

**Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership  
Annual Report  
2022/2023**



Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership



**DORSET  
POLICE**



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The best partnerships aren't dependent on a mere common goal but on a shared path of equality, desire, and no small amount of passion.

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SARAH MACLEAN

GRACIOUSQUOTES.COM

# Foreword

I am delighted to welcome you to the 2022/23 Annual Report of the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership. This is our fourth annual report under the 2018 multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

Our report reflects the safeguarding commitments and hard work of all executive partners, professionals and volunteers alike, as we work together to address shared priorities. These priorities are shaped by the issues facing children and their families across the areas of Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

Last year we reviewed the business support functions of the partnership to assure ourselves that we were as efficient and effective as we could be and working in-line with national best practice. This year we have reviewed the partnership structure itself and refreshed the child safeguarding multi-agency arrangements that were put in place in 2019. Providing a partnership platform across the Pan-Dorset area, which has a long tradition of working well together, across unitary boundaries, remains the preferred operating structure. Collaborating effectively on key strategic themes including statutory reviews, training, MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub), scrutiny and business support provides an efficient and effective structure. Some areas of improvement were identified in the review, which have now been approved for swift action. Well established placed-based delivery boards operate in both local authority areas ensuring that the operational delivery is locally focussed and respects the accountabilities for partners.

Commissioning and publishing Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR) to drive improvement and learning across all agencies is vital work of our partnership. A thoughtful and skilful thematic review of intra-familial child sexual abuse published in March 2022 led the way for a hugely successful conference in April 2022, where delegates were able to learn directly from the review author, strengthening our approach to the valuable learning from the review.

In another significant review this year, surrounding an unaccompanied child arriving from Afghanistan, a broad range of risks and issues were highlighted for services working with unaccompanied asylum seeking children. The partnership worked together, commissioning a strategic assessment and developing a multi-agency plan to heighten our understanding of a growing issue and improve our multi-agency response to keeping children safe.

The PDSCP has worked with local Community Safety Partnerships and Safeguarding Adults Boards to ensure that our priorities are refreshed annually and aligned where they need to be. Informed by this joint working the PDSCP executive refreshed priorities at our annual business planning event in February where it was agreed to focus on: violence as experienced by children, including domestic abuse, sexual assault and knife crime, neglect and emotional wellbeing.

In my role as independent chair of the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership, I witness first-hand how willing and able executive partners are at challenging each other, providing an open environment, where honest and constructive dialogue enables continuous improvements in policy, procedure and practice. Children and young people are genuinely at the heart of their work and every opportunity is taken to learn and reflect on practice to reduce risk and improve outcomes.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone involved in or dedicated to work surrounding and supporting children and young people across the county in whatever role you play.

James R. Vaughan

Independent Chair

Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership

# Demographics

## Dorset Area

The population of the Dorset Council area is 379,578. The 2021 census shows a population rise of 4% (from 2011 census). There are 72,662 children and young people aged 0-19 representing 19.1% of the total population. There was a drop of 3% in the child population. 29.6% of the population are aged 65 and older (nationally 18.6%) and the working age population aged 16 to 64 represents 55.2% of the population.

English is the main language in Dorset with 98.2% of the population in 2021. There are though over 80 languages spoken across Dorset, however residents for whom non-English is a main language make up a very small proportion of the population. The top 5 languages spoken in Dorset are English with Polish, Romanian, Nepalese and Bulgarian spoken by 0.7% of the population. According to the 2021 Census 93.9% of the population are white British, a decrease of 1.7% from the 2011 Census with the remaining 6.1% of residents from Black and Minority Ethnic groups (national 25.6%), this rises to 7.8% for children and young people (aged 24 years and under). Just over half of our residents who are from an ethnic minority, report as being 'White Other'. This is mainly made up of White European residents.

The beautiful landscapes and towns and villages of Dorset can conceal hidden challenges: there are significant areas of deprivation, mostly in urban areas (mainly Weymouth and Portland). Eleven areas in Dorset are within the top 20% nationally for high levels of multiple deprivation, ten of these within Weymouth and Portland (data from 2019). In 2018, South Dorset was ranked at 533 among 533 parliamentary constituencies in England for social mobility with some 70% of the population of the constituency living in Weymouth & Portland. There is rural deprivation linked to isolation and difficulty accessing housing, transport and essential services. The Children's Society estimates that approximately 23% of Dorset Children are living in poverty with up to 45% in some wards (2021).

There are 47,575 children from Reception to Year 14 in Dorset (May 2023 school census). Dorset has 158 Schools Academies, Maintained and Free. 83% are good or better (82% of Academies are Good or Outstanding, compared to 86% of Maintained schools). The Key Stage 2 (2022) performance was in the bottom quartile nationally and Key Stage 4 (2022) performance (progress and attainment 8) was in the second lowest quartile. The gap between disadvantaged young people and their peers is still not where we need it to be and faced further challenge due to the pandemic and the impact on school attendance.

Crime is generally low with Dorset being the sixth safest place to live in the UK in Dorset. First Time Entrants of young people to the Criminal Justice System are relatively low in a national context.

## Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Area

BCP Council area population is 400,200 residents.

The BCP area has a smaller proportion of 0-15 year olds (16%) compared to England (19%). 65,000 children under the age of 16 are living in the BCP area. The number of under 16s is set to decrease by 7% between 2018 and 2028, with the decrease being seen predominantly in the 0-5s and 6-10s age ranges. The area, however, has a larger proportion of residents aged 65 or over (22%) compared with England (19%), although a smaller proportion than neighbouring Dorset. The working age population aged 16-64 (62%) is marginally larger than the percentage in the South West (61%) but slightly smaller than England (63%).

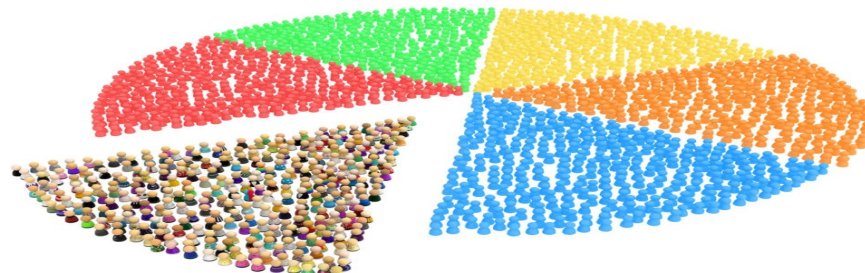
Since the 2011 Census the population in the BCP area has become more diverse with over 80 languages being spoken across the area. The top 5 languages spoken in BCP (excluding English), are Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish and Hungarian. According to the 2021 Census 82% of the population are white British, a decrease of 6% from the 2011 Census (88%), the remaining 18% of the population in the 2021 Census are reported to be from a non-white British background.

The largest religious group in the BCP area is Christianity with 46.8% of residents identifying as Christian, down from 59.7% in 2011. Around 4 in 10 (42.2%) identify as having no religion, this has increased by 12.9% from 29.3% in 2011. The second largest religion in the BCP area according to the 2021 census, is Islam – 1.7% up from 1.2% in 2011.

Like many places BCP is an area of contrast, including some of the most affluent and most deprived areas in the country. Just under 9,000 children live in families with a low income (i.e. reported income is less than 60% of national median). This is 10% of those aged 0-19 and 13% of those aged under 16. As well as this, using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) indicator, BCP has around 8,000 children aged 0-14 and 2,700 15-19 year olds living in areas that fall into the 20% most deprived in the country. The greatest levels of deprivation are in the wards of Boscombe West, Kinson, East Cliff & Springbourne, Alderney & Bourne Valley and Muscliffe & Strouden Park. In contrast 15,900 0-19yr olds live in an area in BCP that is amongst the 20% least deprived in England.

There are 98 state funded schools within the BCP area: 66 primaries; 22 secondary schools (including 4 Grammar schools) and 3 all-through schools. There are a further 5 special schools, 1 alternative provision and 1 pupil referral unit. In January 2023, 94.4% of primary and secondary schools were rated as Good or Outstanding for overall effectiveness. Educational attainment for all key stages is above the national average. The authority has three universities within its area with around 22,000 students. Bournemouth University (2021/22) has around 18,000 students with 16% of its student population from outside of the UK.

In 2021, the BCP area had a crime rate of 110 crimes per 1,000 residents. Crime numbers are typically higher in the town centre areas, in part due to the night-time economy.



# Governance

The Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (PDSCP) was set up to meet the requirements of *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*.

The PDSCP recognises that to achieve the best possible outcomes:

- Children and families should receive targeted services that meet their needs in a co-ordinated way.
- There is a shared and equal responsibility between organisations and agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in the Pan-Dorset area.
- The responsibility to join up services locally rests with the safeguarding partners who have a shared and equal duty to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children across the Pan-Dorset area.

The PDSCP enables a single, joined up approach in addressing vulnerability and risk for children and young people across Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

## **a) The Statutory Safeguarding Partners**

For each of these partners, Working Together 2018 defines the lead representatives from each as the Local Authority Chief Executive, the Accountable Officer of the Clinical Commissioning Group (now Integrated Care Boards - ICB) and a Chief Officer of Police.

For the Pan-Dorset area the lead representatives are:

- Matt Prosser, Chief Executive Dorset Council
- Graham Farrant, Chief Executive BCP Council
- Amanda Pearson, Chief Constable Dorset Police
- Patricia Miller, Chief Executive NHS Dorset

As set out in Working Together 2018, the lead representatives can delegate their functions, although they retain accountability for any actions taken on behalf of their agency. In the Dorset/BCP areas, the lead representatives have identified the following senior officers in their respective agencies who have responsibility and authority for ensuring full participation with these arrangements:

For the Dorset and BCP areas, the agency representatives are as of September 2023:

- Theresa Leavy, Executive Director for People - Children Dorset Council
- Cathi Hadley, Corporate Director for Children's Services BCP Council
- Mark Callaghan, Assistant Chief Constable Dorset Police
- Debbie Simmons, Chief Nursing Officer NHS Dorset



These representatives or delegates:

- Speak with authority for the safeguarding partner they represent.
- Take decisions on behalf of their organisation or agency and commit them on policy, resourcing and practice matters.
- Hold their own organisation or agency to account on how effectively they participate and implement the local arrangements.

The PDSCP has an Executive Group chaired by an Independent Chair and Scrutineer, James Vaughan, and is attended by the agency representatives from the four statutory safeguarding partners.

The Executive Group supports and compliments the place based multi-agency arrangements within both Dorset and BCP areas:

- **Dorset's Strengthening Services Board**

The Strengthening Services Board is the local delivery arm for the Dorset area in the Pan-Dorset Partnership. This is chaired by the Chief Executive of Dorset Council with representatives at executive level across the partnership. The Board meets 6-weekly to oversee progress and impact of the partnership plan and ensure improved outcomes for children and young people. The Board oversees multi-agency safeguarding activity within the Dorset area and highlights from each Board is shared with the PDSCP Executive (see Appendix 1 for structure).

- **BCP Safeguarding Children Partnership.**

The BCP Safeguarding Children Partnership is the multi-agency delivery arm for the BCP area in the Pan-Dorset partnership, it is chaired by the BCP Council Director of Children's Services and meets every 2 months. The group oversees multi-agency safeguarding activity within the BCP area and reports into the PDSCP Executive (see Appendix 2 for structure).

In addition, the PDSCP Executive commissions specific task and finish groups in line with their priorities or emerging safeguarding themes and this has included in 2022/23 work in relation to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, Trauma-Informed Practice and Gender identity.



## b) Review of arrangements

In December 2022 the PDSCP Executive agreed to review the PDSCP multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including the geographical area, covered by the partnership.

The PDSCP Business Manager (who had been appointed in September 2022) led the review and this included direct consultation with a range of stakeholders.

The review recognised that the partnership was able to fulfil its statutory functions and several strengths were identified including:

- Relationships were positive and mature between agencies.
- The Executive was able to offer effective challenge and support to each other.
- The Independent Chair was seen as an effective facilitator and able to work with senior leaders and provide scrutiny in some specific areas.
- There had been work on governance and most sub-groups were working effectively in place-based arrangements.
- The partnership had agreed priorities although these required refreshing.
- There were areas that used data and quality assurance information effectively and an agreed place-based dataset came to the partnership.
- CSPRs were noted as a significant area of strength across the partnership with effective reviews being undertaken in timescales with clear learning identified.
- There was an agreed set of core policies and procedures.
- There was an effective training programme, and this was self-funded including some courses being delivered for free.
- The website was seen as a good source of information and a way of accessing policies, procedures and reports.
- The business team was seen as effective at supporting the work of the partnership.
- There were information sharing arrangements in place although these required updating.
- There was an effective child death overview process.



The review recognised that there were some areas that required further development. This included:

- Revising and reviewing governance arrangements to ensure they were current and fit for purpose, including Pan-Dorset and place based arrangements.
- To further strengthen and develop BCP place-based arrangements.
- Developing mechanisms to effectively engage with partners in education.
- Developing how the partnership identified its priorities, implements and reviews them.
- Developing the quality assurance process and agreeing a revised multi-agency dataset that sat alongside other quality assurance information.
- Developing the role of independent scrutiny of the PDSCP.
- Developing mechanisms for the voice of children and families to inform safeguarding practice.
- Building on mechanisms for the PDSCP to hear the voice of frontline practitioners to help evaluate safeguarding practice.
- Ensuring that the training and development offer met the needs of all agencies across the partnership including demonstrating the impact of training and development on improved outcomes for children and families.
- Developing the communication strategy including the website.
- Developing the Business support team including increasing capacity.
- Developing an annual report that was strategically driven and met the need across the Pan-Dorset area and each area.

These are being progressed through an action plan for the PDSCP that has been overseen by the Executive.

### **c) Geographical area**

The decision was made in 2020 by the partner agencies that the geographical area covered by the multi-agency safeguarding arrangement should be aligned with the geographical areas currently covered by Dorset Council and Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Councils. The approach taken was in line with several Local Authorities whose safeguarding arrangements covered more than one local authority area.

The Executive took the opportunity to review the area covered by the partnership to ensure that it was still fit for purpose. The Executive noted some challenges to the current arrangements including whether there was sufficient clarity about the relationship between Pan-Dorset and place-based arrangements and whether the priorities of the Pan-Dorset arrangements could meet the place-based priorities.

The PDSCP Executive recognised the advantages of the current arrangements. It was noted that the two Local Authority areas covered the historic County of Dorset boundaries. There was a long history of cooperation across the area and children and families recognised the geographical area. Children and families use services across the borders e.g., hospitals, schools etc. In addition, the area was covered by one police force and one Integrated Care Board. The partnership recognised that they could work most effectively when they worked together, and changes to the geographical area covered by the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements were not required to ensure that the partnership was able to effectively meet its functions. Further structural change could also create a distraction from the fast-paced improvement work underway.

# Training and Development

The PDSCP training and development team continues to provide multi-agency training across the BCP and Dorset geographical areas.

The newly appointed PDSCP Training Co-ordinator provides a key link with the both place-based learning groups (Dorset Learning Hub and the BCP Quality Assurance Learning Group) and the PDSCP Business team to ensure that the training reflects the needs and priorities of the partnership. The training programme is linked to the revised PDSCP priorities for 2023/25 and to the findings from local reviews, audits, other quality assurance activity and relevant national developments.

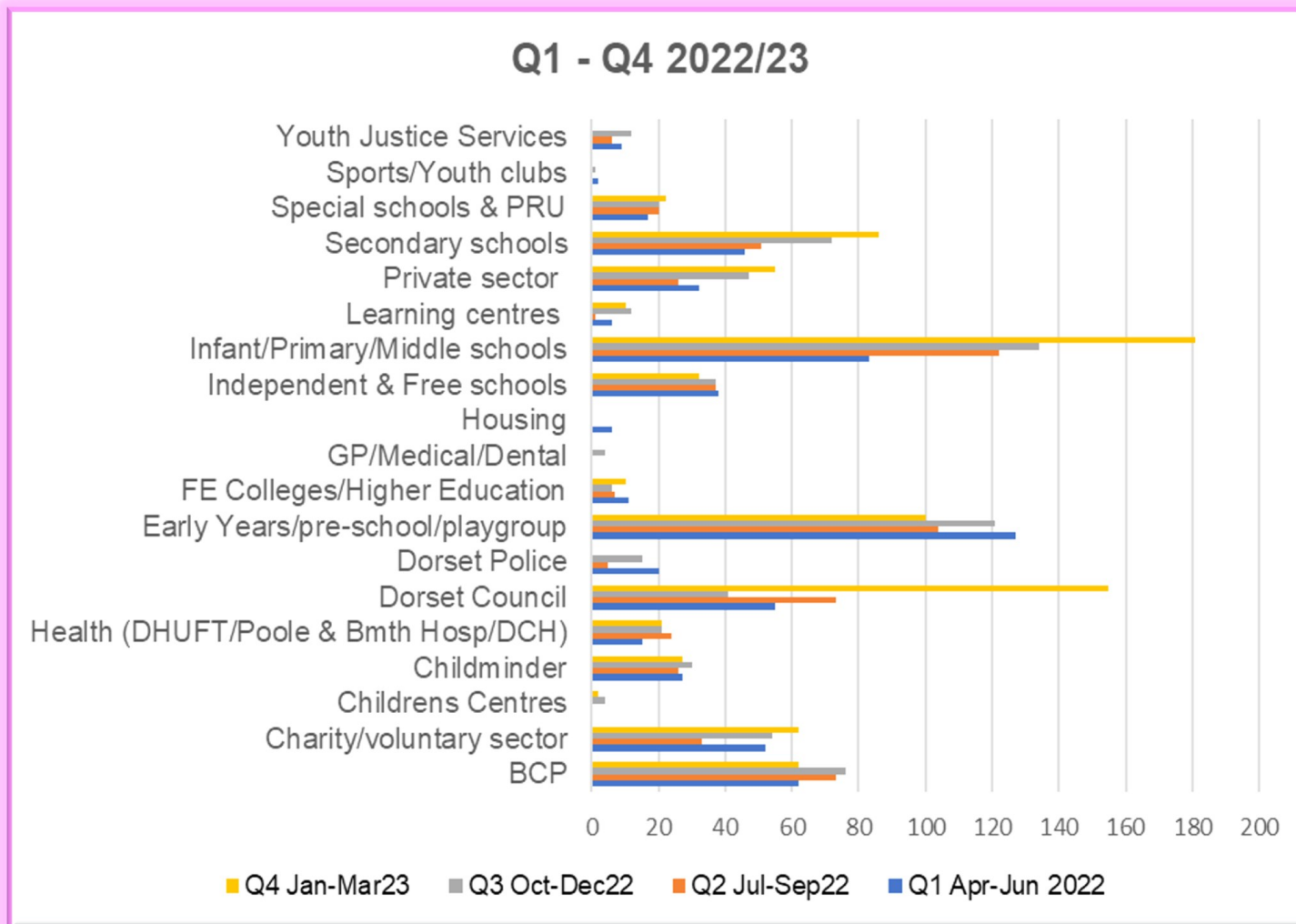
The development of regular reporting ensures that the partnership is aware of training activity, the take up and impact of the training.

## 2022-2023

In 2022/2023 delivery of training continued to be virtual however now some courses are return to face to face. During 2022/2023 the PDSCP delivered 156 courses with an attendance of 2876 multi-agency practitioners. Occupancy rates for these courses averaged 91.5% of capacity which was an increase of 1.5% on 2021/2022.

Local authorities, schools and early years providers continue to make up the biggest cohort of staff attending courses. In response to requests, training continues to be offered on Saturday mornings and twilight sessions to fit in with working patterns of some practitioners e.g., voluntary sector and early years staff.

This graph displays the participation of training across the partnership by agency or sector.



## Looking Ahead 2023/2024

For 2023/24 there has been a 5% uplift on course fees linked to the training charges increasing and staff wage increase. The training fees are now £52.50 for a half day of training and £79 for a full day. Charities or community interested Companies (CIC) can apply for free places to ensure they can access trusted safeguarding training. The policy has been changed to include all charities not just those registered (as per the charity Policy).

### 2023 - 2024 Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership Training Offer as of 26/06/2023

- Safeguarding Level 2
- Working Together
- Working Together Update
- Neglect
- Safer Recruitment and Safer Recruitment Update
- Managing Allegations
- Online Safety
- Missing Exploited Trafficked Children (MET)
- Child Exploitation Basic Awareness
- Supervision for Schools
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Awareness
- Gender Identity, Trans Awareness
- Intel Training
- Trauma Informed Practice
- Intra-Familial Child Sexual Abuse Training Programme - 5 course offer
- Working with Sex Workers
- Domestic Abuse

## Closing the Learning Loop

The role of the newly appointed Training Coordinator has strengthened the relationship for the partnership through close working with the place-based business support officers with a shared understanding of the PDSCP priorities. Monthly meetings are in place to review actions from learning which have arisen through Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR's), the National Independent Review of Children's Social Care and other local and national safeguarding issues, case and thematic audits and service developments.

Examples of these actions include:

- Disseminating changes in local and national legislation or guidance to all relevant training providers ensuring that training content is kept up to date.
- The 7-minute Designated Officer Briefing (LADO) which was produced as an outcome of the CSPR 'Charlie' has now been incorporated into relevant training.
- The Cultural Competencies Standards are referenced in the PDSCP training offer to support practice.
- Developing a suite of training on Intra-familial Sexual Abuse an outcome of the CSPR 'The siblings'

Qualitative data from evaluation feedback demonstrates that practitioners are using their learning when they return to the workplace. Courses are quality assured by the Training Coordinator who provides 3-month post training feedback to the Dorset Learning Hub and BCP Quality Assurance and Learning Group who review the feedback, impact, performance of providers and course design and planning.

There are established place-based arrangements that ensure that learning from quality assurance activity includes practitioners e.g., through learning circles and practitioner events. This ensures that there is opportunity for frontline practitioners to reflect on the learning including how they can develop practice to improve outcomes for children and young people.



# Local and National Learning

During 2022/23 the PDSCP has reviewed and updated its quality assurance process. This will ensure that the partnership continues to learn from a range of sources including reviews, inspections, case audits, feedback from practitioners, feedback from children and families and findings from data. In addition, the partnership is committed to developing effective plans based on their learning and consistently assessing impact. The key question is whether we are improving outcomes for children and families.

The partnership also responded to national learning including reviewing practice, policies and procedures in relation to the findings from the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson. In addition, they have responded to the national review in relation to Safeguarding Children with Disabilities in Residential Settings.

The findings from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and other learning events can be found on the PDSCP website [Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews](#) and [Learning Reviews](#).

Key areas of learning for the partnership included:

- The need to continue to develop trauma-informed organisations and workforce. The partnership has developed some key-principles for organisations in relation to trauma-informed practice, provided tools for organisations and is developing further training.
- Helping practitioners develop their understanding of working with young people, families and systems when there are issues relating to gender identity. This has included gaining the views of children and young people, delivering training and we are developing guidance for practitioners and organisations.

The partnership has also developed their learning in relation to working with intra-familial child sexual abuse including working to improve identification and interventions with children and families and this was the focus of a Conference in 2022.

We have also been working with practitioners to improve their understanding and knowledge of working with children where parents are sex workers, which was a focus of a Conference in 2022.



Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children was an area of focus in 2022/23 . This included the need to ensure there was an effective system to: undertake age assessments, assess and intervene with young people including providing effective education and placements. There was a need to ensure that there were improvements in culturally competent practice.

The partnership identified the need for practitioners, when working with children with disabilities, to ensure that they were effectively safeguarding them including understanding the impact of a disability on a child and where concerns may be linked to abuse or neglect.

There was a need to ensure the effective use of the designated officer (LADO) to protect children especially where there were concerns about transferable risk. This led to the development of a 7-minute briefing.

The partnership has also developed a mental health toolkit for practitioners.

The partnership is focusing work on the experience of older children/young people including in relation to their experience of neglect and domestic abuse, extra-familial harm including knife crime and mental health issues. This was the focus of a Conference in October 2023.

Further learning is also being identified in relation to the risks to babies in relation to physical harm and domestic abuse.



# Section 11 Audits

A programme of section 11 audits was completed in 2022 involving both statutory and non-statutory partners across the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership. Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (PDSCP) has a statutory function under Section 14 of the Children Act 2004 to **'to coordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Partnership for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area; and to ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.'** The PDSCP have chosen to complete a section 11 audit as part of assessing themselves against this statute.

The audit involved the statutory partners (Police, Health and the two Local Authorities) and non-statutory partners (for example, the Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service, Prisons and Public Health) completing an audit tool which consisted of 7 main assessment areas which mirror the requirements of agencies in the statutory Working Together to Safeguarding Children (2018) guidance and providing an individual action plan where areas of improvement were identified. Challenge and support sessions were then held between the statutory partners and then with the non-statutory partners. All sessions were chaired by the Independent Chair for the PDSCP, as a way of holding each agency to account and providing scrutiny to their completed audits. Each agency agreed to take their own action plans through their own quality assurance mechanisms to progress, and the PDSCP Business Support team would request updates for completion of these actions and monitor progress.

Some non-statutory partners required some additional support around the completion of their section 11 audit and this has highlighted where some non-statutory partners may require greater involvement within the Partnership. The PDSCP undertook some focussed work with the prisons within Dorset in respect of their safeguarding arrangements.

Overall, there was some key learning identified in relation to the process of completing the section 11 audit and some areas include:

- Revision of the audit tool is required to ensure this is as succinct as possible, can be translated to individual agencies' own set up and is aligned to the PDSCP priorities.
- The challenge and support sessions to be more effectively structured to allow for agency challenge and scrutiny; this could include advance preparation of key questions to be asked of agencies.

Consideration of bespoke challenge and support sessions for non-statutory partners that cover several different Partnerships, and how this could be co-ordinated across the region.

# Funding

The PDSCP is committed to the principles of equitable and proportionate funding with shared and equal responsibilities. There is a dedicated Business Team to support the work of the partnership across the Pan-Dorset area. Following an external efficiency and effectiveness review of the Business team in 2022, a proposed restructure introduced a new single Business Manager across the Pan-Dorset area and introduced further administrative support. Both new roles have been successfully recruited and the remaining roles in the team made permanent.

In February 2022 the Executive approved a recommendation from the review for the need for all partners to contribute an equal share into the PDSCP budget and agreed for 2023/24 that this would be £75,785 per partner. This would mean a total budget of £303,140. It was noted that this would be an increase for the police of £26,940, for Dorset Council of £6,853 and for Health of £785 with a reduction for BCP Council of £7,639.

At the end of 2022/23 the PDSCP carried forward a small surplus of £21,697, due to the unpredictability of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, which fluctuate from year to year.



# What is CDOP?

Statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 defines child death review partners as “local authorities and any clinical commissioning groups for the local area as set out in the Children Act 2004 (the Act), as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017”

When a child dies, in any circumstances, it is important for parents and families to understand what has happened and whether there are any lessons to be learned.

The responsibility for ensuring child death reviews are carried out is held by ‘child death review partners,’ as defined within Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2018 and set out in current legislation

Child death review partners must make arrangements to review all deaths of children normally resident in the local area and, if they consider it appropriate, for any non-resident child who has died in their area. Child death review partners for two or more local authority areas may combine and agree that their areas be treated as a single area for the purpose of undertaking child death reviews.

Child death review partners in Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole, Dorset and Somerset have agreed to treat Pan Dorset and Somerset as a single area, resulting in a joint Pan Dorset and Somerset Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) undertaking child death reviews for Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole, Dorset and Somerset children.

# Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

During the 2022-23 CDOP reporting year, we were notified of the deaths of 37 Pan-Dorset child residents. The breakdown of these 37 is as follows:

- 22 Dorset area children
- 15 BCP area children

This is in comparison to 2021/22 where we received 23 notifications. There are no apparent themes or patterns to account for this rise. We await the annual report from the National Child Mortality Database (NCMD) to compare our rise with national figures.

During the year, the Pan-Dorset and Somerset Child Death Overview Panel, met 8 times and reviewed a total of 69 cases. 6 panel meetings per year would usually be convened, with 2 additional panel meetings added in response to inquests being resumed following Covid-19. In addition, there were cases coming through following a delay within an out of area hospital trust. Of the 8 panel meetings, 4 were dedicated neonatal cohorts.

The 69 cases reviewed consisted of the following breakdown by local authority:

- 19 BCP area cases
- 18 Dorset area cases
- 32 Somerset area cases

The Pan-Dorset Child Death Review Learning Event was initially planned for November 2022 but was postponed due to availability. The event instead took place in April 2023 and had more than 50 attendees, feedback was entirely positive. There were a number of requests for the event to be recorded and the slides shared, in response, the recording and presentations were shared with a further 100 colleagues who had registered their interest. There was a demand for similar events to be held in the future, and as such, we will continue to pursue making this an annual event.

## **Plans for the 2023-24 CDOP year:**

The neonatal panel has expanded to include Obstetricians from UHD, this will provide further expertise in addition to enhancing challenge and the opportunity to share learning.

# Priority Areas 2022/23

**Priority Area:** Tackling Child Exploitation, early intervention, effective disruption resulting from collaborative decision making.

⇒ **Dorset Council**

In Dorset the 'Children at Risk of or Linked to Exploitation' (CAROLE) model has been in place since April 2019. The Child Exploitation Action Plan implementation is managed by the CAROLE Tactical Group who meet monthly, and this is overseen by the Child Exploitation Strategic group which meets quarterly. Dorset have established Child Exploitation Champions roles within each locality area and across central services. Evidence of good practice has included:

*In response to an increase in boys carrying knives and other weapons in parts of Dorset in 2023 a 12-week multi-agency programme focusing on young men's journey from adolescence to adulthood has been developed to address the issues. This has been designed by targeted youth workers with input from the Targeted Sexual Health team, Circles Southwest, REACH, Dorset Music Hub, Escapeline, Isaiah Dreads and the Airborne Initiative. The programme is complimented by positive activities, targeted interventions, educational resources and creative workshops.*

*In the south of the County there were escalating concerns in respect of weapon carrying and exploitation. In response to Early Help services, Targeted Youth Workers and Children Social Care worked closely with schools to implement a programme of preventative work including education and awareness. This work was extended to include work with families and the community. Joint work is also being undertaken in this area with Reach within schools and youth clubs to focus on harm prevention with a rise in drug overdoses.*

*In the north of Dorset successful multi-agency working identified and disrupted the risk of sexual exploitation to a group of young girls from a high-risk adult male.*

*Multi-agency working led to disruption of a group of concerning adults from Somerset who were frequenting areas in the south of Dorset and were linked to several females in the area. Young people at risk were identified and safety planning put in place. Effective liaison between agencies and the two counties also led to police action to disrupt the adults.*

*In response to an emerging group of vulnerable young people identified as weapon carrying and forming of a 'gang', multi-agency planning took place. Actions have been identified including funding to the youth drop-in centre for targeted preventative work with the group and mapping and referral to the boy's project.*

*Work is ongoing with British Transport Police (BTP) to identify and disrupt exploited young people travelling on the train lines. This has included detached youth workers undertaking sessions on the train lines with BTP. Regular information sharing is taking place including a recent example of sharing information re: a high-risk young female who is regularly using the trains to travel to London and we believe experiencing exploitation.*

The Child Exploitation strategy is in the process of being refreshed and is to become an Extra-Familial Harm Strategy. The Child Exploitation risk assessment was reviewed and the revised tool is being launched in 2023. This tool will assist practitioners with assessing the wider risks of extra-familial harm.

## ⇒ **BCP Council**

In Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole there has been a focus on ensuring that the right systems, processes and resources are in place. Work has included:

- Reviewing the Child Exploitation Screening tool and introduction of a new tool that brings clarity for staff and aids practice. This includes a shortened version for screening by the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- Implementing the Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET) panels to explore exploitation, identify themes and share information to help safeguard the most vulnerable young people.
- Reviewing how the BCP exploitation team (CST) works. Now young people at high risk of exploitation are held by the CST until their risk reduces, so there is one worker responsible for case management.
- All young people being managed either through Child in Need (CiN) or Child Protection (CP) processes, and the use of 'Exploited Team Around the Family' (ETAC) has stopped. This enables independent review of high-risk young people and effective multi-agency oversight, planning and intervention.

There has also been work in BCP in relation to targeted support and Early Help including:

- Ensuring that the voice of children and young people and their lived experience is central to the work.
- Targeted Support Teams offering Child Exploitation (CE) risk screening and assessment for early identification and intervention through sexual health and safe relationships work. Direct work is being undertaken to reduce/disrupt/support vulnerabilities and behaviours through clear safety and wellbeing goals.
- BCP uses a step-up pathway to support the graduated response when safety and complexity exceed safe support offered by Targeted

- Tactical assessment reports provide accurate and up to date information on crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and supports resource decisions and deployment of staff. Evidence shows that focused work reduces anti-social behaviour and crime reports in hotspot areas across the BCP area, this includes vulnerable groups at risk of child exploitation.

A planned programme of diversion intervention and positive activity has been offered during peak periods to signpost and support children and young people into structured safer activities. This includes young people at risk of vulnerable cohorts of young people identified as at risk from exploitation.

## ⇒ Police

The introduction of the two place-based Local Safeguarding Hubs in January 2023 has seen an uplift of resources and a stronger commitment to building local safeguarding partnerships to combat Child Exploitation. Early areas of good practice include the new Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET) panel in BCP where emerging cases of concern can be referred in and discussed by partners from police, health, social care, youth justice service and education to triangulate risk and intervene to prevent escalation of risk. The meeting additionally provides accountability and ownership of those children already deemed to be at significant risk.

Police have also invested in two missing persons teams, place-based, who predominantly focus on missing children and working in partnership to address repeat cases. Whilst we understand not every missing child is exploited it presents opportunity to intervene, assess and prevent harm.

Successful evidence led prosecutions have helped safeguard children. <https://www.dorset.live/news/dorset-news/london-paedophile-who-groomed-bribed-7879380>. Prosecution is not the only outcome and Dorset Police are committed to relentlessly pursue perpetrators of child abuse and giving victims a voice and confidence to report.

## ⇒ Youth Justice Service (YJS)

The YJS adjusted its procedures for Risk Assessment Panels to hold a Risk Assessment Panel for all children with a weapon offence and increase the use of doorstep curfews, in conjunction with Neighbourhood Police Teams, as part of its risk management plans.

The YJS has improved its data links with both BCP and Dorset Council Children's Services to ensure accurate information is recorded regarding children's Child Exploitation (CE) status. The YJS has also adapted its recording and reporting processes to monitor the numbers and progress of National Referral Mechanisms (NRM) for YJS children.

The YJS was inspected in September and October 2022, with the report being published in January 2023. The inspection included detailed scrutiny of YJS work with 62 children, extensive written evidence and meetings with team members, service users and partners. The service received a rating of 'Good'. One of the inspection recommendations was for the YJS Partnership Board to "*develop a shared approach across the partnership to address child exploitation and county lines and put a framework in place which promotes effective practice*". Action in response to this recommendation is being undertaken at a partnership level, overseen by the YJS Partnership Board and reported to the place-based safeguarding arrangements.



## ⇒ NHS Dorset

In the process of delivering healthcare, NHS frontline staff are often presented with opportunities to help young people identify and disclose when they are victims of exploitation. It is vital to ensure that NHS staff are confident and competent in supporting collaborative processes which intervene and disrupt this exploitation. Individual NHS provider organisations publish their safeguarding training compliance figures in their public annual safeguarding reports. NHS Dorset assures itself of the confidence and competence of the Dorset NHS workforce through monitoring of the safeguarding training compliance of the NHS providers. The NHS Dorset safeguarding team also assists NHS providers with advice about training strategy and content.

Other assurance is gained through a range of strategies. Of note in 2022/23 was the development of a new protocol to improve the quality and timeliness of information supplied to child protection conferences by GP practices.

During the year, NHS Dorset also created a role for a dedicated Consultant Nurse for Community Safeguarding. This unique post has created space for an experienced safeguarding health clinician to devote attention solely to working with community safety partnerships to design strategy to reduce exploitation.

NHS Dorset Chairs the Pan-Dorset Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) sub-group and this is a particularly useful forum for collaboration in applying learning about effective ways to reduce exploitation. NHS Dorset also leads work with NHS partners to ensure that actions identified for the NHS through CSPRs are effectively managed.

NHS Dorset works in partnership with NHS providers and gains assurance of how the NHS works together to reduce the exploitation of young people through work carried out by the providers. For example, in the Dorset County Hospital (DCH) annual safeguarding report, reference is made to how DCH has noted a rise in attendances to the emergency department due to assaults related to weapon-carrying in young people (both male and female). DCH are members of the Dorset place-based Child Exploitation Tactical Group.

During the year a collaborative Reachable Moments project was launched by BCP Council, Police and University Hospital Dorset (UHD) in response to a CSPR. UHD staff received training from The Children's Society to support this project. The principle of 'reachable moments' is to offer support and signposting to young people as soon as possible after an incident of exploitation-related trauma has occurred.

During the year UHD noticed an increase in assaults to children, by children and non-familial adults. Knife crime was a particular concern. To reduce risk, UHD works with BCP Council and Dorset Council to ensure that children at risk of exploitation are flagged so that frontline staff are made aware of risk when treating them.

# Priority Areas 2022/23

**Priority Area:** Sexual Abuse - intrafamilial, link to violence against women and girls and sexual abuse in schools - peer on peer.

## ⇒ Dorset Council

This has been an area of focus in Dorset following the outcome of a CSPR. This led to the development of a bespoke sexual abuse toolkit, training and a dedicated conference.

Dorset Council responds to the needs of the community and the areas they live in to address any concerns. An example is the Pineapple Project which was developed following concerns identified for girls and young women in Weymouth and Portland. The project has been developed to support and safeguard young women when they are outside of their family homes.

The Project was set up based on the experiences of young people who spoke about sexual assault, exploitation, and peer on peer abuse. Young women told them that:

- many incidences occur locally.
- incidences have not been reported.
- young women's harmful experiences can become hidden.

The Project believes that all young women should:

- feel safe in the communities where they live
- be given the opportunity to understand their right to safety
- be able to seek the right support at the right time.

The Pineapple Project has reached out to girls and young women to understand their experiences e.g., during firework events in Weymouth where it had over 130 contacts. Assemblies have also been held in three secondary school in Weymouth.

The Project has provided safe spaces for young people and developed community guardians.

Further community guardian recruitment is planned along with looking to roll out across other areas of Dorset.

Further school assemblies are planned including opening the opportunity to primary schools – year 5 & 6 and offering education to boys in schools through targeted assemblies.

## ⇒ **BCP Council**

In the BCP area there have been a range of developments including:

- The workforce has been provided with training in recognising, assessing and supporting victims and perpetrators of Harmful Sexual Behaviour and/or are identified as Sex offenders.
- Tools in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) have been embedded to support them to identify and respond to concerns about potential Harmful Sexual Behaviour.
- Targeted Support plans have been developed to include specialist services to support recovery from violence, Female Genital Mutilation and sexual abuse.
- There has been work with schools to support them with young people where there are concerns about sexual abuse.
- There has been the development of focused adolescent programs such as Escape the Trap & Who is in Charge that provide education and support to young people that are experiencing peer-on-peer or peer-to-adult abuse.

## ⇒ **Dorset Police**

The forces vision is to 'Make Dorset a Safe County for Everyone', with priorities identified to relentlessly pursue perpetrators and put victims first. Many examples have been seen this year of the commitment to protecting vulnerable child victims of sexual abuse. One such investigation undertaken by the Child Abuse Investigation Team saw a 27-year sentence given to a male who abused two children over a 9-year period. <https://www.dorsetecho.co.uk/news/23570246.man-sexually-abused-girls-dorset-across-nine-year-period/>.

This sends a message to all victims of sexual abuse that Dorset Police will do all they can to investigate offences and ensure offenders are brought to justice and ensure victims are supported.

Learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR) for the police included; the over reliance of requiring children to disclose abuse, the requirement for professional curiosity and the development of skill amongst professionals to spot the signs of abuse. The recommendations are now being embedded through training throughout the partnership.

## ⇒ Youth Justice Service (YJS)

The YJS trained its Harmful Sexual Behaviour practitioners in the updated 'AIM3' assessment and intervention work during 2022/23. YJS also reinstated and reinvigorated its Harmful Sexual Behaviour practitioners group to provide peer reflective supervision.

YJS managers have played active roles in the multi-agency Harmful Sexual Behaviour task and finish group, led by the Integrated Care Board.

## ⇒ NHS Dorset

During the year, NHS Dorset helped develop a joint protocol for the assessment of intrafamilial child sexual abuse following learning arising from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. NHS Dorset gathered constructive feedback from practitioners then led a learning event to enable stakeholder consultation (they ensured that an evening session was provided to allow childminders to contribute). Clear protocols help professionals of different disciplines to work together effectively in these complex situations to ensure that children suffering this type of abuse are protected.

Also, during the year, the UHD safeguarding team initiated quarterly collaborative peer review meetings with the Dorset Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) to improve collaboration and share learning.



# Priority Areas 2022/23

**Priority Area:** Recognising and responding to the impact of domestic abuse involving children and young people (including under 1's and unborn safety and wellbeing)

## ⇒ Dorset

Dorset Council commissions an Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (IDAS) which is provided by Paragon. The service offer consists of community outreach support, accommodation-based support, helpline, and recovery programmes.

Dorset constantly strives to support practitioners to consistently identify domestic abuse and to build on the range of Domestic Abuse Support services available in our area so that staff can respond effectively with the right support for children and families. Through the Strengthening Services Plan they are working closely with the Community Safety Partnership on a range of actions to strengthen our partnership approach including the implementation of a Domestic Abuse Toolkit.

Dorset has implemented the nationally accredited DRIVE perpetrator programme. This included the creation of a Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Panel (DAPP). DAPP/DRIVE have been in operation since March 2021 and feedback from those involved demonstrates it is having a positive impact. DAPP/DRIVE link closely with the High-Risk Domestic Abuse (HRDA) model, where perpetrators are identified at HRDA, and referred to DAPP for consideration to DRIVE. Where DRIVE is not suitable, partners consider disruptive techniques to reduce the risk and ongoing offending.

Dorset Council continues to work with partners to take a whole systems approach to how they design and commission services. Last year partners came together to create and agree the Domestic Abuse Commissioning Charter. The Charter sets out a range of key principles and commitments for future design work and helps facilitate co-commissioning opportunities.

Dorset are implementing a new model of integrated working, with adult practitioners embedded in the locality teams in the Chesil, Dorchester and West localities. The teams welcomed domestic abuse practitioners in November 2022.

## ⇒ Integrated Domestic Abuse Court

The Integrated Domestic Abuse Court Investigative Approach (IDAC-IA) pilot in the family court is a new three stage approach to dealing with certain private law children cases\* in the family court. The three stages are:

- Information Gathering and Assessment
- Intervention and/or Decision Hearing and
- Review Stage

The pilot, known as Pathfinder, is testing a less adversarial and more investigative approach to managing private law cases. The court will identify families' needs earlier and work with both adults and children, as well as external agencies, to understand their circumstances and help them to reach an agreement (where safe to do so) without the need for multiple hearings. A review stage may be carried out after an order has been made.

Pathfinder Leads feel that identification of domestic abuse has improved. While, domestic abuse was always considered under the Child Arrangements Programme (CAP), the IDAC-IA model has brought a much greater focus on domestic abuse and protecting children and families from harm.

Identification has been enhanced by the inclusion of DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour based violence) risk assessments and active engagement with domestic abuse agencies and Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs).

Domestic abuse agencies are supporting new families who were not previously known to them. The new risk assessment approach and greater involvement of specialist service organisations suggests the new process is helping to address a need in support for victims of domestic abuse in private law cases.

## ⇒ **BCP Council**

In BCP, bespoke training was commissioned by the Council to provide staff with the confidence to understand and work with children and young people in homes where domestic abuse was present, or with families who had previously experienced domestic abuse.

This included providing training in recognising, assessing and supporting victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse. A domestic abuse specialist based in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) provides consultation, advice and support to practitioners.

Practitioners work with children and young people to understand their lived experience, to capture their voice and to understand the nature, extent and impact of domestic abuse.

Multi-agency safety planning is key to working with families in BCP and drawing upon a range of domestic abuse services and reviewing risks as they escalate.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) continues the aim of protecting high risk victims of domestic abuse and helps facilitate a shared understanding of domestic abuse and the local offer.

The Domestic Abuse Strategy Group completed a needs analysis around Housing and Domestic abuse.

There has also been focussed work including training in relation to young people and abusive relationships including making appropriate referrals to services such as 'Escape the Trap' and this has included staff working with care experienced young people.

## ⇒ Dorset Police

Annual vulnerability training has focused on seeking the voice of the child in domestic abuse investigations. Frontline staff attending domestic incidents and those investigating crimes now seek to understand the lived experience of children living with domestic abuse. Officers are encouraged to speak directly to children and not make presumptions on behalf of young people has enhanced the information shared with partners.

Operation Encompass was rolled out across Dorset in 2021 to ensure that schools received timely information to support children living with domestic abuse in their homes. In 2022, this was further expanded to include the sharing of information regarding preschool age children. Police now share notification with Midwifery and Health visitors for pre-school age children ensuring every child pre-birth to 18 years is covered by the scheme. 303 schools across Dorset are signed up to the scheme with 76% of those surveyed finding this information sharing useful. Feedback from safeguarding leads in schools included:

*“Information that we otherwise would not have received. On occasions we had no idea the families were in turmoil. Op Encompass gave us a way in”*

*“Much stronger understanding of the context of pupils' lives”*

*“We can ensure we are aware of incidents, children's emotional health and stresses experienced by families. This helps us with our own recording adding evidence and information to support families”*

## ⇒ NHS Dorset

Healthcare staff are often very well placed to identify risk to children and young people when treating adult victims and perpetrators. NHS Dorset gains assurance that healthcare staff are using these opportunities from operational monitoring and auditing undertaken by NHS providers. This data is triangulated with safeguarding referral data reported by local authorities through quality assurance groups of the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership.

South West Ambulance Service Foundation Trust (SWASFT) frontline staff are often well-placed to identify risk to children when attending to injuries received by adults. During the year, SWASFT actively participated in Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and attended practitioner learning events connected to reviews. During the year, SWASFT also recruited a new Safeguarding Educational Specialist post to enhance the support of training provided to frontline staff.

Victims of domestic abuse sometimes use medical appointments with GPs as a safe place to disclose the abuse. During the year, NHS Dorset further enhanced a domestic abuse toolkit for GPs. The toolkit helps GPs to give effective support and signposting to victims who disclose domestic abuse, and specifically reminds them to consider the impact on any children involved.

# Priority Areas 2022/23

**Priority Area:** Supporting children to maintain positive mental health and emotional wellbeing, understanding the longer-term impact of Covid-19. Access to services at all levels (e.g., Tier 4 beds locally, CAMHS demand)

## ⇒ Dorset Council

Support for educational settings has been developed in Dorset. This has included:

- Offer of Therapeutic Thinking to all schools with 92/159 settings having attended 3-day training course. In addition, there is ongoing support to implement the approach.
- Relational practice training has been attended by 85 settings.
- Family support workers and pastoral leads in schools attended training on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) focused group work for families.
- Providing Emotional Literacy Support Training and Supervision. In 2022-2023, two courses were run and attended by 71 practitioners. 196 Emotional Literacy Support Assistants received half-termly supervision provided by an Educational Psychologist.

There are regular joint meetings between education, social care and Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to track high to medium risk young people.

## ⇒ BCP Council

In 2022/2023 we achieved:

- Chat Health supporting parents with anxiety, depression/low mood, emotional wellbeing and worry, suicide ideation:
  - \* *'Chat Health' reports 883 messages were received and 1,099 were sent between Oct - Dec 2022.*
- Parentline supporting parents with concerns such as infant feeding, physical health and sleep, emotional health and wellbeing, behaviour, continence and eating/nutrition issues:
  - \* *Parentline 0-5 years reports 5,365 messages were received and 8,028 messages sent between Oct - Dec 2022.*
  - \* *Parentline 5-19 years reports 898 messages were received and 1,383 messages sent between Nov - Dec 2022.*



In 2023/24 we are redesigning pathways and recommissioning Children and Young Peoples Mental Health Services to enable place based and outcome focused commissioning. We are commissioning parenting support in respect of children and young people with, or who are at risk of conduct disorder.

We are developing staff in family hubs to have a greater understanding of mental health issues, including early intervention and emotional/wellbeing support, and to ensure that they are able to connect families to appropriate support within the network and local area.

## ⇒ **Dorset Police**

Due to an increasing prevalence of responding to children in mental health crisis, this year Dorset Police has equipped staff more effectively to respond. There is positive practice developing between mental health professionals, families and officers in some complex cases where the police response was potentially resulting in greater trauma for the child. The production of trigger plans and guidance to frontline officers has worked to good effect and in 2024 the force will deliver trauma informed training to the wider workforce in our annual vulnerability training.

However, Dorset Police recognises we are not the right agency to respond to a child in crisis and are committed to working with our partners to embed “Right Care Right Person” in the forthcoming year. Stakeholder briefings have commenced, and ambitious timelines will see delivery of this programme to ensure children in need receive help from those best equipped and trained to respond.

## ⇒ **Youth Justice Service (YJS)**

The Youth Justice Service added a ‘Trauma Champion’ role to help develop the team’s trauma-informed practice. The YJS Psychologist led multi-agency trauma formulation meetings in respect of YJS children in both Dorset and BCP areas. The Trauma Champion and the YJS Psychologist, led workshops for team members to consolidate and enhance their confidence and application of trauma-informed practice.

The YJS nurses developed a consistent process for providing consultations to YJS colleagues to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children in the YJS. A nurse also delivered a workshop to team members on assessing and responding to risks of self-harm and suicide.

The YJS Speech and Language Therapists provided training and support for YJS colleagues in using resources such as Talking Mats to improve communication with young people. They also provided training to other services including The Appropriate Adult Service, The Harbour and to detectives in Dorset Police.

## ⇒ **NHS Dorset**

NHS Dorset helped develop a memorandum of understanding (MU) assessing the needs of children and young people with emotional and mental health needs staying in acute settings. This MoU helps partners to work together to find effective solutions for young people who might otherwise not be receiving appropriate care for their unique and individual needs.

# Other Work

## ⇒ Dorset Council

The government's response to national reviews of two tragic child deaths was to commission Josh MacAlister's care review. In response to this the government published their report 'Stable Homes Built on Love'.

Families First for Children is the name the government is using for its project to implement the reforms outlined within 'Stable Homes Built on Love' This includes changes to family help, child protection, kinship care and safeguarding partnership arrangements.

Dorset Council has been recognised for its ground-breaking work with children and families and has been selected as one of three local authorities to be a pathfinder in the government's new programme to ensure families are better supported.

Work has started on the programme in the autumn of 2023 and three local authorities (Dorset Council, Lincolnshire County Council and City of Wolverhampton Council) will work with police, health and education in their areas over the following two years. The programme will attract funding for the Dorset Council area to help with the implementation.

## ⇒ BCP Council

Children's Services have continued their improvement journey with scrutiny through their Improvement Boards, Department for Education (DfE) Advisor, Sector Led Improvement Partner (SLIP) support and OFSTED monitoring visits (4 completed at the time of this report). They continue to address areas for improvement, monitoring visits and DfE reviews consistently report that Childrens Services is improving and the service knows itself well and demonstrates it knows how to improve. OFSTED have reported that the quality of social work practice in BCP Council continues to improve and is more consistent.

Building Stronger Foundations is the Children's Services transformation programme which has completed a diagnostic and put in place priorities for transformation moving forward, these include service redesign, strengthening partnerships and supporting transformation in Childrens Social Care, Commissioning, Governance and Communication and Culture.

BCP Childrens Services was awarded National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum Best Project of the Year Award for its innovative 333 Care Leavers Hub, which is a safe space for Care Experienced Young People to seek support, guidance and socialise.

The Keeping Families Together team and the Edge of Care team has an 83% success rate in supporting families to stay together and has expanded to support all age groups from its initial remit of adolescents.

An extensive Early Help and Family Hub Transformation Programme is underway. This work will provide a new Early Help Strategy, new partnership assessment and care planning pathways, and provide a single outcomes framework for Early Help services. This work aims to ensure partnership working is better integrated to meet the identified needs of local children, young people and families. The programme will align Local Authority working on the Integrated Looked After Children (ILAC) and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) improvement, Family Hub

Transformations and prepare the foundations for the longer term implementation of the Care Review'

## ⇒ Dorset Police

Following the 2021 National Child Protection Inspection undertaken by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), Dorset Police has worked to address 8 recommendations relating to how we respond to and investigate incidents involving children. 2022 saw the reinspection where good progress was noted across all recommendations ranging from the response to missing children, the management of sex offenders who present a risk to children, use of Police protection powers and evidence of our working practices with partners.

The Police being a Pan Dorset agency have worked with the partnership to understand and enhance place-based arrangements with the implementation of Local Safeguarding Hubs whilst building on opportunities to unify and create Pan-Dorset opportunities. An example of this is the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) where we recognise the need to have two place-based Operations Groups aligned to the Local Authority front doors but have unified and sought to find commonality at a strategic level with a number of task and finish groups to prevent duplication of effort and divergence of practice.

## ⇒ NHS Dorset

NHS Dorset has set out how it will deliver healthcare to the people of Dorset and BCP areas in a five-year Joint Forward Plan (JFP) for 2023 to 2028. The safeguarding priorities of NHS England and local safeguarding partnership were used in the development of this JFP. As well as delivering the JFP, NHS Dorset will continue to contribute to the development of priorities agreed with local safeguarding partnerships.

The NHS Dorset safeguarding team also engaged with regional and national safeguarding including the NHS England Southwest Safeguarding Steering Group, the National Network of Designated Healthcare Professionals for Children, and the Safeguarding Adults National Network, to understand and apply regional and national safeguarding priorities.

The Dorset Insight and Intelligence Service launched a portal for professionals involved in providing services to children providing safeguarding and health insight data. Good quality information and insight allows NHS Dorset to plan and commission services for children in ways that better reduce health inequalities for those who suffer abuse or neglect.

During the year, NHS Dorset gained assurance on the safeguarding strategies and operations of NHS providers through performance monitoring, reviewing the annual reports of NHS providers, and also by attendance at NHS provider's internal safeguarding governance meetings. Attending these meetings provides a useful opportunity for the cross-pollination of safeguarding strategies between providers and partners and provides NHS Dorset with assurance that NHS providers are modelling a partnership approach to safeguarding children and young people.

NHS Dorset safeguarding professionals delivered Initial Health Assessments to unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in the BCP area to help manage demand due to an exceptional influx. The timely delivery of Initial Health Assessments (IHA) to this cohort of patients allowed trauma-induced mental health illness to be identified promptly so that appropriate help could be sought swiftly.

During the year, NHS Dorset also restructured its arrangements for safeguarding governance. A new Integrated Care Board Safeguarding Assurance Group was created to consolidate safeguarding assurance from a range of child and adult safeguarding work streams. One of the programme groups is the Child Safeguarding Programme Group. This group brings NHS child safeguarding leads together to coordinate and collaborate on quality assurance tasks identified in recommendations arising from partnership statutory reviews.

# Priorities 2023-2025

The Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership reviewed their priorities and agreed, in consultation with both BCP and Dorset Community Safety Partnerships and both BCP and Dorset Safeguarding Adult Boards, the following priorities for 2023-2025:

## Priority 1: Violence experienced by children and young people

### a) Sexual violence and abuse including online abuse

#### Why is this a priority?

In the Pan-Dorset area the largest proportional increase in suspected sexual offenders has occurred within male suspects of sexual offences aged under 18 years, having risen by 2.5% (from 8.7% to 11.2%) between 2019 – 2022.

Individuals aged under 18 years at the time of reporting the offence to police remain the largest cohort of victims, accounting for over a third (34.0%) of all sexual offence in the last 12 months.

The Children's Commissioner's report on young people and pornography in January 2023 identified that pornography exposure is widespread and Normalised, to the extent that children cannot 'opt-out'. The average age at which children first see pornography is 13 years. By age nine years, 10% had seen pornography, 27% had seen it by age 11 years and half of children who had seen pornography had seen it by age 13 years. They also found that young people are frequently exposed to violent pornography, depicting coercive, degrading or pain-inducing sex acts; 79% had encountered violent pornography before the age of 18 years. Young people expressed concern about the implications of violent pornography on their understanding of the difference between sexual pleasure and harm.

### b) Domestic violence and abuse

#### Why is this a priority?

Each year more than 100,000 people in the UK are at imminent risk of being murdered or seriously injured because of domestic abuse.

130,000 children live in households where there is high-risk domestic abuse.

A quarter (25%) of children in high-risk domestic abuse households are under 3 years old.

62% of children living in domestic abuse households are directly harmed by the perpetrator of the abuse, in addition to the harm caused by witnessing the abuse of other.

In 2021-2022, 9,477 domestic abuse-related crimes were recorded by Dorset Police up from 9,159 the year before.

### c) **Physical violence and knife crime**

#### **Why is this a priority?**

Under 18s continue to account for the largest proportion of Public Place Violent crime victims, in the Pan-Dorset area. In the last 12 months to January 2023 they represented 24.3% (1,875 of 7,715) of all victims. Victims aged under 18 years at the time of the offence are slightly more likely to be a repeat victim (12.4%, 199 of 1,611).

There were 338 recorded knife crimes in the last 12 months and this is an 8.3% increase. There continues to be an increase in under 18s as both victims and perpetrators of knife crimes.

Reviews have indicated that there have been ongoing concerns in this area. Operation Landslide related to two 16-year-olds convicted of murder and both were in possession of knives and the victim died of stab wounds.

### **Priority 2: Children's mental health and emotional well-being**

#### **Why is this a priority?**

Child mental health remains a disproportionately high factor within referrals from the police and is the predominant concern in around 10% of referrals to children social care. This is also reflected within referrals from health, as well as child attendances at local emergency departments. There is an increase in both the volume and complexity of mental health, following the pandemic.

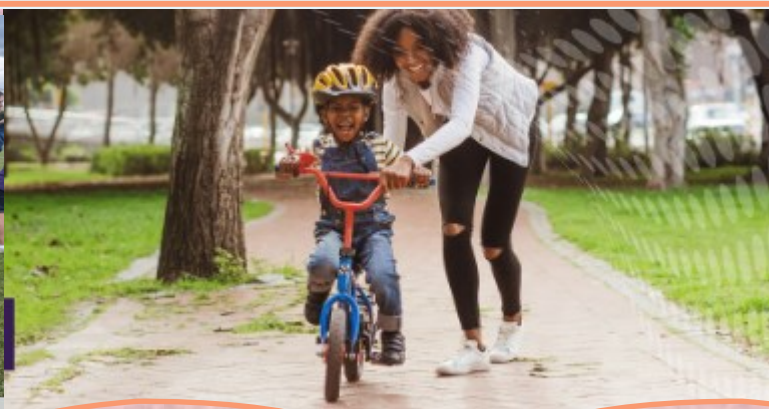
Multi-Agency planning is ongoing to review and improve local service provision and there is still a lack of appropriate accommodation for these children and young people.

### **Priority 3: Neglect**

#### **Why is this a priority?**

Neglect continues to be a feature in both national and local reviews e.g., neglect featured in 75% of the 166 serious case reviews examined for the period 2017-19. There is a continued need to ensure that all agencies are recognising and responding effectively to neglect.

The Partnership recognises the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, poverty and the increased pressures on family life that can lead to neglect.



**Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership**

The central graphic features a large, light pink heart shape with an orange border. Inside the heart, the text "Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership" is written in pink. Below the text are four logos: Dorset Council (a green and blue circular logo), BCP Council (a purple square logo with white dots), Dorset Police (the Royal Coat of Arms crest), and NHS Dorset (the NHS logo).



# Conclusion

In summary leaders and frontline professionals and volunteers are operating in an environment of high risk and uncertainty, whilst undertaking their vital child safeguarding duties. Complex human systems and processes, across many agencies, particularly in the face of increasing demand and continued resource constraint, provide significant challenge. Identifying clear priorities for safeguarding children and then providing evidence of action and impact is essential. Working together in structured partnership provides for rigorous scrutiny, challenge and assurance led by senior executive leaders from the statutory agencies.

In our annual report we have demonstrated how we use an annual business cycle to identify priorities for activity, set objectives for action and then work to deliver continuous improvement throughout the year. We demonstrate how we provide independent scrutiny of our own activities through audit and review and are using a new scrutiny plan developed and agreed for action.

We provide ongoing and consistent strategic analysis of emerging risks and national themes to prompt specific focus, as demonstrated by our work on intra-familial sexual abuse, unaccompanied children and trauma-informed practice.

We provide structured governance which reflects the local delivery needs and accountabilities at unitary local authority level, in our well-developed 'place-based' arrangements and a Pan-Dorset partnership to deliver strategic oversight where it adds value in areas such as Business Support, Training, Reviews and leadership challenge.

We ensure that learning from reviews is implemented and embedded across all agencies and organisations working with children and young people and that this informs the content of our high-quality training provision. Nearly 3,000 frontline practitioners receiving vital training across 156 courses is a clear demonstration of our partners' commitment to continuous improvement.

# Glossary

<b>MASH</b>	<b>Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub</b>	<b>CST</b>	<b>Complex Safeguarding Team</b>
<b>CSPR</b>	<b>Child Safeguarding Practice Review</b>	<b>CIN</b>	<b>Child in Need</b>
<b>PDSCP</b>	<b>Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership</b>	<b>CP</b>	<b>Child Protection</b>
<b>BCP</b>	<b>Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole</b>	<b>ETAC</b>	<b>Exploitation Team Around the Child</b>
<b>IMD</b>	<b>Index of Multiple Deprivation Indicator</b>	<b>ASB</b>	<b>Anti-Social Behaviour</b>
<b>LSOA</b>	<b>Small Statistical Area</b>	<b>YJS</b>	<b>Youth Justice Service</b>
<b>ICB</b>	<b>Integrated Care Board</b>	<b>NRM</b>	<b>National Referral Mechanism</b>
<b>PRU</b>	<b>Pupil Referral Unit</b>	<b>ED</b>	<b>Emergency Department</b>
<b>DHUFT</b>	<b>Dorset Healthcare University Foundation Trust</b>	<b>UHD</b>	<b>University Hospital Dorset</b>
<b>DCH</b>	<b>Dorset County Hospital</b>	<b>SARC</b>	<b>Sexual Assault Referral Centre</b>
<b>WT</b>	<b>Working Together to Safeguard Children</b>	<b>IDAS</b>	<b>Integrated Domestic Abuse Service</b>
<b>MET</b>	<b>Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Children</b>	<b>DRIVE/DAPP</b>	<b>Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Panel</b>
<b>IFSA</b>	<b>Intrafamilial Sexual Abuse</b>	<b>HRDA</b>	<b>High Risk Domestic Abuse model</b>
<b>GRT</b>	<b>Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Cultural Awareness</b>	<b>IDAC-IA</b>	<b>Integrated Domestic Abuse Court Investigative Court</b>
<b>DA</b>	<b>Domestic Abuse</b>	<b>CAP</b>	<b>Child Arrangement Programme</b>
<b>LADO</b>	<b>Local Authority Designated Officer</b>	<b>DASH</b>	<b>Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour-Based violence.</b>
<b>S11</b>	<b>Section 11</b>	<b>IDVAs</b>	<b>Independent Domestic Violence Advisors</b>
<b>CDOP</b>	<b>Child Death Overview Panel</b>	<b>MARAC</b>	<b>Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference</b>
<b>NCMD</b>	<b>National Child Mortality Database</b>	<b>SWASFT</b>	<b>South Western Ambulance Service Foundation Trust</b>
<b>CAROLE</b>	<b>Children At Risk Or Linked to Exploitation</b>	<b>CBT</b>	<b>Cognitive Behaviour Therapy</b>
<b>REACH</b>	<b>Drug and Alcohol Service</b>	<b>OFSTED</b>	<b>The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills.</b>
<b>CE</b>	<b>Child Exploitation</b>	<b>HMICFRS</b>	<b>Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.</b>
<b>HSB</b>	<b>Harmful Sexual Behaviour</b>	<b>JFP</b>	<b>Joint Forward Plan</b>
<b>CAMHS</b>	<b>Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service</b>		
<b>MoU</b>	<b>Memorandum of Understanding</b>		





~ SOCIAL WORKER ~

“ History will judge us by the  
difference we make in the  
everyday lives of Children ”

~ Nelson Mandela ~

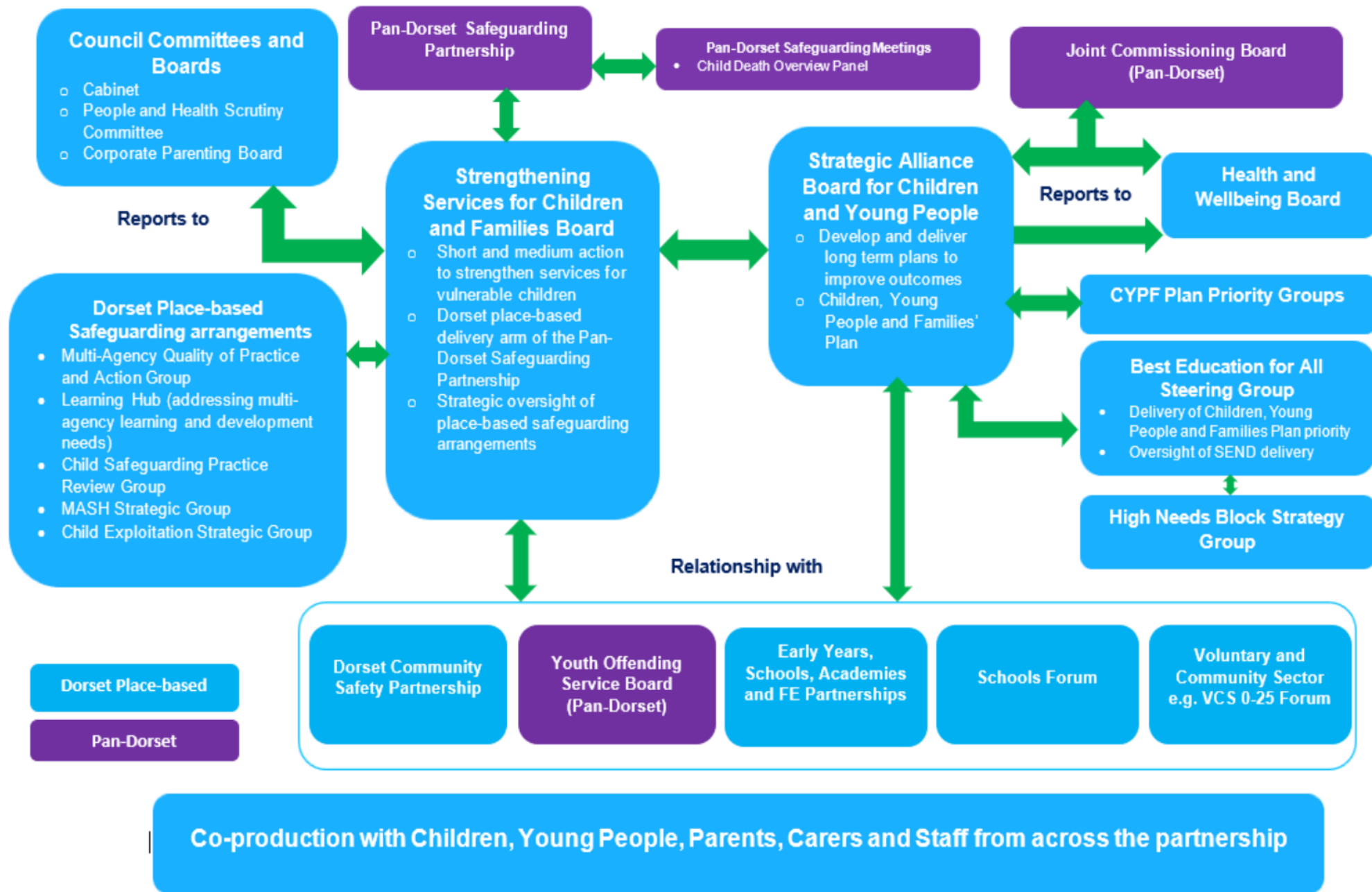


# Appendices

**Appendix 1** — Dorset Children's Strategic Partnership Governance

**Appendix 2** — BCP Safeguarding Children Partnership Structure

# Appendix 1 - Dorset Children's Strategic Partnership Governance



# Appendix 2 - BCP Safeguarding Children Partnership Structure

