

Cabinet

9 September 2025

Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership (DSCP) Annual Report April 2024 – March 2025 For Information Only

Cabinet Member:

Cllr C Sutton, Children's Services, Education & Skills

Local Councillor(s):

Executive Director:

P Dempsey, Executive Director of People - Children

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Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

The 2024–2025 reporting year marks a significant milestone for the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP), following its formal separation from the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership in August 2024. This transition has enabled Dorset to tailor its safeguarding arrangements to better reflect local needs and align with national reforms, particularly those outlined in *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)* and the *Stable Homes Built on Love* review.

1.1 Strategic Leadership and Governance

DSCP has established robust governance structures, including the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership Board and a Pan-Dorset Lead Safeguarding Partner meeting. These forums ensure strategic oversight, accountability, and alignment across agencies. Education has been successfully embedded as a statutory partner, enhancing multi-agency collaboration and ensuring the voice of education is central to safeguarding leadership.

1.2 Key Achievements

Key achievements were the integration of education as a statutory partner through the formation of the Education Safeguarding Board, which has strengthened multi-agency collaboration. The Partnership completed targeted multi-agency audits on intra-familial child sexual abuse and neglect, resulting in informed action plans to improve practice. Training and development efforts were robust, with 126 practitioners responding to post-training surveys—84% reported high confidence and 95% demonstrated strong knowledge application. The voice of children and families was amplified through co-production initiatives, feedback mechanisms, and tools such as Mind of My Own, enhancing engagement and service responsiveness. Additionally, the inaugural DSCP conference, “Finding Our Girls,” focused on violence against girls and received overwhelmingly positive feedback, further reinforcing the Partnership’s commitment to addressing priority safeguarding issues.

1.3 Future Planning

Looking ahead to 2025–2026, the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) will focus on several key initiatives to strengthen safeguarding practices across the county. These include conducting bi-monthly multi-agency audits to assess and improve service delivery, launching a revised neglect strategy and toolkit to support practitioners, and hosting a conference centred on the impact of mental health on children. The Partnership will also continue to embed learning from previous quality assurance activities and enhance independent scrutiny and practitioner guidance to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

1.4 Conclusion

The DSCP has demonstrated resilience, innovation, and commitment in its first year as a standalone partnership. Through strategic leadership, collaborative practice, and a relentless focus on the voice of children and families, the Partnership has laid a strong foundation for continued improvement and impact. The dedication of all partners has been instrumental in driving forward safeguarding excellence across Dorset.

2. The report

2.1 Please see the appendix

3. Alternative options considered

3.1 Not applicable.

4. Legal considerations

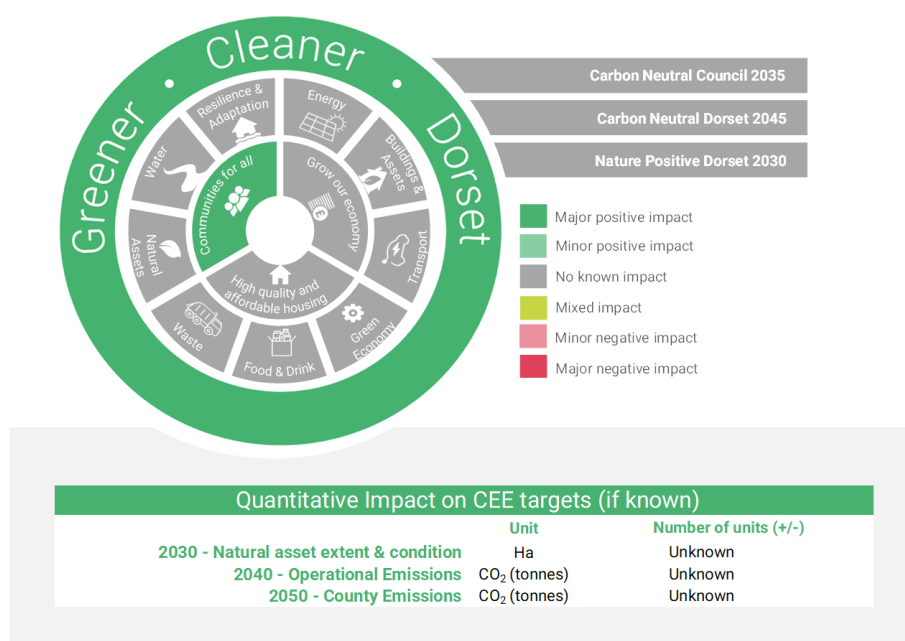
4.1 Not applicable. Statutory Report.

5. Financial implications

5.1 A strong safeguarding children's partnership has important financial implications. By promoting early intervention and coordinated multi-agency responses, it helps prevent escalation of harm, reducing the long-term costs associated with crisis services, health care, social care, and the criminal justice system. Effective safeguarding also improves service efficiency by streamlining processes, reducing duplication, and ensuring resources are targeted where they are most needed. Additionally, robust governance and accountability mechanisms support transparent budget planning and equitable funding contributions from statutory partners, as demonstrated by DSCP's shared funding model and investment in training, independent scrutiny, and statutory functions.

6. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

6.1



7. Well-being and health implications

- 7.1 A strong safeguarding children's partnership has profound well-being and health implications for children, families, and communities. It ensures that children are protected from harm, abuse, and neglect through coordinated multi-agency responses, which in turn promotes their emotional security, mental health, and overall development. By embedding trauma-informed practices and amplifying the voice of children and families, such partnerships foster trust, resilience, and early intervention—reducing long-term health inequalities and improving life outcomes.

8. Other implications

- 8.1 None

9. Risk implications

- 9.1 There is no decision needing to be made, this report is for information only. No risk.

10. Equalities

- 10.1 A strong safeguarding children's partnership actively promotes equality by ensuring that all children and families, regardless of background, identity, or circumstance, are protected and supported equitably. It helps to identify and address disparities in access to services, outcomes, and experiences—particularly for children and families from minority ethnic groups, those with disabilities, or those facing socio-economic disadvantage. Through inclusive practices, diverse representation, and culturally competent approaches, the partnership fosters a system where the rights of every child and family are upheld and their unique needs are recognised and met.

11. Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix 1: Dorset Safeguarding Childrens Partnership Annual Report 2024-2025.

12. Background papers

- 12.1 None.

13. Report sign-off

- 13.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)