether the incident happened recently or a long time ago, a referral should still be considered.
- More social workers need to be trained to participate in Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interviews. Currently, there are limited spaces available per year for social workers to attend ABE interview training. This is impacting on the availability of social workers to support and attend ABE interviews. From the cases audited there are examples of this impacting on the timeliness of ABE interviews and the focus on interviews being child centred.
- As a 'window on the system' there were concerns that in two-thirds of strategy meetings held, in the cases audited in the 'Regular Case File' audit, were held without input from general practice. This highlights learning for multi-agency practice regarding improved coordination and information sharing in particular from general practice.

Further details on the ESSCP QA audits in 2024/25 can be found in the **Assurance** section of this report.

6.4 ESSCP Training Programme

The ESSCP has continued to offer both classroom-based training courses as well as virtual sessions for multi-agency practitioners. This mixed mode of delivery is embedded within the training programme and continues to be positive, most practical, and cost effective for the growing number of pan Sussex events and in-house shorter courses.

Between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025, 49 training courses ran from the 'core' ESSCP programme (courses advertised via the East Sussex Learning Portal, ESLP) with 694 participants from a range of agencies.

The rate of evaluation returns from the 694 participants during 2024/25, spread over 49 courses where evaluation data is available is 69% (436 returns). The majority of participants continue to rate courses as either Excellent (66%) or Good (34%). Continued analyses of the more in-depth narrative helps the ESSCP Learning & Development Consultant to understand some of the

impact of training and where necessary to follow up with members of the training 'pool' to improve the training offer.

Five new ESSCP courses were introduced from April 2024.

- In April a new short briefing session on Harmful Sexual Behaviours was launched with support from the Education Safeguarding team, which highlighted the locally produced sexual behaviour screening resource and intervention programmes for children and young people.
- Also, in April '*Understanding Self-harm in Children and Young People and the East Sussex Toolkit*' was relaunched with support from the Mental Health Support Team, will become embedded in the ESSCP training programme.
- In July, following the relaunch of the updated Neglect Toolkit and Matrix, a new neglect training course was launched.
- In November '*Adult Mental Health and Suicide Risk Management*' was launched, which replaces the Parental Mental Health and the Impact on Children offer.
- From April 2022 the Government offered grants to Local Authorities to encourage Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC) focussed practice into local services for children and families. A rolling programme of workshops on RPC delivered to Children's Services was extended to include the wider SCP audience, and between April 2024 and March 2025, 71 people attended from across a range of agencies.

Collaborative working with Brighton & Hove and West Sussex continues with pan Sussex 'Improving Outcomes for Looked After Children', 'Suicide Prevention' and 'Safer Sleeping' training embedded into all SCP programmes. All three partnerships have reciprocal arrangements for shared learning, where certain courses are commissioned by one, but co-funded across the three. Other subjects offered on a pan Sussex basis include: Adultification, Equalities: Exploring Inclusive Practice - Racial, Ethnic and Religious Diversity, and LGBTQ+(B&H) and 'Abuse Linked to Accusations of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession'.

Pan Sussex Safeguarding Fortnight ran from the 18th to the 29th November. The ESSCP led a series of taster/Brief Bytes sessions across seven subject areas. 250 practitioners attended across a range of agencies: Education 69(28%), Health 68(27%), Children's Services 55(22%), Police 16(6%) and Other 42(17%) charities and other organisations.

The ESSCP training pool of practitioner is an exemplary committed group of people, going above and beyond their professional roles to bring a huge amount of knowledge, skill and experience to the partnership's safeguarding training courses.

ESSCP trauma informed training multi agency training is co designed and delivered with people who have lived experience of trauma, recovery and involvement of services.

The inclusion of lived experience in training in person, through video, research and discussion, as well as up to date theory and practice guidance about trauma informed working is important to ensure that content is relevant, informed and meaningfully supports practitioners to integrate learning from the training into their work.

It is of vital importance that the sharing of lived experience is purposeful to promote learning and development of participants and to achieve changes in practice positively. To ensure this, the emotional safety of those sharing lived experience, confidentiality and learning agreements are crucial.

A lived experience contributor to the training shared their view:

'I share my experiences in the hope that it will benefit even one child, foster carer or social work professional. What a great privilege that is for me to do, it has given me understanding and gratitude for the hard life that I have lived. My trauma has become my strength. I believe through love and continued work to understand each side of this field of work, the future of Looked After Children and those affected by trauma will be better for it.'

I get so much from doing training work, firstly how powerful it is as a Looked After Child to see how much effort is being put into improving practice. The mistakes of the past are being learned from and that fact should be known, the voiceless are being given a voice! I am hoping that my contribution will support workers to help families and children to recovery from intergenerational trauma and to support organisations and workers to become more trauma informed.'

I feel very supported by the facilitator, we sometimes laugh about her mothering and fussing about me. But we are running a trauma informed training course so it is important that I am supported, my well-being has always been the main focus and I feel in control. I have done so much spiritual work (and I continue to work hard with recovery work!) to arrive at the emotional stability to be able to give what I do in this work, and I appreciate the importance of looking after myself and each other.'

Annually, representatives from the Children in Care Council (CiCC) attend the Local Safeguarding Children Liaison Group (LSCLG) to share updates on activities they have undertaken, provide feedback from children and have an opportunity to raise issues with members of the children's workforce.

In November 2024, two representatives attended, and several areas were discussed by the group:

Children/young people should always be asked if they would like an advocate and/or Independent Visitor, this should be encouraged by workers, even if the initial response is a no

Rather than just focussing on one issue, such as mental health, it is important to consider all issues and how they link

The importance of joint working across services and young people's negative experiences of when this doesn't happen

Young people want a child centred approach, with professionals passing on only relevant information to others and ensuring they chase up / follow through with what has been agreed

The CiCC has a monthly newsletter for children in care, and CiCC members can be contacted directly by young people/children who want to comment/contribute, or via their social worker.

Other areas of work the CiCC have been involved in include:

- Improving Lives: Young People's Annual Conversation with NHS Sussex
- Junior Consultation with 7-11 year old children in care
- A National Voice
- East Sussex Youth Voice

7. Oversight and assurance

7.1 ESSCP oversight and assurance

One of the roles of the ESSCP is to ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding practice, which it does through evidence-based auditing, performance management, and self-analysis. The SCP ensures that there is continual evaluation of the quality of services being provided, as well as effective communication and joint working between all SCP partner agencies.

The **Quality Assurance (QA) Subgroup** has the lead role, on behalf of the Partnership, for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the work carried out by partners. It does this through regular scrutiny of multi-agency performance data and inspection reports, and through an annual programme of thematic and regular case file audits. This subgroup is chaired by the Detective Chief Inspector of the Safeguarding Investigation Unit in Sussex Police. From September 2025 the QA subgroup will be chaired by an Independent Scrutineer.

Examples of assurance undertaken by the ESSCP during 2024-25 include:

- The Partnership had an **ESSCP Independent Chair** between April 2024 and August 2024. The function of the Independent Chair was to provide challenge and scrutiny on the effectiveness of the lead partners and other relevant agencies, via the Board and Steering Group meetings, and to also work with the lead partners to ensure the effectiveness of the safeguarding work carried out by partners. The Chair acted as a constructive critical friend to promote reflection and continuous improvement and to provide support to that improvement. This included:
 - Scrutinising the learning and action plans arising from the three rapid reviews that were conducted in early 2024-25 and endorsing the recommendations to not conduct Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPRs). As part of this process they provided support and challenge to the National Safeguarding Panel on the rationale for local decision in one of the rapid reviews.
 - Reinforcing key multi-agency actions arising from LCSPRs, in particular raising concerns with agencies regarding their attendance and participation in Child Protection Conferences processes and requesting agencies consider their responsibilities.
 - Overseeing the partnership's development of independent scrutiny arrangements post the implementation of new MASA arrangements from September 2024. The scrutiny plan also provided an overview for lead partners on key areas of challenge to multi-agency working and progress with responding to national learning.
 - Escalating concerns about the long-term viability of the ESSCP budget with the Lead Safeguarding Partners.
 - Providing a bi-annual report to the Lead Safeguarding Partners on current key risks and issues to safeguarding children in East Sussex.
- In addition to the Independent Chair, the **three Lay Members** play a critical role in the partnership. The Lay Members act as further independent insight, on behalf of the public, into the work of agencies and of the partnership. As well as acting as critical friends at Board meetings, providing additional challenge and scrutiny, one Lay Member is a standing

member of the Case Review Group (CRG), and Lay Members are panel members for all LCSPRs. During 2024-25 Lay Members have also become formal members of the QA Subgroup and the newly established Education Subgroup. Their role has been critical at CRG, via the rapid review process and subsequent LCSPR process, in advocating the voice of the child.

- During 2024-25 the ESSCP established a Sussex Lay Member network with membership from the three lay members of the ESSCP and other lay members from the Brighton & Hove and West Sussex SCPs and three safeguarding adult boards. The network has provided peer support, a forum to share experiences and ideas on how to develop the lay member role, developed a consistent 'offer of support' to lay members from the safeguarding partnership business teams, and enabled better understanding of lay members roles and responsibilities.

I have been a lay member of the ESSCP for a number of years. The Partnership continues to impress me. Professionals remain committed despite the reduction in resources. They are willing to challenge each other and collaborate well. I am a member of the Case Review Group and discussions there are open, honest and detailed which leads to relevant and comprehensive learning. This year I, and one of the Partnership Managers, took part in workshops run by Research in Practice on behalf of the National Panel to consider safeguarding practice reviews. This was a good opportunity to hear how other authorities manage the process and confirmed that East Sussex does this better than most.

This year saw changes to the organisation of the Partnership in response to Working Together (2023). The partnership no longer has an independent chair and so no longer has someone who can take the role of independent scrutineer. The Lay Members and Partnership Managers have been considering ways in which we could increase our role in scrutinising the work of the Partnership. We are already critical friends, and members of working groups, but are keen to expand the scope of our involvement and to focus more on representing the voices of the public, particularly those of children and young people.

Harriet Martin

I am privileged to have represented the voice of children, families, and the general public in my role as a Lay Member on the Partnership for a further year. Over the last year I have been actively involved with the Education Sub-group and have attended the Early Years Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) network meetings. The Education Sub-group grows in strength and already demonstrates how committed and proactive our education partners are to being an integral element of the wider partnership. The Early Years DSL network, albeit newly formed, is an excellent example of the knowledge and value that practitioners provide.

The increased engagement with the Voluntary, Charity and Social Enterprise organisations is another exciting development for the Partnership, and once again shows how forward thinking and progressive the Partnership is.

Nick Porter

When Working Together to Safeguard Children was published in December 2023, extensive work was undertaken to shape future partnership arrangements. The team has since worked hard to meet the requirements set out in the report.

Earlier this year, I was invited to join the Quality Assurance subgroup who have been involved in a range of projects - for example, in February 2024 the group undertook a 'deep dive' audit involving front line professionals working with specific children and their families. They found that Child Protection Plans were in place, they were appropriate, robust, and supported the family to reduce risk demonstrating the high standard of work undertaken across the county.

What makes the work of the ESSCP so effective however, is the members themselves who, coming from a range of professional backgrounds bring a high level of expertise which is generously shared at meetings to ensure that safeguarding children is explored from a range of angles. There is an emphasis on proactivity, transparency and information sharing. In addition, a range of high-level learning opportunities have been developed which allow us all to remain current and informed.

It has been a privilege to be a Lay Member of the ESSCP to date and I look forward to continuing to support the work of the partnership knowing the high level of commitment and professionalism that shines through at every meeting.

Anne Moynihan

- In summer 2024 the ESSCP, along with Brighton & Hove SCP and West Sussex SCP, made requests to all pan-Sussex agencies to complete the updated '**section 11' self-assessment audit**. The purpose of the audit is to provide evidence of how they comply with s11, of the Children Act 2004, when carrying out their day-to-day business and provides an indication of how well organisations are working to keep children safe. Minor amendments were made to 'Standard 9' (recognition and response to risk) in the 2024 tool, in response to recent local learning from safeguarding reviews. Agencies were encouraged to be reflective and open about areas of safeguarding policy and practice that could be improved.

In spring 2025 an Independent Scrutineer, commissioned by the Sussex DSPs, held individual 'challenge' conversations with thirteen pan Sussex agencies who had completed their section 11 self-assessments. This scrutiny process included an initial review of agency's self-assessment by the Independent Scrutineer - highlighting measures where ratings might be over-optimistic, making requests for documentary evidence, identifying challenge questions for consideration - and triangulating information to responses provided in a 'staff survey' of front-line staff and managers about their perception of safeguarding practice in their organisation. This was followed up by individual conversations with agencies to review the information.

In their final report to DSPs, the Independent Scrutineer found the section 11 returns, when triangulated with challenge conversations and staff survey findings, provided DSPs with a:

- **Medium level of assurance** for the delivery of statutory duties.
- **High level of assurance** for the capacity to critically evaluate strengths and areas for improvement. A high level of assurance was observed in standards such as senior management commitment to safeguarding, the availability of clear organisational responsibilities, and effective safer recruitment practices. However, areas requiring

further improvement included the need to integrate the perspectives of children and families from strategic to the frontline.

Additional challenges were identified in supporting practitioners through reflective supervision and in understanding the impact of their decisions on children and families. The final report will be shared with DSPs in July 2025 for agreement on next steps.

- The QA subgroup held **three audits** during 2024-25:

The QA subgroup held an audit in May 2024 on the quality and robustness of safeguarding response on six cases of **children's attendance at A&E due to deliberate self-harm**, where there were known safeguarding concerns. The audit was agreed following the QA subgroup's monitoring of the attendance data on the ESSCP dashboard, noting the 34% increase over the previous year.

Of the cases audited, many of the children had attended A&E due to self-harm multiple times. Reasons for attendance included cutting to arms and legs and overdosing on insulin (as a form of self-harm). Two of the children arrived at A&E via ambulance.

Overall, the auditors were satisfied that there were strong systems in place to deal with the immediate needs of children presenting at A&E due to self-harm. The audit found that there was good working multi-agency working to respond to safeguarding concerns, particularly between ESHT, Social Care, the school and CAHMS. The audit also identified strong professional curiosity by staff in A&E, leading to timely and appropriate referrals.

Further work was identified to provide assurance that care plans are shared with relevant agencies on discharge, in particular schools and general practice, as this could not be evidenced in all cases that were audited.

It was also not clear from the audit what could have been done to prevent the young person from self-harming or if there was a more appropriate place for a child's mental health needs to be addressed. The chair recommended the audit findings were shared with the East Sussex Children and Young People Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Partnership Group to discuss further work required on identifying how self-harm can be prevented.

The QA audit group held an audit on six cases of **intrafamilial child sexual abuse** in December 2024. The audit theme was chosen to provide assurance that learning and recommendations highlighted in the [ESSCP Child Y Safeguarding Practice Review](#), published in 2022, had been effectively embedded into local practice. The audit focused on the following key questions:

- Were procedures followed?
- Were relevant agencies, such as SWIFT and cSARC invited to attend or contribute to multi-agency meetings?
- Was there clarity in the plan regarding how the children's needs are to be addressed?
- Was the Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interview carefully planned and appropriately documented?

The cases selected included children aged between six and 17 years old at the time of reporting the abuse. All the cases featured multi-agency involvement, a strategy discussion, and an ABE interview had taken place. The perpetrators of abuse in the cases audited included a biological father, stepfather, a parent's ex-partner and a family friend. Many of the children had also experienced self-harm, neglect, physical abuse and parental mental health issues. Two cases were Child in Need, and one was a Looked After Child.

The audit highlighted that the learning points from Child Y had been successfully embedded into practice: in all six cases procedures were followed; relevant agencies were invited to attend or contribute to multi-agency meetings; there was clarity in the plan regarding how the child's needs were to be addressed; and in five cases the ABE interviews were carefully planned and appropriately documented

The audit identified learning around recording and follow up of health needs, when a health needs assessment was not undertaken and issues with securing ABE trained social workers. The auditors also reflected on the challenges of supporting children and families when there are lengthy police investigations, noting that in two of the six cases audited police investigations had been ongoing for over a year.

The **QA subgroup recommended** that issues raised in the audit regarding ABE interviews were escalated to delegated safeguarding partners, and to request assurance on the plan for increasing the number of social workers trained. The audit also recommended that the ESSCP closely monitor the provision for holistic health assessments in the newly commissioned SARC service (from April 2025), and that the ESSCP seek assurance on the quality and robustness of multi-agency working in cases where there are lengthy police investigations or decisions to take no further police action.

The QA subgroup held a **regular case file audit** of six recent cases where a Section 47 enquiry had been initiated and/or a Strategy Discussion had been held, in February 2025. The ESSCP try to undertake a regular case file audit once a year as a 'window on the safeguarding system'.

The cases selected were children aged 4-15 years old at the time considered in this audit. The children had experienced domestic abuse, poor parental mental health, neglect and sexual abuse. Five children were on a Child Protection plan when the cases were selected, with one case open to the children's disability service.

The audit found that in all six cases there was timely and appropriate identification of risk, good collaboration and communication between partner agencies, and effective strategy discussions and section 47 enquiries. There were examples of excellent practice in individual cases, such as persistent and creative engagement of father and child in one case, use of professional networks, and examples of innovative engagement with children, particularly those with complex needs.

As a 'window on the system' the audit group were concerned that two-thirds of strategy meetings held, in the cases audited, were held without 'input' from general practice. This highlighted learning for multi-agency practice regarding improved coordination and information sharing in particular from general practice

- The QA Subgroup reviews the ‘**ESSCP Performance Dashboard**’ on a quarterly basis. The dashboard includes 60 performance indicators which are presented by: impact of multi-agency practice; children supported by statutory services; children with family related vulnerabilities; children with health-related vulnerabilities; and children whose actions place them at risk. Indicators are reviewed by the QA subgroup and escalated to the Steering Group if required (up to September 2024). Examples of indicators focused on by the QA subgroup in 2024-25 included:
 - Continued focus on self-harm and suicide. Indicator 42 (Attendances at A&E due to deliberate self-harm) was escalated to the ESSCP Steering Group to consider the significant increase in attendances by children to East Sussex A&E departments due to deliberate self-harm. An audit was held in May 2024 to review the quality and robustness of safeguarding response to these children. Learning and recommendations from the audit were shared with the with the East Sussex Children and Young People Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Partnership Group to discuss further work required on identifying how self-harm can be prevented. Next steps were aligned to respond to the significant rise in suspected child suicides, with a multi-agency workshop held in January 2025 to identify immediate and longer-term action to reduce serious self-harm and suicide.
 - At the start of 2024-25 agreement was made with Sussex Police to expand the range of data supplied for the ESSCP dashboard. New information included more detailed breakdown of sexual offences against children (including the age of the suspected perpetrator - which has helped with the partnership’s understanding of harmful sexual behaviour); improved data on domestic abuse crimes where children are involved (previously the QA subgroup had relied on MARAC information); and more detailed information about exploitation, use of custody, and diversion activity.
 - The subgroup has closely monitored the number of children with child protection plans over the past year in light of children social care’s plans to safely reduce the numbers following the previous period of unsustainable high levels. The QA subgroup has challenged children’s social care colleagues on the robustness of plans, the impact on re-referrals, and repeat child protection plans. In addition, the QA subgroup has overseen the introduction of new performance measures regarding quoracy and participation by multi-agency partners at child protection conferences.
- The Partnership has a key role in **evaluating the effectiveness of support for looked after children and care leavers** - it does this via the annual scrutiny of the ESCC Annual Looked After Child & Care Leaver Report, the annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) report, regular monitoring of key performance information in the ESSCPs quarterly dashboard, and via the Section 11 process. In addition, one of the ESSCP Lay Members met with the Operations Manager for Looked After Children to scrutinise data on the disproportionate representation of some ethnic groups in the cohort, following presentation of the annual report at Board.
- The Partnership has a key role in **evaluating the effectiveness of early help services** - it does this via the regular monitoring of key performance information in the ESSCPs quarterly dashboard.

7.2 Lansdowne Secure Children's Home

Lansdowne secure children's home is within the Partnership's local area. The unit underwent an extensive review and redesign of the staffing structure during a closure period from February 2023. The home reopened in February 2024.

It is a statutory requirement of the partnership to undertake a review of the use of restraint within Lansdowne. Regulation 2 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2015 defines 'restraint' means using force or restricting liberty of movement. Therefore, a review should consider the use of physical restraint along with other practices, such as the use of 'single separation' (where children are locked into an area) and 'managing away' (locked into an area with staff).

For 2024/25 the partnership reviewed the Lansdowne Restraint Dashboard, Managing Away Report, Action Plan and the Ofsted reports for inspections undertaken in 2024/25. The Restraint Dashboard detailed the number of restraint incidents (for individuals or as a unit), the reason for the restraint, the restraint holds used, and the location and duration of the restraint. The Managing Away report detailed the number of Managing Away incidents (for individuals or as a unit) and the duration of Managed Away. Lansdowne's action planning detailed extensive actions in relation to staff training, support and wellbeing, including observational practice supervision, significant incident debriefs, reflective and trauma informed practice and through record keeping.

From the reports provided by both the unit and the external scrutiny of Ofsted, the DSPs considered the unit's approaches to managing behaviour, episodes of single separation and use of restraint. The effective relationships between staff and the children were evident, with well-informed staff able to use support strategies in response to incidents. The partnership was encouraged to see that the manager and leadership team promote learning and development of the team, supporting staff to develop and grow, which includes attendance at ESSCP training programmes.

A full Ofsted inspection was undertaken in September 2024, with a follow up monitoring visit in March 2025. The full inspection in 2024 found the secure children's home provides effective services that met the requirements for **good**. Ofsted observed:

'Children told inspectors that they feel safe and always have someone that they can talk to if they are worried about something.'

Staff complete the mandatory training required by the organisation. They also receive bespoke training that is tailored to the needs of the children. Staff discuss safeguarding issues in team and one-to-one meetings. This provides opportunities for staff to discuss and reflect further about specific safeguarding issues. As a result, training is focused on care, support and the safeguarding needs of children.

*Incidents where **physical restraint** is used are closely scrutinised to ensure that the measure was appropriate and proportionate. Children are seen by a nurse at the earliest opportunity*

following an incident to ensure they are well supported. The manager and the leadership team scrutinise records closely and provide robust oversight. A debrief and evaluation takes place to consider how to prevent recurrence. As a result, learning and reflection ensure that staff practice is safe and that children are cared for.

The multidisciplinary ‘Safeguarding Huddle’ meetings provide an opportunity for leaders, managers, health team members and staff to regularly assess the care and risks that exist for each child. These discussions inform each child’s individual risk assessments and safety plans. This helps to ensure that staff are aware of each child’s vulnerabilities and what they need to do to help keep children safe. As a result, children have their individual needs met in a way that best helps to keep them and staff supporting them safe.

***Single separation** (where children are locked in an area when they meet the legal criteria of being a significant risk to themselves or others) and **managing away** (where children are with staff but are kept apart from their peers due to risk) are used minimally and appropriately. Children receive the support and care they need from staff during and following these times. When a restriction is used, there is clear rationale for the decision-making. There is robust management oversight and regular review to ensure appropriate practice, and the least amount of time is used.*

When safeguarding incidents or concerns occur, these are reported swiftly to the appropriate professionals, including the local authority designated officer. Records are comprehensively completed, and management oversight is robust with clear communication, expectations and learning outcomes. This helps to safeguard children and protect them from future harm.’

The Ofsted monitoring visit in March 2025 did not identify any concerns in relation to the use of restraint within Lansdowne.

Following helpful feedback in July 2025 from Ofsted, the ESSCP will be improving its practice with regards to the review of restraint practices at Lansdowne. For 2025/26 and ongoing, the LADO will be undertaking quarterly visits to Lansdowne to review reports and recordings from incidents to determine a view of practice and safeguarding. These regular visits will be accumulated to inform a ESSCP annual review for ESSCP Independent Quality Assurance Chair and Lay Member scrutiny.

8. ESSCP Budget and value for money

8.1 Actual Income and Expenditure 2024/25:

ESSCP BUDGET REPORT 2024/25	2024/25 Expenditure
Independent Scrutiny	£12,703
Business Managers and Administrator	£112,370
Learning & Development Consultant	£64,295
Administration	£1,300
Partnership Meetings/Events and Training Programme	£9,410
QA and Data Support	£18,000
Pan Sussex Procedures	£7,707
IT Software and Hardware	£1,316
Safeguarding Practice Reviews	£18,513
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£245,614

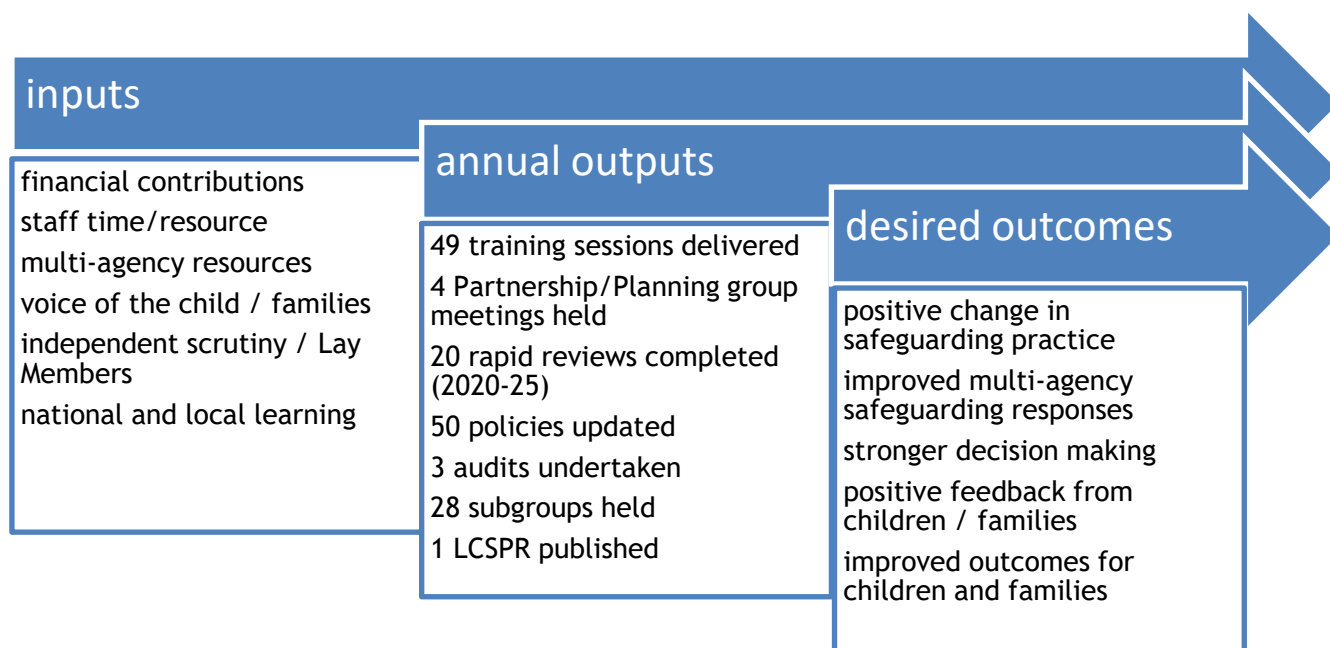
FUNDING BY SOURCE 2024/25	2024/25 Income
ESCC base budget	£139,600
ICB Sussex (NHS)	£53,987
Sussex Police	£36,750
Training income (cc3033)	£6,458
C/forward income - 23/24	£28,146
TOTAL INCOME	£264,941

NET (OVER) / UNDER*	£19,327
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* 2024/25 confirmed underspend of £19,327. This is largely due to unspent independent scrutiny funds post the Independent Chair's resignation, as well as efficiencies with venue sourcing and administration costs.

8.2 Evaluating value for money

Evaluating the value for money (VfM) of the ESSCP involves assessing whether the support to partnership arrangements are effective in a way that is *economically efficient*, *efficient in delivery*, and *produces impact*. The table below details the inputs, outputs and desired outcomes for the ESSCP:



In 2025/26 the ESSCP will be undertaking a full evaluation of the partnership arrangements, which will include an element of value for money, in particular for the learning & development function. This will be fully reported in the 2025/26 Annual Report.

Prior to this, by considering East Sussex's statistical neighbours (as per the table below), it is possible to compare broad indicators of value for money:

- East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership spend is £2.72 per child. Amongst statistical neighbours this is mid-range, with Northumberland being the highest at £6.25 and Essex the lowest at £1.20.
- East Sussex deprivation is moderate, and the county has a higher rate of children subject to a Child Protection Plan and rate of children looked after than many statistical neighbours. This combination suggests East Sussex is not a 'high spender' in terms of safeguarding children's partnership funding compared with neighbours, but has high levels of statutory intervention.
- Serious incident notifications are mid-high per capita: SI notifications per 10k are around 1.45 for East Sussex – not the highest, but above several neighbours. This can be interpreted two ways: a greater propensity to report/notify which is positive for safeguarding culture, or a higher incidence of serious incidents. This would require further work to determine, however the conversion rate from SI's to Local Safeguarding Practice Review is considered appropriate by the National Panel review of Rapid Review outcomes.

	0-17 year old population (ONS mid-year estimates 2023)	IDACI average score in 2019	Rate of children subject to CPP per 10,000 at end of March 2024	Rate of children looked after per 10,000 at end of March 2024	Serious incident notifications in 2022-2025	SCP spend 2023-24
East Sussex	103606	0.161	66.1	63.4	15	£282,251
Bury	43965	0.169	74.7	59.3	8	£262,280

Dorset	66022	0.121	50.7	56.3	7	£303,140
Devon	147313	0.123	36.0	58.6	26	£280,807
Essex	322812	0.144	31.8	67.8	6	£388,544
Kent	348332	0.158	44.8	35.6	43	£430,522
Cornwall	105686	0.164	19.4	78.2	15	£278,000
Norfolk	169965	0.155	34.8	67.6	13	£516,994
Northumberland	58812	0.174	28.5	50.6	4	£367,730
West Sussex	179008	0.110	65.3	74.1	20	£344,500
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	74285	0.147	36.0	73.5	6	£303,140

9. Appendices

9.A Safeguarding Context 2024-25

Impact of multi-agency working		
Family contacts (to SPOA and other excluding MASH)	↓	The total number of contacts was lower than in previous years (16,785 compared to last year figure of 17,855 and 2022-23 figure of 17,798).
Information gatherings by Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	↑	The number of multi-agency information gathering (MIG's) increased by 8.7% (24,676 compared to 22,699), continuing the year on year increase (between 2023-24 MIGs increased by 7%, the previous year by 8%)
Referrals to statutory social care	↓	The number of referrals to statutory social care decreased between 2024-25 and 2023-24 (4117 compared to 4400).
Privately Fostered children	↓	Following a peak of 50 in summer 2024, the number of Privately Fostered children fell to 22 at the end of 2024-25. Generally, the number of privately fostered children is lower than previous years.
Children supported by statutory services		
Children with a child protection plan	↓	The number of CP plans has steadily fallen throughout 2024-25 to a low of 614 at the end of March 2025. This figure was 11% lower than the March 2024 total of 688 plans and is the lowest monthly figure for over two years, from a peak of 766 at the end of February 2024.
Looked After Children	↑	The number of Looked After Children increased by 5% in 2024-24 compared to the previous year (690 compared to 655 across the year in 2023-24). The number peaked in October 2024 at 709, the highest figure in over two years.
Looked after Children who are Separated Migrant Children (formerly known as UASC)	↔	The number of Looked after Children who are Separated Migrant Children (formerly known as UASC) remained relatively stable across 2024-25 and to a similar level as 2023-24. The end of year figure of 71 was similar to the end of year 2024 figure of 69.
Young people at high risk of child exploitation	↓	The average number of children rated as RED within the SAFER process has remained fairly similar - there were an average number of 12 children rated 'red' in 2024-25 compared to 14 in 2023-24. Overall, the number of 'red' and 'amber' cases held at SAFER has decreased by 30% (21 at the end of 2024-25 compared to 30 in March 2024).

Sexual offences against children	N/A	There were 491 sexual offences against children recorded by Sussex Police in 2024/25: 267 where the suspect was an adult (59 rape, 208 other sexual offence); and 224 where suspect was aged 0-17 (79 rape, 145 other sexual offence).
Children with family related vulnerabilities		
Domestic abuse crimes where children were involved	N/A	There were a total of 2676 domestic abuse crimes recorded in East Sussex during 2024-25 year where children were involved. On average, children are involved in 44.1% of all domestic abuse crimes reported to the police.
Vulnerable young carers	↓	There were 310 children's social care assessments completed in 2023/24 where a young carer was identified as a factor, this is an decrease compared to 380 in the previous year.
Children educated at home	↓	The number of children school age children recorded as being electively home educated at the end of March 2025 is lower than the March 2024 figure (1626 compared to 1820). However, this still represents a 30% increase on the March 2023 figure of 1262. In November 2024 there was a two year high of 1958 children being electively home educated.
Children with health related vulnerabilities		
Children with disabilities with a Child Protection Plan	↑	At the end of March 2025 there were 31 children with disabilities with a child protection plan and increase of 47% on the previous end of year figure of 21. On average, the number of children with a CPP was 34 per month compared to 24 in 2023-24.
Children attending A&E due to self-harm	↓	739 children in 2024-25 attended A&E in East Sussex hospitals due to deliberate self-harm, a decrease from the 786 who attended in 2023-24 (however this still represents an increase from 692 in 2022/23 and 612 in 2021/22). There was a peak of 76 attendances in September 2024.
Contacts to SPOA CAMHS	↓	A total of 5566 contacts were made to the CAMHS 'front door' (SPOA) in 2024-25. This is a slight decrease from the previous year high of 5963.
Children whose actions place them at risk		
Missing episodes	↑	There were a total of 3065 missing episodes in 2024-25, a 29% increase on the 2023-24 figure of 2373.
Number of permanent exclusions from school	↓	There were a total of 97 permanent exclusions from school across the 2024-25 financial year, compared to 125 in the previous year. The 2024-25 figure has fallen back in line with the 2022-23 levels.

Young people entering the youth justice system	↓	79 young people entered the youth justice system for the first time in 2024-25 compared to 85 in 2023-24. The rate of FTE per 100,000 0-17-year-olds is still well below the target rate (50 per 100,000 compared to a target of 75)
Young people held overnight in Police custody	↓	There were 8 occasions of young people being held overnight in Police custody in 2024-25, slightly higher than in 2023-24, but lower than in previous years (11 in 2022/23 and 2021/22)

9.B: Partnership Group Membership - as at March 2025

NAME	TITLE, ORGANISATION
Carolyn Fair	Director of Children's Services, East Sussex County Council
Naomi Ellis	Deputy Chief Nursing Officer, NHS Sussex
Richard McDonagh (CHAIR)	Detective Chief Superintendent, Head of Public Protection, Sussex Police Service

Anne Moynihan	Lay Member, East Sussex SCP
Deborah Jenkin	Senior Business Administrator
Giovanna Simpson	Training & Development Consultant, East Sussex SCP
Harriet Martin	Lay Member, East Sussex SCP
Louise MacQuire-Plows	Manager, East Sussex SCP
Nick Porter	Lay Member, East Sussex SCP
Victoria Jones	Manager, East Sussex SCP

Alix Hews (AH)	Named Nurse Safeguarding Children - East Sussex, Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust
Alison Sheta / Stacy Pettit	SARC - Mountain Healthcare
Gail Gowland	Head of Safeguarding (Adults and Children), East Sussex Healthcare Trust
Gareth Knowles	SECamb Trust Safeguarding Lead, Clinical Supervisor
Gemma Brown	Named Nurse Safeguarding Children, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust
Jackie Dyer / Lynne Torpey	NHS England and NHS Improvement - South
Jo Tomlinson	Head of Safeguarding and Looked After Children, NHS Sussex
Joe Nhemachena	Deputy Director of Clinical Standards & Safeguarding, NHS Sussex
Judith Sakala	Named GP for Child Safeguarding, NHS Sussex
Michael Brown	Head of Safeguarding Children & Looked After Children, SPFT
Sally Pullen	Head Of Service, East Sussex School Health, Children's Integrated Therapies and Equipment Services Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust
Sergio Lopez-Gutierrez	Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children for NHS Sussex
Tracey Ward (Deputy Chair)	Designated Doctor Safeguarding Children, NHS Sussex
Vicky Ashby	General Manager, East Sussex CAMHS, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Vikki Carruth	Director of Nursing, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust

David Kemp	Head of Community Safety, East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service
Eleanor Gregory	Interim Head of East Sussex Probation Delivery Unit
Kate Adams	Service Manager, Sussex Children & Family Court Advisory Support Service CAFCASS
Kate Lawrence	Chief Executive Lotus Families East Sussex
Kyra Siddall-Ward	Executive Primary Headteacher, Cavendish Education Trust

Amanda Glover	Operations Manager, Adults Services, ESCC
Bob Bowdler, Cllr	Lead Member for Children and Families
Catherine Dooley	Senior Manager - Education Division, ESCC
Deborah Ennis	Assistant Director, Transformation and Commissioning, Children's Services
Douglas Sinclair	Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, Children's Services
Emma King	Consultant, Public Health, ESCC
Justine Armstrong - Smith	Safer Communities Manager, ESCC
Kathy Marriott	Assistant Director (Early Help & Social Care), Children's Services
Magdalena Kaiser	ESCC Children's Services - Safeguarding Unit Operations Manager
Rachel Doran	Legal & Coroner Services Manager, ESCC
Sam Harman	Safeguarding Adults Board Development Manager
Star Pswarayi	Head of Safeguarding Adults, ESCC
Vicky Finnemore	Head of Specialist Services, Children's Services

Charlotte O'Callaghan	Senior Policy Officer, Wealden District Council
David Plank	Director, Child + Adult Safeguarding, Wealden District Council
Peter Hill	Senior Policy Officer, Wealden District Council, Wealden District Council
Richard Parker-Harding	Head of Environmental Health, Rother District Council
Seanne Sweaney	Community Services Lead, Lewes District & Eastbourne Borough Councils
Verna Connolly	Head of People and Business Support, Hastings Borough Council

9.C Links to other documents

[East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)

[East Sussex Children and Young Peoples Plan](#)

[Children and Young People's Trust](#)

[Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner - Police and Crime Plan 24-28](#)

[East Sussex Safer Communities Partnerships' Business Plan](#)

[East Sussex Safeguarding Adult Board Strategic Plan 2024-2027](#)

[East Sussex Youth Cabinet](#)

[West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

[Brighton & Hove Safeguarding Children Partnership;](#)

9.D Acronyms

ABE	Achieving Best Evidence
ALWSPA	Abuse Linked to Accusations of Witchcraft and Spiritual Possession
AMH	Adult Mental Health
B&H	Brighton & Hove
CACE	Collaboration Against Child Exploitation
CAFCASS	Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CDOP	Child Death Overview Panel
CDRP	Child Death Review Panel
CME	Children Missing Education
CNB	Child Not Brought
CPP	Child Protection Plan
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CRG	Case Review Subgroup
CSARC	Children's Sexual Assault Referral Centre
CSP	Community Safety Partnership
CYPT	Children and Young People Trust
DA	Domestic Abuse
DAT	Duty and Assessment Team
DfE	Department for Education
DHR	Domestic Homicide Review
DSP	Delegated Safeguarding Partner
DSVA	Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse
EET	Education, Employment, or Training
EHE	Electively Home Educated
ES	East Sussex
ESFRS	East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service
ESHT	East Sussex Health Trust
ESSCP	East Sussex Safeguarding Children's Partnership
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HSB	Harmful Sexual Behaviour
ICB	Integrated Care Board
JTAI	Joint Targeted Area Inspection
LAC	Looked After Children
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
LCSPR	Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
LGBTQ	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender queer
LPS	Liberty Protection Safeguards
LSCLG	Local Safeguarding Children Liaison Groups
LSCP	Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership
LSP	Lead Safeguarding Partner
MACE	Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Group
MACS	Multi-Agency Child Safeguarding
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MASA	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
MCA	Mental Capacity Assessment
NAI	Non Accidental Injury
NPS	National Probation Service
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
PG	Partnership Group
PP	Perplexing Presentations
PSHE	Personal Social Health and Economic
QA	Quality Assurance

RPC	Reducing Parental Conflict
SAB	Safeguarding Adults Board
SAFER	Situation, Assessment & Actions, Family, Expected Response, Referral & Recording
SAR	Safeguarding Adult Review
SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centre
SCARF	Single Combined Agency Report Form
SCP	Safeguarding Children Partnership
SCR	Serious Case Reviews
SECamb	South East Coast Ambulance
SEND	Special Education Needs and Disabilities
SEROCU	Southeast Regional Organised Crime Unit
SLES	Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based
SOLAH	Safer Online at Home
SPFT	Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust
SPOA	Single Point of Advice
SSCE	Sussex Safeguarding Children Executive
STP	Sustainability and Transformation Plan
SUDI	Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy
SWIFT	Specialist Family Services
TASP	The Associate of Safeguarding Partners
TOR	Terms of Reference
VCSE	Voluntary Charity Social Enterprise
VFM	Value for money
WS	West Sussex
YOT	Youth Offending Team