



Induction to the North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSSCP)

Background

Child Safeguarding Partnerships—what they are, why they matter, and how they work in practice to protect children and young people.

What is child safeguarding?

Child safeguarding refers to the measures and policies in place to protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and harm. It's about creating safe environments where children can thrive, and it places a legal and moral responsibility on individuals and institutions to promote the welfare of children.

Safeguarding is governed by a range of laws and policies, but one of the most significant recent changes came from the Children and Social Work Act 2017. This act introduced a new framework for how safeguarding arrangements are coordinated at the local level.

What are Child Safeguarding Partnerships?

Under the 2017 Act, the previous model of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) was replaced by local safeguarding partnerships. These are formal partnerships between three key agencies:

1. The local authority
2. The police
3. The health service – integrated care board

These three are known as the 'statutory safeguarding partners', and they share equal responsibility for setting out the local arrangements to keep children safe.

They must work together with other relevant agencies—such as schools, early years settings, social care providers, and the voluntary sector—to coordinate safeguarding work.

Each area of England is required to publish its own arrangements, which must be transparent and outline how agencies will work together to identify and respond to the needs of children.

Why did the system change?

The shift from LSCBs to local safeguarding partnerships was recommended in a 2016 review by Sir Alan Wood, which found that the previous model was often ineffective. LSCBs were criticised for being too large, bureaucratic, and inconsistent in their effectiveness.

The idea behind the new model was to ensure clearer accountability, stronger collaboration, and more flexible arrangements tailored to the needs of local children and families.

This reform aimed to streamline processes and ensure that safeguarding decisions are made by those with the statutory power and resources to act.



Current Picture

Latest government guidance

In December 2023, the latest guidance for partnerships was published [Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance](#). This details the 'legislative requirements that apply to individuals, organisations and agencies'... 'This statutory guidance sets out key roles for individual organisations and agencies to deliver effective arrangements for help, support, safeguarding, and protection. It should be read and followed by leaders, managers and frontline practitioners of all organisations and agencies... 'It is essential that these arrangements are strongly led and promoted at a local level, specifically by elected local area leaders, including Lead Members of Children's Services, Mayors, Police and Crime Commissioners and through the commitment of chief officers in all organisations and agencies, particularly those representing the three safeguarding partners'.

How do these partnerships operate?

Child Safeguarding Partnerships operate under a shared vision and set of priorities. They hold regular meetings, develop multi-agency safeguarding policies, and carry out reviews when serious incidents occur.

A key function of these partnerships is to conduct Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews—these were formerly known as Serious Case Reviews. These reviews are triggered when a child dies or is seriously harmed and abuse or neglect is suspected. The aim is not to assign blame, but to learn lessons and improve systems and practice across agencies.

Another important aspect of partnership working is data sharing. Agencies are expected to share information effectively to identify patterns, respond to risks, and monitor outcomes.

Local partnerships also engage in multi-agency training and quality assurance processes to make sure professionals are competent and confident in their safeguarding roles.

Challenges facing partnerships

While the new model has shown promise, it's not without its challenges.

One of the biggest issues is inconsistent implementation across different areas. Some partnerships are very effective, with strong leadership and clear accountability. Others struggle due to lack of resources, poor communication, or unclear roles.

Another issue is workforce capacity. Professionals are under a lot of pressure, and multi-agency working requires time, training, and commitment from all sides.

Information sharing can also be tricky. Despite clear guidance, fears about breaching data protection laws sometimes prevent professionals from sharing vital information—often at great cost.

There's also the challenge of hearing and amplifying the voice of the child. Despite being at the heart of safeguarding, children's views and lived experiences are still not always fully represented in policy and practice decisions.

The role of education and community

Schools and educational settings are key safeguarding partners. They are often the first to notice changes in behaviour or signs of harm. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) plays a critical role in liaising with local safeguarding partners and making referrals.



The wider community also has a role to play. Charities, faith groups, sports clubs, and youth organisations all interact with children and should be involved in creating safe environments and identifying concerns early.

NSSCP

The local arrangements

Working Together to Safeguard Children 23 states that every local authority will have a Safeguarding Partnership who will deliver the Multi-Agency safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) [Agreed NSSCP MASA arrangements December 2024](#) for the local area.

Who's Who?

The 3 statutory agencies for the North Somerset Partnership are:

- Health – integrated care board (ICB) that covers the geographical area of Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire (BNSSG)
- Police – Avon and Somerset that covers the force wide area (5 x LAs)
- Local authority – North Somerset Council

Led by Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) and Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs).

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
- Liz Hughes, Chief Superintendent – DSP

The Business Unit supports the work of the Partnership.

Business Manager – Zoe Gartland

Business Support Officer – TBC

Our Independent Scrutineer, Kevin Gibbs has joined the NSSCP in February to provide an objective assessment of the effectiveness of the arrangements, drive continuous improvements and provide assurance that the arrangements are working effectively. He provides parity in the work undertaken for each function of the NSSCP to provide effective support and challenge at strategic and operational

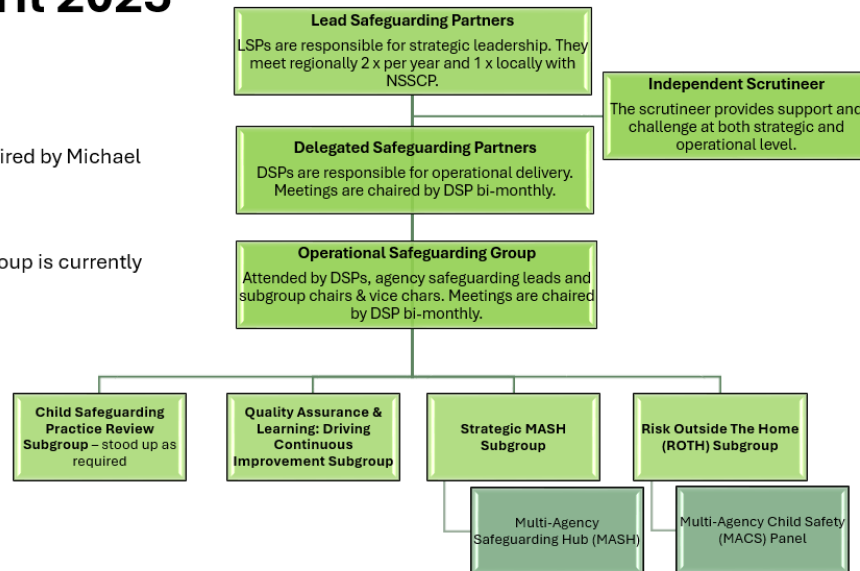


level. Kevin ensures that statutory duties are being fulfilled; that quality assurance mechanisms are in place; that learning is effectively implemented across systems and that the voice of children and their families is considered, informing policy and practice.

Structure April 2025

The DSP meeting is currently chaired by Michael Richardson, Deputy Chief Nurse.

The Operational Safeguarding Group is currently chaired by Claire Shiels, DCS.



Operational Safeguarding Group

This group includes DSPs, chairs and vice chairs of subgroups, and additional partners – education, voluntary and community sector - Voluntary Action North Somerset (VANS), Safeguarding Adults' Board (SAB), Community Safety Partnership (CSP), other health agencies, housing services, drug and alcohol support services, Domestic Abuse support services.

This group is designed to be a 2-way process. Reports, information and updates come to this group from all partners; this will inform future training, the newsletter and the website [Childrens Safeguarding Partnership](#) Emerging concerns from agencies should be shared via this route too. Key headlines are shared from the DSPs and the work plan of the Partnership is updated, allocated where required and unstuck. There is an expectation and responsibility for members to share information with their own agencies and ensure information flows both ways.

Subgroups

The work of the subgroups is to drive forward the priorities of the North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership and to carry out the work to make this happen.

CSPR – a statutory group stood up when a serious incident occurs and a learning or Rapid Review is conducted.



Strategic MASH – 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.

Quality Assurance and Learning: Driving Continuous Improvement – to support the priorities of the NSSCP through an excellent learning and development offer rooted in a robust quality assurance framework.

ROTH – 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.

Chairs and vice chairs of subgroups

CSPR – Dr Richard Williams, Designated Doctor, BNSSG, ICB and Shelley Caldwell, Head of Service for Family Support & Safeguarding, NSC

Strategic MASH – Jane Anstis, Assistant Director NSC and Alison Jenkinson, Regional manager for Lighthouse Safeguarding Unit, ASP

Quality Assurance and Learning: Driving Continuous Improvement – Faye Kamara, Head of safeguarding, BNSSG, ICB and Jo Ratcliffe, Head of Service for QA & Safeguarding, NSC

ROTH – Michael O'Connor, Head of Service for Youth Justice, NSC, Toyah Carty-Moore, Designated Nurse, BNSSG, ICB and police colleague TBC

Vision

The vision for the 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.

How do we assure ourselves?

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