



Avon and Somerset Police
SERVE.PROTECT.RESPECT.



North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership

Multi-agency Safeguarding Arrangements December 2024 – December 2025

1. Introduction

In December 2023, the Department for Education published revised statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, which focusses on strengthening multi-agency working across the whole system of help, support and protection for children and their families, keeping a child-centred approach while bringing a whole family focus, and embedding strong, effective and consistent multi-agency child protection practice.

The guidance requires the three safeguarding partners, local authority, Integrated Care Board and the police, to publish local safeguarding children's arrangements and to take equal responsibility for the coordination and effectiveness of those arrangements. Strong multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working is vital to identifying and responding to the needs of children and families. The following expectations have been developed to underpin this multi-agency working. They apply to all agencies and practitioners involved in safeguarding and protecting children. Specifically, these include police, local authorities, health services, probation services, youth offending services, education providers and childcare settings, and voluntary and third sector organisations.

These updated arrangements are cognisant of the following legislative requirements. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 and its accompanying guidance and Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2023, place a shared and equal duty on the statutory safeguarding partners to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area.

2. Geographical Area

These arrangements cover the geographical area of North Somerset. The NSSCP acknowledges that its health partners cover the local authority areas of Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire, and police partners work across the Avon & Somerset footprint comprising of 5 local authorities. Reflecting this, engagement and collaboration through our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements extends beyond the geographical borders of North Somerset.

3. Governance

3.1 Strategic Leadership & Accountability

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 has strengthened the requirements in relation to Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) and Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs). LSPs are: Chief Executives of local authorities, Chief Executives of ICBs and Chief Officers of police forces. DSPs should be appointed by each LSP for its agency and should be sufficiently senior to be able to speak with authority, take decisions on behalf of the LSP and hold their sectors to account.

The three statutory partners jointly leading the North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership are:

North Somerset Council

- Jo Walker, CEO - LSP
- Claire Shiels, Director of Children's Services – DSP

Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board (BNSSG, ICB)

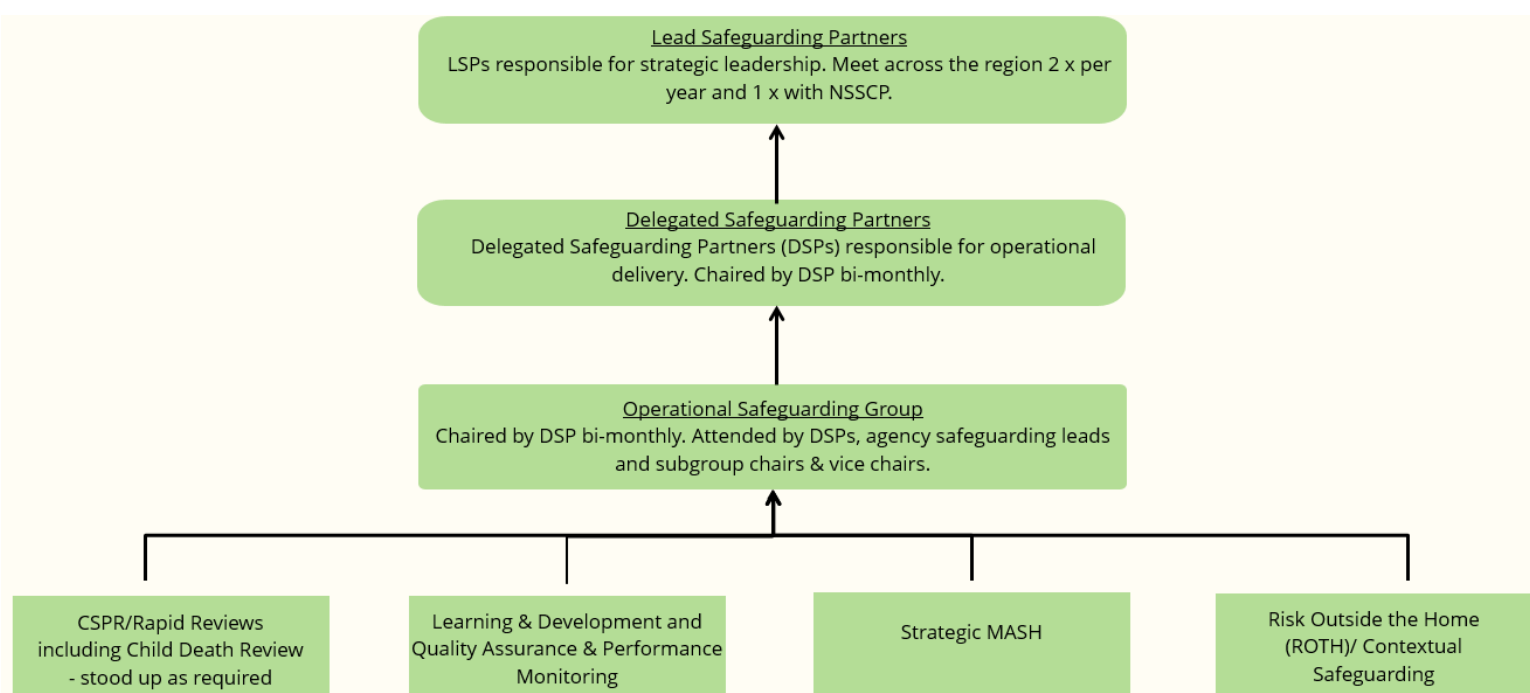
- Shane Devlin, CEO - LSP
- Michael Richardson, Deputy Chief Nurse – DSP

Avon & Somerset Constabulary

- Chief Constable Sarah Crew - LSP
- Rachel Shields, Chief Superintendent – DSP

3.2 Delivering multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

Structure of the NSSCP



Vision

The vision for the North Somerset Safeguarding Partnership is that children and young people who reside in North Somerset grow up in a safe environment, free from abuse and neglect. Children, young people, and their families will receive the right level of support & intervention, at the right time, by skilled professionals to ensure that children and young people have the best start to life, so that children and families have the ability to thrive and develop and an ability to reach their full potential.

Our Values

Transparency & Respect – we will foster a culture of openness, respect and transparency. NSSCP partners are required to work openly together, to learn from collective and individual experience, and to seek and receive assurance on the overall effectiveness of work to safeguard and protect children in North Somerset.

Integrity & Honesty – we will be honest and open with each other on areas of challenge, transformation and system change to inform decisions on future initiatives and collaborative working.

Challenge and Innovate - we will respectfully and constructively challenge each other to drive continuous improvement and deliver the best outcomes for North Somerset's children.

Collaboration and Partnership – The three Safeguarding Partners and all Relevant Agencies will work proactively, effectively, and collaboratively together. We will value differences to help drive improvements for children and young people.

Care and Listening to the voice and lived experience of the child - Everything we do will benefit children and young people in North Somerset. We will ensure that our work is child centred, and we continually seek to care and engage, and involve our children and young people and their families.

Lead Safeguarding Partners

Each LSP is responsible for discharging their own statutory and legislative duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. As leaders of their organisations and the statutory safeguarding partners, it is for LSPs to assure themselves that their local arrangements are effective and keep children safe. This includes systems of assurance and accountability within each of their organisations, including inspection findings.

LSPs are jointly responsible for ensuring the proper involvement of and oversight of all relevant agencies, and should act as a team, as opposed to a voice for their agency alone.

They should meet sufficiently regularly to undertake the core functions. To support them in this, the Lead Safeguarding Partners will meet twice a year in a regional meeting across the Avon & Somerset footprint. Once a year, LSPs for North Somerset will meet at a local level. The Delegated Safeguarding Partners, Independent Scrutineer and Business Manager will also attend this meeting to ensure strong links within the structure and the vehicle to escalate any concerns as necessary.

Quarter 1 and Quarter 3 –

cross boundary LSP meeting to include one police force, three ICBs and five local authorities

Quarter 2 –

local LSP meeting in North Somerset to include LSP for LA, Police and BNSSG ICB

DSPs and LSPs should have regular interaction and communication to ensure that the LSP has sufficient oversight and detail on key topics and issues to maintain their statutory responsibilities. Where a key decision needs to be made that will impact arrangements and/or services, this should involve the LSP. DSPs should escalate risks and issues they cannot resolve between them to the LSPs for resolution. This will ensure that accountability is clear, that strategic decisions are achievable and deliverable, and that progress is driven at all levels. Although the lead representatives have appointed named delegates, they remain accountable for any action or decisions taken on behalf of their respective agency.

Joint Functions of LSPs

- Set the strategic direction, vision, and culture of the local safeguarding arrangements, including agreeing and reviewing shared priorities and the resource required to deliver services effectively.
- Lead their organisation's individual contribution to the shared priorities, ensuring strong governance, accountability, and reporting mechanisms to hold their delegates to account for the delivery of agency commitments.
- Review and sign off key partnership documents: published multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including plans for independent scrutiny, shared annual budget, yearly report, and local threshold document.
- Provide shared oversight of learning from independent scrutiny, serious incidents, local child safeguarding practice reviews, and national reviews, ensuring recommendations are implemented and have a demonstrable impact on practice (as set out in the yearly report).
- Ensure multi-agency arrangements have the necessary level of business support, including intelligence and analytical functions, such as an agreed data set providing oversight and a robust understanding of practice.
- Ensure all relevant agencies, including education settings, are clear on their role and contribution to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

Delegated Safeguarding Partners

The DSPs should have the authority to carry out these functions, while ultimate accountability remains with the LSP as the individual responsible for the delivery of the statutory duties of the safeguarding partners.

DSPs should meet sufficiently frequently to undertake their joint functions:

- Delivery and monitoring of multi-agency priorities and procedures to protect and safeguard children in the local area, in compliance with published arrangements and thresholds.
- Close partnership working and engagement with education (at strategic and operational level) and other relevant agencies, allowing better identification of and response to harm.
- The implementation of effective information sharing arrangements between agencies, including data sharing that facilitates joint analysis between partner agencies.
- Delivery of high-quality and timely rapid reviews and local child safeguarding practice reviews, with the impact of learning from local and national reviews and independent scrutiny clearly evidenced in yearly reports.
- The provision of appropriate multi-agency safeguarding professional development and training.
- Seeking of, and responding to, feedback from children and families about their experiences of services and co-designing services to ensure children from different communities and groups can access the help and protection they need.

The DSPs have oversight of the quality and compliance of the delivery of the agreed shared priorities and have processes in place to provide assurance that multi-agency practice is reviewed and operating well, in line with these arrangements.

The DSPs meet bi-monthly alongside the Assistant Director for Education. This meeting is chaired by the Deputy Chief Nurse. A named colleague for each of the three DSPs attend in addition to or as a deputy for the DSP.

The purpose of the DSP meeting is to implement strategic priorities and make recommendations to LSPs where necessary; hold each other to account, agree the budget and annual plan; commission independent scrutiny, sign off documentation and reports, agree to Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews/Rapid Reviews and managing issues of escalation.

Operational Safeguarding Group

The wider Operational Group meet bi-monthly and includes DSPs, safeguarding leads in all agencies, the voluntary and community sector and education representatives. The Lead Member for Children's Services is invited as an observer. The independent scrutineer is invited to raise issues and suggest escalations to DSPs/LSPs. This meeting is chaired by the Director of Children's Services.

The purpose of this meeting is to oversee the delivery of the Partnership improvement plans, receive reports from the work streams below and raise issues of concern for work to be done and/or assurance. This group also provides assurance that any actions from partner agency reviews/inspections are monitored closely; they are added to the overarching action plan held at this operational group.

Delivery of work streams: subgroups

This comprises a mixture of standing subgroups and task and finish groups. There is a formalised mechanism for links between other safeguarding boards and partnerships to ensure work is coordinated and having impact. Reports from those are requested as required and a regular meeting for chairs of subgroups supports this.

Strategic MASH – Chair = Assistant Director for Children’s Services

The purpose of the MASH Steering Group is dedicated to ensuring the effectiveness and continuous improvement of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), including the Adolescent Safety Hub, which plays a pivotal role in safeguarding children. The group is committed to upholding quality and timeliness standards as outlined in Working Together 2023 and facilitating shared learning among overarching boards. Additionally, the Steering Group aims to:

- Facilitate the seamless operation of the MASH, ensuring active engagement from all partners, establish information sharing protocols and effective decision-making processes.
- Identify challenges and proactively seek solutions, always prioritising the wellbeing of children and families, leveraging intelligence across the Partnership.
- Maintain a focus on quality assurance, steering effective regular audit processes, supervision and reporting.

Quality Assurance & Learning and Development – Co chairs = Head of Safeguarding, BNSSG ICB & Head of QA & Safeguarding, North Somerset Council

As of January 2025, the Quality Assurance and Learning and Development Subgroups will merge. The purpose of the reformed subgroup is to coordinate matters arising from the meetings of the NSSCP’s Delegated Safeguarding Partners and safeguarding leads from all agencies, and to drive forward the strategic priorities of the NSSCP. There is a 2-year Performance Framework which illustrates a quarterly programme of multi-agency thematic audits. The themes for the audits are focussed on business plan priorities. The audits are contributed to by professionals from a wide range of agencies and learning from every audit is captured and shared with practitioners. In addition, the Partnership undertakes an annual Section 11 audit with a well-established regional approach. The group aims to:

- Ensure that the voice of children and young people is central to the work of the NSSCP
- Collate and analyse information relating to safeguarding performance across partner agencies to understand areas of prevalence and emerging trends
- Interrogate and interpret data to identify patterns or the need for further analysis
- Monitor and interpret relevant performance data from partner agencies working to safeguard children
- Make recommendations to the NSSCP in respect of aspects of performance to escalate identified risk
- Promote learning opportunities from national and local developments, case reviews, audits, internal and external challenge and scrutiny and share with workforce
- Develop effective and appropriate multi-agency courses that are driven by the needs of the workforce and national/ local developments
- Quality assure NSSCP multi-agency training and professional development activities and evaluate of the impact of this training
- Identifying and promoting a learning culture
- Develop training in response to feedback and audits
- Continue to embed neglect as a key area of learning throughout respective partnership training requirements
- Continue to educate multi-agency partners on the impact, outcomes and responses following trauma to children

Risk Outside the Home (ROTH)/Adolescent Safety – Co-chairs = Designated Nurse, BNSSG ICB, Head of Youth Justice Service and police TBC

The purpose of the ROTH Subgroup is to set the strategic objectives and priorities across the Partnership for responding to and reducing risk outside the home. This is achieved by taking responsibility for ensuring there is a shared understanding across partner agencies regarding risk

outside the home and the different types of contextual risk and oversight of the groups of children involved. The group aims to:

- Drive the implementation of the Adolescent Safety Framework across the Partnership to ensure a co-ordinated and structured response to ROTH, including all extra-familial harm (with the exception of terrorism and radicalisation which are overseen by a separate group).
- Maintain a focus on quality assurance and performance across key agencies, including oversight of relevant data to identify strengths and areas for development.
- Lead and promote a positive and supportive culture which is solution focussed and encourages constructive challenge and mutual development.
- Promote and ensure robust information sharing protocols between partner agencies.
- Report to the Delegated Safeguarding Partners and work with relevant subgroups to progress our aims and priorities.
- Ensure relevant information is shared effectively and in a timely manner across borders with Somerset, South Gloucestershire and Bristol when required.

3.3 Undertaking Statutory Reviews

Child Safeguarding Practice Review Subgroup – Chair = Designated Doctor, BNSSG ICB

As of January 2025, this group will be stood up as required. The purpose of the group is to respond to concerns raised by any multi-agency partner about serious incidents involving children. The group will decide (within 5 days) if it is required to notify the National Panel and conduct a Rapid Review. The group must:

- Ascertain whether serious incidents involving children meet the criteria for a Rapid Review i.e. that the child has died, or serious harm and abuse is known or suspected.
- Ensure that any Rapid Review considers if a CSPR is required to identify the potential for national learning or any new learning locally.
- Initiate and oversee any such reviews, summarise learning and create action plans to deliver change.
- Report learning to the Lead & Delegated Safeguarding Partners to quality assure reports and provide critical challenge of the recommendations from reviews.
- Ensure quality assurance of reviews and monitoring of action plans related to the recommendations are held within the Operational Safeguarding Group.
- Ensure the Quality Assurance and Learning and Development Subgroup monitor effective and timely completion of the actions arising from Rapid Reviews and CSPRs ensuring evidence of positive practice change.
- Ensure the Quality Assurance and Learning and Development Subgroup identify training needs and develop and implement training.
- Ensure the Quality Assurance and Learning and Development Subgroup triangulate evidence of impact through the self-assessment audits, which demonstrate how learning from reviews has been shared and embedded in practice.

There is an agreed principle that the NSSCP can stand task and finish groups up to complete work and reach an end point as required. The ambition is to continue to explore ways of working across the BNSSG and Avon & Somerset footprint further so that where it makes sense to do so, we reduce the need for health and police colleagues to attend multiple meetings of the same subgroups. Where possible, this work would be thematic.

Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) Preparation

This is a strategic group that meets regularly and has oversight of the multi-agency preparation for JTAI inspections chaired by the Head of Service for Quality Assurance & Safeguarding in North Somerset Council. This includes the evidence requirements, self-audit and dry run of data for each new theme to provide assurance that the partnership is prepared in the event of an inspection. The Quality Assurance and Learning and Development Subgroup links with this preparation group as the audit group for inspections.

3.4 The Role of Education

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 requires that partnerships strengthen the input from education providers at operational and strategic level decision-making. Safeguarding partners are under a duty to make arrangements to work together, and with other partners locally including education providers and childcare settings, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.

As a result of independent scrutiny in December 2023, the Partnership had already begun the work to invite an education representative into the Partnership to strengthen and engage practice. Chairs of existing education groups for Headteachers across all age groups are invited to the Operational Group of the NSSCP on a bi-monthly basis from January 2025. Their role has a 2-way responsibility to take information and learning back to their respective headteachers' groups and to bring the voice and perspective of education to the Partnership. A standard safeguarding agenda item should also be added to the existing education meetings so that key information can be shared from and escalated to the NSSCP.

- The NSSCP recognises that their insight and cooperation are vital in delivering the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- The educational landscape in NSSCP is challenging as most establishments are multi-academy trusts, a number of which span local authority borders.
- The NSSCP works closely with the local authority Director of Education and the Safeguarding in Education Lead to ensure there is consistent representation and messaging.
- The NSSCP will continue to seek assurance on schools' safeguarding practice through the Section 175 self-assessment audit and through data drawn from inspection and monitoring visits.

4. Youth custody and residential homes for children

There are no prisons or youth offending institutions in North Somerset, however, the Youth Justice Service works closely with the NSSCP and recognises its duties to those children who may be detained in other local authority areas.

There are currently 5 residential children's homes in North Somerset that are owned by 4 Independent providers. North Somerset Commissioning currently actively work with 4 of these providers, who offer homes to 6 North Somerset young people.

5. Independent Scrutiny Arrangements

Safeguarding partners must ensure that there are arrangements for effective independent scrutiny in place for their local area. (Working Together to Safeguard Children 23 para. 89-97) Statutory partners and relevant agencies will review progress against the priorities identified in the strategic plan and identify areas for scrutiny, with a focus on achieving outcomes. The NSSCP will be appointing an Independent Scrutineer to provide an objective assessment of the effectiveness of the arrangements, drive continuous improvements and provide assurance that the arrangements are working effectively. It is important that the scrutineer

provides parity in the work undertaken for each function of the NSSCP to provide effective support and challenge at strategic and operational level. They must ensure that statutory duties are being fulfilled; that quality assurance mechanisms are in place; that learning is effectively implemented across systems and that the voice of children and their families is considered, informing policy and practice.

A framework will ensure that scrutiny is evidence-based, and feedback considered and acted upon by safeguarding partners. The scrutineer will consider the impact of the LSPs and DSPs through their strategic insight and there would be opportunity for independent test and check at practitioner level and child level. The role will also contribute to the wider system of accountability. The scrutineer will attend the Operational Group and provide updates for DSP and LSP meetings with an additional function to provide scrutiny to the QA and L & D group. Furthermore, the ambition is to commission themed scrutiny pieces across the region.

6. Use of data and intelligence to assess effectiveness

The NSSCP will also receive assurance of the effectiveness of arrangements through:

- The annual Section 11 audit report
- The annual Section 175 audit report
- Quarterly performance data, specifically from the statutory partners
- Multi-agency and single agency audit findings
- Single service performance reports
- Multi-agency and single agency evidence of impact and implementation of practice change following learning reviews
- Annual reports from Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Officers (ISRO) and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

The NSSCP will use this intelligence to:

- Help set priorities for the partnership
- Identify strengths and areas for development across the system
- Identify the need for change to policy, service design and practice
- Support any necessary changes

7. Multi-agency training offer

The NSSCP will oversee the provision and delivery of the multi-agency training calendar through the Quality Assurance and Learning and Development Subgroup. The course content is evaluated, designed and delivered by the multi-agency safeguarding training officer.

Training is based on a learning and development plan, developed through a training needs analysis. The plan considers inter-agency targets, emerging issues identified through the NSSCP, and how it can support the development, knowledge and competencies of practitioners in addition to training that may already be provided through a single-agency route. All partner agencies have a responsibility to provide training single-agency training which will complement the multi-agency arrangements.

There is a charging policy in place for multi-agency training, which is subsidised by the statutory partner contributions. Evaluations of training delivery and impact on practice as well as training uptake by partners is monitored, collated and submitted to the NSSCP in a quarterly report.

8. Working in Partnership

Relevant Agencies

The NSSCP will include as members, all organisations, agencies and individuals that will enable it to be effective in safeguarding children and discharging its duties.

The NSSCP will comprise of the named statutory partners and those agencies listed below, each of whom has been chosen due to the services and support they provide to children.

- Avon Fire & Rescue Service
- Avon & Somerset Constabulary
- Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust
- Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board
- CAF/CASS
- Charitable and Voluntary organisations
- Domestic Abuse service providers – Next Link
- Drug and Alcohol Services – With You
- Education providers- all schools, colleges and early years settings including the virtual school
- General Practitioners and primary care professionals
- Housing providers – local authority and private sector
- National Probation Service
- North Bristol NHS Trust
- North Somerset Council Services – Children & Adult Social Care, Public Health, Community Safety Partnership, Education Services, Lead Member for Children and Young People
- Advocacy Service – Junction 21
- Public Health
- Residential Care
- South West Ambulance Service Foundation Trust (SWAST)
- University Hospitals Bristol & Weston
- Violence Reduction Partnership
- Youth Justice Service

Relevant agencies should have a clear understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and co-operate with partners to improve, implement and monitor effectiveness of the arrangements. They should share information and data about safeguarding issues and concerns affecting those involved with their organisation to contribute to local priorities.

LSPs will determine when the relevant agencies will be reviewed.

9. Funding Arrangements

The requirements of 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023' are likely to result in the need for increased funding. It states, 'The LSP should agree on the level of funding needed to deliver the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. This includes consideration of business and analytical support, independent scrutiny, infrastructure, and core functions including local children safeguarding practice reviews, multi-agency training and learning events. It is the responsibility of the LSP to ensure that adequate funding is allocated and spent in line with agreed priorities. Funding contributions from the statutory safeguarding partners should be equitable and agreed by the LSP. Funding for the arrangements should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that they can meet the financial needs of the arrangements.'

The NSSCP is funded by the three statutory safeguarding partners. Contributions are agreed annually. There is a budget review underway to ensure all current expenditure is still required and that the budget enables

the Partnership to discharge its duties. LSPs have agreed a position for the coming year (police will increase to 25%). DSPs will be working together in the next 12 months to develop better, simpler, value arrangements across the wider area and LSPs will come together to negotiate an equitable funding formula going forward.

The cost accrued in relation to Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) sit outside of the primary budget. Cost of these reviews is recovered through an equal split between the 3 statutory safeguarding partners for CSPRs. The safeguarding partners will identify rapid review report authors across the three agencies to ensure there is sufficient resilience to meet the 15-day timeline as required by Working Together 2023. It is acknowledged that the partnership has not been challenged to date in terms of multiple, concurrent reviews taking place. As we do not have the resources within the business unit, the expectation is that the partners lean in with mutual aid and all agencies step in.

The NSSCP Business Manager is responsible for funding received from statutory partners. This includes invoicing, receipt of funding and budget monitoring. Regular reports to the Delegated Safeguarding Partners are prepared, setting out the allocation of financial resource and the impact of expenditure.

The NSSCP Business Unit currently comprises of 1 FTE posts of Business Manager, which is hosted by North Somerset Council. The Partnership recognises the need for further business support, and this will be addressed in the 2025/2026 budget.

NSSCP Budget 2024/2025		
Agency	%age contribution	Value
Local Authority	52%	£50,981
Integrated Care Board (ICB)	20%	£19,050
AWP	8%	£7666
UHBW	4%	£3842
Police	16%	£15,696.20
Total		£97,235.20
Multi-agency training income (estimated)		£20,000
Total		£117,235.20

10. Threshold Documentation

Meeting the needs of children and young people who require additional support can be complex. The North Somerset Effective Support Guidance outlines agreed thresholds for early help, targeted and specialist services across North Somerset to ensure that children, young people and their families get the right help at the right time. There is a requirement within Working Together to Safeguard Children 23 for children’s partnerships to clearly explain the thresholds to their colleagues and partners to help them understand and apply each level. Simply put, the threshold is the point at which consideration is given, either by practitioners, children, young people and/or their families as to the type of support required. The guidance is not prescriptive but is intended to be a tool to help consider the strengths, needs and risks that exist with the family and their wider systems, and then, in turn consider where the right level of support should sit.

This guidance aligns with our multi-agency arrangements and assurance of the application of thresholds is sought through the Operational Group. The document is reviewed on a 3-yearly cycle in consultation with statutory and relevant partners.




11. Dispute Resolution

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, clearly states that safeguarding partners and relevant agencies must act in accordance with the arrangements for their area and will be expected to understand each other's differences of views and resolve such differences locally. LSPs should therefore agree a system to resolve disputes and issues between partners within multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

The NSSCP expects and will support organisations and agencies to challenge appropriately and to hold one another to account when differences of opinion relating to the effectiveness of arrangements arise. The multi-agency 'Issue Resolution Policy' clearly defines the process that is required to be followed for professional disagreements in relation to safeguarding.

Signatures:

Lead Safeguarding Partners:

Jo Walker	Sarah Crew	Shane Devlin
Chief Executive Officer	Chief Constable	Chief Executive Officer
North Somerset Council	Avon & Somerset Constabulary	BNSSG ICB
		

Delegated Safeguarding Partners:

Claire Shiels	Rachel Shields	Michael Richardson
Director of Children's Services	Chief Superintendent	Deputy Chief Nurse
North Somerset Council	Avon & Somerset Constabulary	BNSSG ICB
