

Cabinet

6 October 2026

Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership (DSCP) Annual Report April 2025 – March 2026

For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr C Sutton, Children, Families & Education

Local Councillor(s):

Senior Leadership Team:

P Dempsey - Executive Director, Children's Services

Report author and job title:

Megan Cameron-Brown, Head of Quality Assurance & Partnerships

Email: megan.cameron-brown@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Children Act 2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.

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

1. Executive summary

The 2025-2026 reporting year has seen the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) further embed its arrangements as a standalone safeguarding partnership. The Partnership has continued to strengthen multi-agency safeguarding practice across Dorset through robust governance, effective quality assurance activity, strong partnership working, and a commitment to improving outcomes for children and families. The work delivered throughout the year demonstrates the positive impact of collaborative safeguarding arrangements and ongoing implementation of national reforms, including Families First for Children and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026. Strategic Leadership and Governance

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) annual report be received and its future priorities be endorsed.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 The recommendation enables Cabinet to receive assurance regarding the effectiveness of local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, note the progress made by the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership during 2025-

2026, and endorse the Partnership's priorities for 2026-2027 in support of improved outcomes for children and families in Dorset.

4. The report

4.1 Strategic Leadership and Governance

The Partnership has maintained effective governance arrangements through the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership Board, the Pan-Dorset Lead Safeguarding Partner Meetings, and a range of multi-agency delivery groups. An independent scrutiny review completed during the year concluded that the partnership is strong and well-functioning, with committed leadership, positive multi-agency relationships and no systemic safeguarding concerns identified. Recommendations from the review have been incorporated into future planning to further strengthen accountability, partnership oversight and impact.

4.2 Key Achievements

Key achievements during 2025-2026 include:

- Completion of multi-agency quality assurance audits focused on children under two and extra-familial risk and harm, identifying strong collaborative practice and informing partnership improvement plans.
- Delivery of a successful annual safeguarding conference, Wellbeing First: Building Resilience in Young Lives, attended by 167 delegates from across the partnership.
- Continued strengthening of education's role within safeguarding arrangements through the Education Safeguarding Board and associated quality assurance and engagement activities.
- Delivery of a comprehensive multi-agency safeguarding training programme reaching over 1,800 practitioners, with satisfaction rates consistently between 98% and 100% and strong evidence of improved confidence and practice.
- Enhanced focus on the voice of children, young people and families through engagement activities, co-production of conferences, use of Mind of My Own, and embedding lived experience into reviews and audits.
- Strengthened multi-agency responses to extra-familial harm, violence against women and girls, domestic abuse, and the impact of mental health on children and families.

4.3 Future Planning

During 2026-2027, the Partnership will focus on:

- Further strengthening and evidencing the voice of children, young people and families throughout partnership activity.

- Embedding quarterly multi-agency audits through a forward quality assurance programme.
- Undertaking scrutiny activity relating to child sexual abuse, neglect, domestic abuse and unborn babies to under one-year olds.
- Continuing to embed and respond to national safeguarding reforms and Families First developments.
- Implementing recommendations arising from the independent scrutiny review of governance arrangements.

4.4 Conclusion

The Partnership has continued to demonstrate strong leadership, effective partnership working and a shared commitment to safeguarding children and young people. Through robust quality assurance, workforce development, independent scrutiny and a continued focus on children's lived experiences, DSCP has strengthened its arrangements and improved multi-agency practice. The dedication and collaboration of all safeguarding partners continue to support positive outcomes for children and families across Dorset.

The Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership (DSCP) Annual Report for April 2025 to March 2026 is set out at Appendix 1

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 Not applicable.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 Not applicable. The publication of an annual report is a statutory requirement of local safeguarding partnerships under the Children Act 2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.

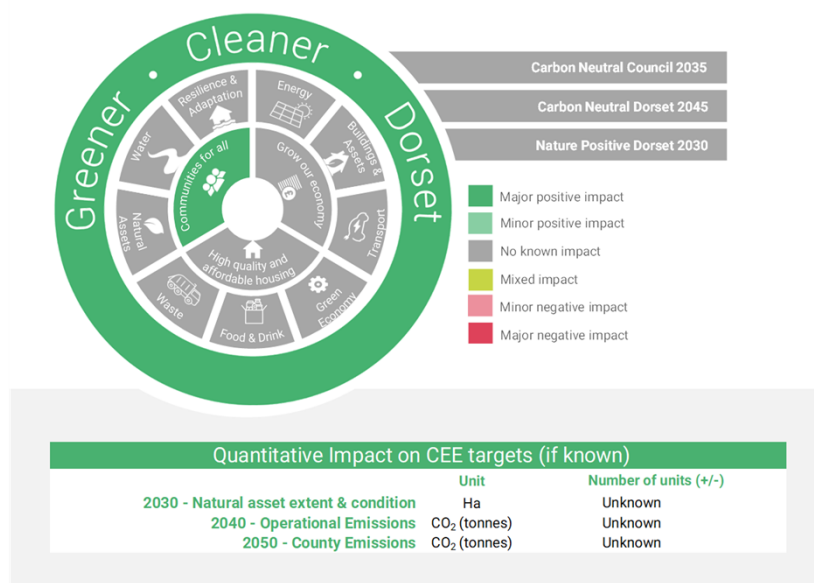
7. Financial implications

7.1 Effective safeguarding arrangements deliver significant financial benefits through early intervention, coordinated multi-agency responses and reduced demand for high-cost statutory services. These arrangements help prevent escalation of need and reduce long-term costs associated with crisis services, social care, health, education and criminal justice services.

The Partnership operates a shared funding model across statutory partners, supporting delivery of statutory safeguarding functions, independent scrutiny, quality assurance activity, safeguarding reviews and workforce development. Robust governance and accountability mechanisms support transparent budget planning and equitable funding contributions from statutory partners.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 There are no direct natural environment, climate or ecological implications arising from this report.



9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 The work of the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership contributes significantly to improving the wellbeing, safety and health outcomes of children and young people. Through effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, trauma-informed practice and coordinated support, children are protected from harm and provided with opportunities to thrive. The Partnership's focus on mental health, domestic abuse, violence prevention and early intervention supports improved long-term outcomes and reduces health inequalities.

10. Other implications

- 10.1 None

11. Risk implications

- 11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

This report is presented for information only and does not require a formal decision by Cabinet. No specific risks arise from the report itself.

12. Equalities

- 12.1 The Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership is committed to promoting equality and ensuring that all children, young people and families, regardless of their background, identity, circumstances or protected characteristics, receive equitable protection, support and opportunities to achieve positive outcomes. Through robust quality assurance, scrutiny activities, performance analysis and engagement with children, families and practitioners, the Partnership seeks to identify and address disparities in access to services, experiences and outcomes, particularly for children from minority ethnic

communities, those with disabilities, vulnerable groups and families experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. By embedding inclusive practices, diverse representation and culturally competent approaches across all aspects of its work, the Partnership aims to ensure that the rights, voices and individual needs of every child and family are recognised and responded to effectively. The Partnership will continue to strengthen its use of data and intelligence to understand whether any groups are disproportionately represented within safeguarding systems and to ensure services remain responsive, accessible and effective for all communities across Dorset.

13. Appendices

- 13.1 Appendix 1 – the Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership (DSCP) Annual Report April 2025 – March 2026

14. Background papers

- 14.1 None

15. Report sign-off

- 15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Assurance and Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director for Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).