



Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report

April 2024 - March 2025



Contents

Foreword from the Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board	3
Who is the Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board and what does it do?	5
Telford and Wrekin – the place, a Borough of contrasts	7
Voice of the child	8
Governance	10
Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel	11
Quality Performance and Development	12
Family Connect subgroup	13
Current priorities, focus and impact	14
Child Sexual Exploitation	15
Early Help	16
Young people living with domestic abuse	17
Young people’s emotional wellbeing and mental health	17
Independent scrutiny – what the scrutineer says about the partnership?	18
Training and development	20
Challenges and our future focus	22
Acknowledgements	22

Foreword from the Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board

It is a great privilege to have been appointed as Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board in December 2024 to enable me to work with partners to ensure that we have robust and effective partnership arrangements to safeguard the borough's children.

Following publication by the Government on new requirements for safeguarding partnerships, **Working Together 2023**, we have made some important changes to our partnership arrangements. We have appointed an **independent scrutineer to bring challenge to the work of the partnership** and establish a **Lead Safeguarding Partners** Board which enables the chief Constable of West Mercia Police, the Chief Executive of Telford & Wrekin Council and the Chief Executive of the NHS Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin ICB have oversight and accountability for safeguarding children.

As a Partnership, we've seen the benefits of our focused and multifaceted approach to developing our offer and aligning with key priorities. By continuing with our **Family Safeguarding** model and commissioning work with respected academics in the field of neglect, we've achieved a **significant reduction in neglect referrals**. This progress has enabled a positive transition from a dedicated Neglect Subgroup to **six-monthly reviews** led by our **Independent Scrutineer**.

We remain committed to continually developing our workforce's understanding of thresholds and available services, ensuring that the right support is provided at the earliest opportunity. This commitment is strongly reflected in our ongoing **Partnership Threshold Training**.

We've deepened our commitment to being a **reflective and learning Partnership**. This year, we've made a concerted effort to test the effectiveness of our learning and communication processes through **Single and Multi-Agency Case File Audits**. These audits are a vital tool for evaluating the impact of our work and provide assurance around the development of practice.

This year has been one of considerable change and development, marked by a raft of new legislation aimed at supporting the most vulnerable children in our society. Among these is the **Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024**, which has helped shape our evolving response to families in need through the **Families First Programme**. In Telford and Wrekin, this national focus aligns with our local vision – building on the work of our **Family Hub initiative** and continuing our commitment to meaningful consultation, as demonstrated through the **Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry** and the **co-production of our current partnership priorities**.

While we embrace the opportunities ahead, we also recognise the challenges. In Telford and Wrekin, we pride ourselves on being a **mature, open, and honest partnership**. We remain steadfast in our central aim: **keeping children safe and families together**. We will continue to challenge each other constructively and hold one another to account, always placing the children and families of Telford and Wrekin at the heart of everything we do.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many professionals and volunteers who work tirelessly across our borough to make it a safer place for children and young people.



Jo Britton

Jo Britton

Chair of Safeguarding Children Board (Executive Director, Children and Family Services)

Who is the Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board and what does it do?

How the Board does things is as important as what it does. To shape how it delivers its role, the Board has adopted the following principles and values:

- **Empowerment** – people being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and give informed consent;
 - **Prevention** – it's better to take action before harm occurs;
 - **Proportionality** – the least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented;
 - **Protection** – support and representation for those in greatest need;
 - **Partnership** – working with communities who have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting abuse and neglect; and
 - **Accountability** – accountability and transparency in safeguarding practice.
- **Enhanced Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements:** Reflecting shared responsibility and increased accountability across all statutory partners— Telford & Wrekin Council, West Mercia Police, and Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICS;
 - **Independent Scrutineer Role:** Providing objective oversight and challenge to ensure transparency and effectiveness;
 - **Recognition of a Strong and Mature Partnership:** The Partnership continues to demonstrate resilience, collaboration, and a commitment to continuous improvement; and
 - **Regional Collaboration:** Engagement with Lead Safeguarding Partner meetings across the West Mercia footprint ensures alignment with broader regional safeguarding priorities.

Working Together 2023 (WTG23) requires Telford & Wrekin Council, West Mercia Police, and Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS) to establish and maintain multi-agency safeguarding arrangements to protect vulnerable children. In line with *WTG 2023*, the Partnership has continued to strengthen its governance and accountability structures. Key developments include:

The responsibility to maintain multi-agency safeguarding arrangements to protect vulnerable children is overseen by the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Partnership Board, jointly funded by the three statutory partners. The Board has fully adopted the principles of *WTG23*, resulting in the establishment of a newly appointed, top-tier leadership group. Senior leaders from each agency meet regularly with the Lead Safeguarding Partner (LSP) to gain assurance and address concerns related to safeguarding children in Telford and Wrekin. In addition to this, the broader Safeguarding Children Partnership Board continues to operate, comprising service leads, directors, and representatives from education and the third sector.

- A **Lead Safeguarding Partner (LSP)** structure across the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin footprint. Comprising of Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire Chief Executives, Chief of West Mercia Police and the Chief Executive of Telford and Shropshire ICB).
- A **Delegated Safeguarding Partner (DSP)** structure specific to the Telford & Wrekin authority area. This is known locally as Safeguarding Children Board.

Safeguarding Children Board

The Board plays a central role in driving the safeguarding agenda across Telford and Wrekin. Membership is drawn from a broad range of statutory and strategic partners, ensuring diverse representation and robust oversight.

Board membership includes:

- Independent Scrutineer
- Telford & Wrekin Council – Children’s Services
- NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS)
- West Mercia Police
- Telford & Wrekin Council – Education and Skills
- Voice of the Child Representative, Project Manager, and School Improvement Adviser/ITT Lead
- Telford & Wrekin Council – Policy & Governance Service Delivery Manager
- Legal Advisor – Solicitor, Team Leader (People), Telford & Wrekin Council
- West Mercia Youth Offending Team
- Safeguarding Children Board Manager – Telford and Wrekin Partnership
- Education Representative – Local Head Teacher

Core Strategic Focus:

- **Child-Centred Practice:** Ensuring the voice and experience of the child is central to all safeguarding activity.
- **Accountability:** Holding partners to account for their role in keeping children safe.
- **Data-Driven Insight:** Collecting and sharing intelligence to evaluate effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.
- **Workforce Development:** Ensuring staff and volunteers are equipped with the training and confidence to safeguard effectively.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Reviewing policies and guidance to maintain high standards of practice.
- **Public Awareness:** Promoting understanding of safeguarding issues and how to respond.

To enhance strategic oversight, the Partnership has introduced Executive DSP meetings, involving statutory leads, a local headteacher representing Education, and the Independent Scrutineer. These meetings are held between Safeguarding Children Board sessions, providing a focused space for leaders to monitor progress and address emerging priorities.

From December 2024, Jo Britton, Director of Children’s Services (DCS), chairs both the Safeguarding Children Board and the Executive. The chairing role is subject to annual review and may rotate by mutual agreement when deemed in the best interests of the Partnership. The Chair will present this Annual Report to both the **Telford & Wrekin Council Scrutiny Board for Children and Families** and the **Health & Wellbeing Board**, reinforcing transparency and accountability.

Telford and Wrekin – the place, a Borough of contrasts

The borough served by the Safeguarding Children Partnership is marked by its diversity in geography, history, and population:

Geographical and Cultural Diversity: At its heart lies the New Town of Telford, established in 1968 and developed around historic communities such as Wellington, Oakengates, Dawley, and Madeley. Along the River Severn sits Ironbridge, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. Over two-thirds of the borough is rural, creating a unique blend of urban and countryside environments.

Growth and Demographics: Telford and Wrekin is one of the fastest-growing areas in England, driven by inward migration of families attracted by its high-quality environment, affordable housing, and strong transport links to the West Midlands. In 2024 the population of the borough was estimated to be 195,952 people. Between 2014 and 2024 the overall population increased by 14.9% making it the fastest growing upper tier local authority in the West Midlands and the ninth fastest in England. As the population grows, the borough is also ageing and becoming increasingly diverse, between 2014 and 2024 the number of people aged 65+ grew by 27.6% whilst the number of under 18s grew by 13.7%, increasing from 38,923 to 44,248. The population is becoming more ethnically diverse with the proportion of the population from a non-white British background increasing from 10.5% in 2011 to 17.0% in 2021. The under 18 population is even more diverse with 23.5% (9,750) from a non-white British ethnic background in 2021.



Economic Profile: The borough is home to around 7,000 businesses with key sectors including advanced manufacturing and agri-tech, defence, engineering, plastics, IT outsourcing and data centres, construction, retail, food and drink and tourism. Unemployment rates in the borough are consistently below the regional and national averages and GVA per head in Telford and Wrekin is the third highest in the West Midlands region behind Solihull and Warwickshire.

Challenges: Deprivation and Inequality

While some parts of Telford and Wrekin appear prosperous, there are clear differences across the borough. 10.5% of the borough’s population live in areas ranked in the 20% least deprived in England, however 24.5% of residents (approx.48,000 people) live in areas ranked in the 20% most deprived nationally.

In 2023/24, 27.1% of under 16s (10,359 people) were living in relative low-income families, this was significantly worse than the England average (22.1%).

Since 2015/2016:

- 14.4% increase in pupils receiving SEN support.
- 49.2% increase in pupils with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan.

To better understand referral and escalation levels within the safeguarding system, the following figures were submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) as part of the statutory returns for the 2024/2025 reporting year.

	2023/2024	2024/2025
Number of safeguarding contacts received	9,975	6,683
Number of CIN Plan open in year	1,224	1,003
Number of CP plan open in year	442	373
Number of episodes of CLA open in year	778	795



Voice of the child

The partnership places the voice of the child at the core of its work, primarily through the efforts of 56 Children's Safeguarding Boards. These Boards engage with children from Early Years through Key Stage 5 to promote their understanding of the right to feel safe, report concerns, and access timely support. The young people actively contributed to shaping the Partnership's priorities through an engagement initiative led by Independent Scrutineer John Clements. The young people feed back to the Safeguarding Children Partnership Board at all meetings through the Children's Safeguarding Board leads and presented by standing Board member, Sian Deane.

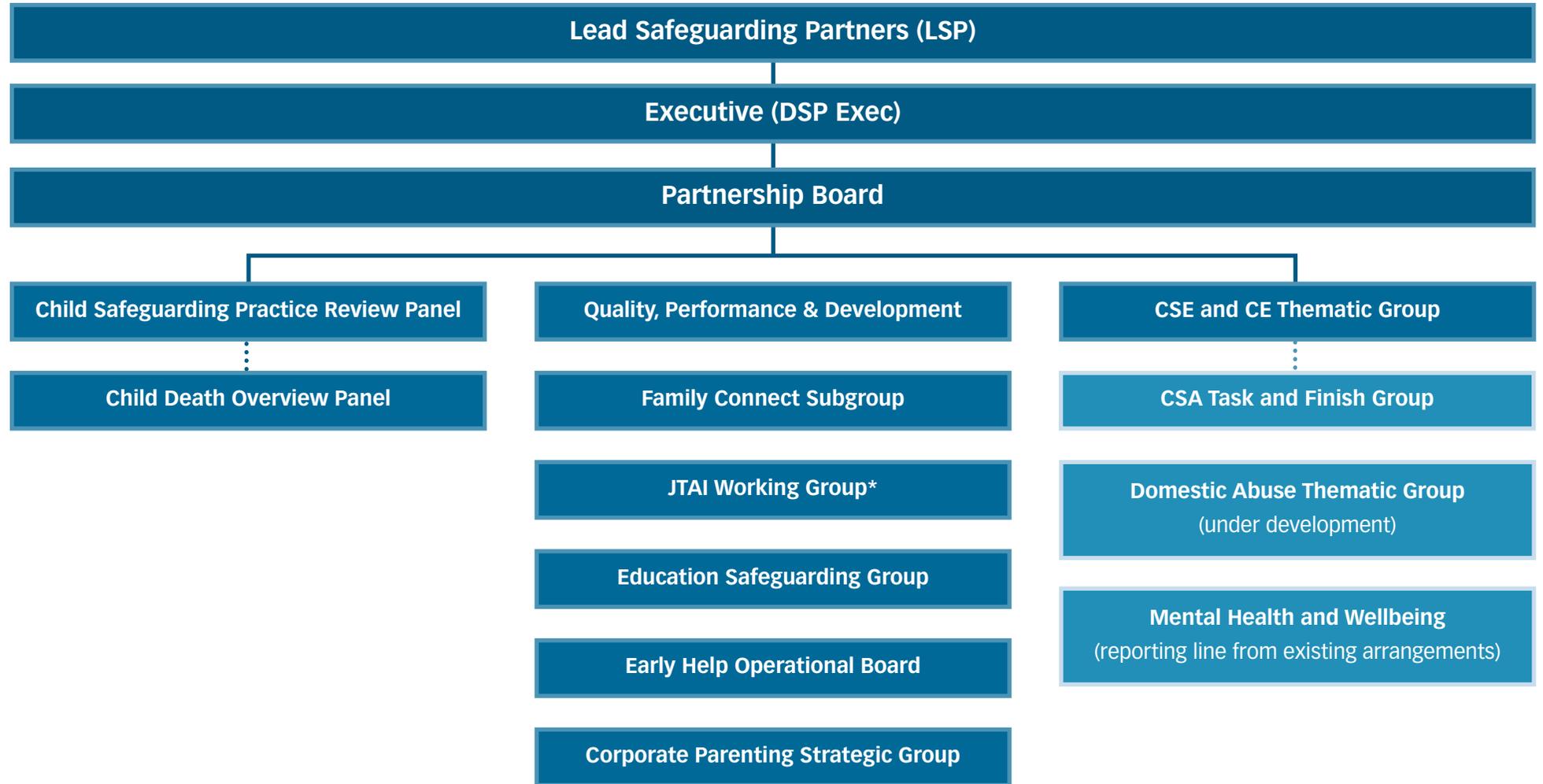
Two further examples of child voice influencing policy and practice:

- Professor Jan Howarth's review was informed by the Dandelions, a group of care-experienced parents and children, who provided insights into family engagement from Family Connect referrals through to Section 47 inquiries and Initial Child Protection Conferences.
- The Partnership's response to all IITCSE recommendations was guided by the perspectives of individuals with lived experience of child sexual exploitation.



Governance

The Governance of the Safeguarding Children Partnership is as follows and all groups are explained further within the report.



*JTAI Working Group –dynamic working group, responsive to changes in Government guidance

Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Panel is the multi-agency group that has delegated responsibility from Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership to oversee the process and arrangements for identifying, commissioning and review child safeguarding practice reviews and respond to serious incidents of harm in accordance with Working Together (2023); at all times promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement across all organisations, driving improvements in practice. The panel administer all activity in connection to 16c (1) of the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017).

Within the reporting period, there has been one Rapid Review Referral received however this did not meet criteria for a Rapid Review to be undertaken and a single agency review was initiated.

CSPRs, Rapid Reviews and action plans have been progressed with publication taking place. CSPR 10 was published in May 2024 in relation to non-accidental injuries. Furthermore, CSPR 9 was published anonymously in January 2025 due to risk of identifying those involved.

Within the reporting period there have been changes to the chairing arrangements, terms of reference and structure to include senior leadership and increased accountability within the group.

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel works closely with the Quality Performance and Development (QPD) Subgroup to review and create policies, develop and distribute briefings and to undertake audit activity to provide assurance to the Safeguarding Children Board that learning has been implemented and is effective. The Panel complies and reviews a document that simplistically displays the Board identified safeguarding concerns/themes and cross references these current and evolving Board training offer.

Although not report directly to the Safeguarding Children Board, the Child Death Overview Panel feeds into the CSPR panel in connection to identified Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review.

Quality Performance and Development

Data Analysis and Audit Activity

Aligned with *Working Together 2023*, the Board has strengthened its focus on quantitative data analysis. The **Quality, Performance and Development (QPD)** subgroup compiles and analyses safeguarding data from across the Partnership. This intelligence informs strategic decision-making and is regularly reported to the Safeguarding Children Board.

The Partnership has commissioned the local authority's Insight Team to develop an enhanced performance dashboard. In addition to data aligned with priority subgroups, the dashboard will continue to highlight key indicators of partnership effectiveness, including re-referral and re-plan rates, as well as the number of children and families receiving support across all agencies over the whole spectrum on the continuum of need dashboard. Completion is expected in early 2025–2026.

Multi-Agency Case File Audit (MACFA) Activity

QPD leads on MACFA activity to provide assurance on practice quality and progress. Recent audit themes include:

- Criminal Violence and Exploitation
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing
- Intra-Familial Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)
- Right Care, Right Person

These audits have supported the Board in evidencing embedded learning and identifying areas for improvement. In addition to demonstrating good practice—such as positive audit outcomes for “Think Family” and trauma-informed approaches—each audit generates an action plan, which is progressed by the relevant thematic or working group.

An example of learning from the Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) audit includes the following actions:

- 1 **Review and Action Plan:** Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Partnership (TWSCP) to review its response to child sexual abuse, informed by audit findings, and develop an action plan to improve outcomes for children and families.
- 2 **Multi-Agency Strategy Discussions:** Ensure all strategy discussions involving CSA include Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) staff to address the medical needs of child victims.
- 3 **Therapeutic Support Referrals:** Ensure all potential child victims of sexual abuse are referred for consideration of therapeutic support.
- 4 **Risk Assessment and Management:** In line with the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's report on intra-familial CSA, conduct a review of how individuals who pose a risk of sexual harm and have contact with children are assessed and managed.
- 5 **Ongoing Audit and Evaluation:** Undertake further audits of CSA cases to evaluate the effectiveness of the local multi-agency response.

Audit Planning and Responsiveness

The Partnership adopts a blended approach to audit planning. Each subgroup submits annual recommendations to the Board, informed by data and emerging needs. In the last quarter, three audits were completed and two escalations addressed in response to real-time concerns.

This approach balances long-term strategic objectives with the flexibility to respond to dynamic safeguarding challenges. The next annual audit plan will be presented at the September 2025 Board meeting. Each thematic subgroup will analyse emerging trends and present recommendations to the Partnership Board in Q2. Audit activity will support this work by testing the effectiveness of our offer against national themes (e.g. Child Sexual Abuse) and providing assurance on the implementation of learning from Rapid Reviews, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, and training.

Governance and Follow-Up

All audit findings are reported to the Safeguarding Children Board, with action plans overseen by QPD. Following the CSA audit, the Board approved the establishment of a **Task and Finish Group** to focus on this specific area.

Family Connect subgroup

The Family Connect Subgroup plays a key role in identifying and addressing strategic, multi-agency barriers that may affect the effective implementation of the Children Act (1989/2004) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023). Reporting directly to the Safeguarding Children Board, the subgroup provides oversight and assurance, with the Independent Scrutineer serving as a core member.

Informed primarily by data and performance metrics, the subgroup has identified key trends, including a reduction in Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) referrals—subsequently referred to the CSE and Child Exploitation Subgroup which resulted in an increase and focus on CSE awareness, indicators and referral process—and has contributed valuable context to the local Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) offer and pathway.

Additionally, the Family Connect Subgroup has constructively challenged partners and worked to mitigate the impact of changes arising from the reorganisation of the West Mercia-wide Vulnerability Hub (Harm Assessment Unit).

Current priorities, focus and impact

Following a review of Board priorities in late 2024, young people were actively consulted through the Partnership's 56 Children's Safeguarding Boards to help shape future direction. The agreed priorities and areas of focus are listed below, followed by a detailed overview of each priority and the actions undertaken to date.

- The Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Exploitation Thematic Subgroup was retained as a key priority area for the partnership. In YEAR Telford & Wrekin Council commissioned an independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. As reported in the 2023-2024 report, the independent Chair Tom Crowther KC, has revisited Telford and been complementary of progress undertaken.

“People will not forget Telford’s history of child sexual exploitation – and nor should they. But in my view Telford’s approach – the Council’s approach – to the Recommendations, to engagement with its key partners and most of all with those three people it let down as children, now stands as a model.”

Tom Crowther KC, Statement from the Chair, Publication Day Update 16 July 2024. Independent inquiry, Telford Child Sexual Exploitation

The Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership believes it is the correct thing to continue working with the consultee is developing the whole exploitation offer for children in Telford, to continually strive to improve our response in this area.

- The **Neglect Subgroup** was discontinued, with ongoing oversight now provided by the **Independent Scrutineer** (see relevant section).
- In response to identified needs, **Early Help** has been formally established as a new subgroup. It was the view of the young people of Telford to

continue with the Partnerships trajectory of developing its early help offer. Both the Partnership and its residents feel that helping people at the earlier opportunity is the best way to support young people and families.

- Understanding the national concerns with children mental health and waiting times for services (which locally was identified through our QPD analysis), The young people of the 56 Children safeguarding Boards highlighted **Mental Health** as a concern. In response, the **Independent Scrutineer** is leading a comprehensive review to:
 - Map existing services.
 - Assess commissioning developments.
 - Identify gaps across the full continuum of care.

Additional Areas of Focus

- Supported by the national focus on **Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)**, the Partnership has undertaken a review of its CSA offer, led by the Independent Scrutineer. A Multi-Agency Case File Audit (MACFA) was also completed to identify areas for development. To ensure the Partnership’s CSA response remains aligned with national developments, a dedicated working group will be established in the first quarter of 2025–2026.
- In response to the 2024 JTAI guidance on domestic abuse, the Partnership has initiated targeted activity to explore its impact on children. Through the JTAI working group, it was identified that a further review of the local offer would strengthen assurance around best practice in Telford and Wrekin.

Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Exploitation Thematic Subgroup

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and broader child exploitation remain key priorities for the Partnership. While significant improvements have been made to policy and practice following the Independent Inquiry into CSE in Telford, we continue to work closely with individuals with lived experience to drive ongoing improvement.

Building on the CSE Annual Report, a detailed performance dashboard has been developed and is actively monitored by the thematic subgroup. This enables robust challenge and action, including analysis of referral patterns across agencies, evaluation of tools such as the Explore More document, and assessment of the effectiveness of CATE engagement sessions.

Through this analysis – and in collaboration with the Family Connect Subgroup – a reduction in CSE referrals was identified. In response, the subgroup implemented targeted strategies to refresh professional awareness and enhance public understanding of the signs of CSE. These efforts have contributed to a positive trend in the identification and referral of young people suspected to be at risk.

The Annual Report highlighted an overrepresentation of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) among those at risk of CSE. In response, a multi-agency case file audit was conducted. This involved practitioners from across the Partnership reviewing a representative case to assess how well the child's needs were met and to identify areas for improvement.

As a result of this audit, the following actions have been implemented:

- The CATE Lead will contact the SEND team for relevant information during CATE allocation meetings.

- A SEND worker will attend the CATE multi-agency risk panel.
- The CATE Lead will participate in the SEND decision panel.
- Where appropriate, CATE practitioners will liaise with the SEND team to support parents in requesting an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The “Explore More” document, co-developed with lived experience consultees, provides clear guidance for professionals making CSE referrals to Family Connect. It ensures that referrals include comprehensive and relevant information to support effective decision-making. Additionally, weekly CATE engagement sessions, held every Thursday morning, offer practitioners a structured opportunity to discuss potential cases, seek advice on risk factors, and apply threshold guidance consistently. Both initiatives have significantly improved the quality and consistency of CSE referrals.

The Partnership has appointed an NRM Coordinator to lead all National Referral Mechanism (NRM) submissions within Telford and Wrekin. This role was developed in response to engagement with ITTCSE lived experience consultees and reflects the Partnership's commitment to recognising all young people affected by exploitation as potential victims of modern slavery and trafficking. The full impact of this role will be evaluated and reported in the 2025–2026 Annual Report.

Early Help

Our Early Help offer has been restructured and integrated with existing Family Hubs. Six hubs are currently operational in priority areas across the borough, with two additional hubs in development. These hubs support children and families from pre-birth to age 19 (or 25 for those with SEND).

Access and Referral Referrals continue via an Early Help Assessment or relevant agency assessments, such as a Child and Family Assessment.

Support Offer The Family Support Team provides in-home support for up to six months. Additional services include:

- **Brief Intervention Support:** Rapid signposting and access to services.
- **Targeted Youth & Community Groups:** Including Triple P, Crush (teen relationships), support for separated families, and Talking Tots.
- **Community Access:** 'Here to Help' drop-ins and Family Connect advice via the Family Information Service.
- **Partner Coordination:** Dedicated support for professionals on thresholds, community resources, and Early Help processes.
- **Participation & Peer Support:** Engagement through children, young people, and parent panels, plus Family Hub volunteers.
- **Open Access Drop-ins:** Six weekly sessions for parents/carers seeking support.
- **Domestic Abuse Support:** Practitioners embedded in hubs, aligned with the Family Safeguarding model.
- **Start for Life Resources:** Distributed at midwifery bookings and birth registrations (approx. 280/month).
- **Fatherhood Engagement:** 16 trained Fatherhood Champions and an established Father Inclusive Network.

- **Inclusive Communication:** Multi-agency review of 0–2 age range materials to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness, following perinatal mortality recommendations.
- **Community Grants:** Launching July 2025, offering £500–£2,000 for local Start for Life initiatives.
- **Practitioner Training:** Triple P for Teens, SEND, and separated families begins September 2025 for 12 Family Hub staff.

Impact Over 12,000 individuals engaged with commissioned Family Hub sessions or interventions during 2024–2025.



Young people living with domestic abuse

Domestic abuse affects every aspect of a young person's life, often distorting their understanding of care, love, and safety. As a Partnership, we are committed to ensuring that young people growing up in such environments receive the support they need, with a clear understanding of their lived experiences and the long-term impact on their wellbeing.

In collaboration with the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership, our Independent Scrutineer has completed a scoping exercise to strengthen the local response to child victims of domestic abuse. This included engagement with Public Health to assess service provision, which confirmed that an effective offer is in place and that there are no current waiting lists.

A dedicated working group has been established to provide assurance to the Board that appropriate structures, support, and understanding are in place for young people affected by domestic abuse. The group will review current support and processes, with the aim of identifying clear, measurable areas for improvement. This work is expected to be completed in Autumn 2025.

Young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health – assurance and next steps

Mental health among young people remains a national concern and has been identified locally by both young people and the Board as a priority area requiring assurance. In response, the Partnership Team has initiated a quantifiable audit across health, Early Help, and Public Health partners.

This audit seeks to capture:

- Referral pathways and volumes
- Service composition and capacity
- Number of young people currently receiving support

The Partnership recognises that this is a rapidly evolving area, with ongoing improvements, service developments, and recommissioning of formal mental health provision.

At the close of the reporting period, all single agency audits were reviewed by the Partnership Business Unit and the Independent Scrutineer. The findings, along with a proposed thematic focus for a dedicated subgroup, will be presented to the Safeguarding Children Board in the first quarter of 2025–2026.

Independent scrutiny – what the scrutineer says about the partnership?

This overview is provided in four sections:

- 1** Compliance with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and the ongoing development of child safeguarding.
- 2** The day-to-day effectiveness of the partnership.
- 3** The outcomes being achieved for children.
- 4** Issues for the partnership to consider.

Compliance with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 (WT 2023) and the ongoing development of child safeguarding

The partnership has been positive in its response to WT2023, and this is reflected in its structures and processes. Lead and Delegated Safeguarding Partners have been identified, formed groups, developed relationships, and met regularly. One of the delegated safeguarded partners, became the Partnership Chair, for an initial 12 months. The partnership, in consultation with children and families, identified four priorities and established groups through which activity to develop practice in those areas will be coordinated. An Independent Scrutineer was appointed, a scrutiny plan developed, and a quality assurance framework developed. Regular scrutiny work has been undertaken through a programme of multi-agency case file audits. Processes to identify incidents from which learning can be drawn, are in place and rapid reviews have been conducted. Learning arising from those incidents has been disseminated across the partnership. There is clear ethos on working with the ‘whole family’ and staff across different agencies understand what

family networks are and there is a focus on keeping children with their families. Practitioners across the partnership listen to children and families and involve them in their direct work and in service development. The joint targeted area inspection conducted in July 2025 commented positively on the partnership’s adoption of WT 2023.

The day-to-day effectiveness of the partnership

The safeguarding children partnership is alive and working in Telford and Wrekin. The partnership is underpinned by effective working relationships, and this can be seen at all levels, from the chief executives through to staff working directly with children and families. The relationships are not all cosy, and when necessary, staff are able to challenge one another. I have witnessed this on numerous occasions over the past twelve months, through different levels of seniority. The subgroups complement each other, and the overall work is effectively coordinated by the Partnership Manager and Partnership Chair. There is a strong learning culture across the partner agencies, with many examples of multi-agency case file audits, rapid reviews and dynamic learning events being completed with learning identified. Staff have worked hard to gather information, analysed it and contributed positively during multi-agency discussion forums. The staff I have met across the partnership have been committed, enthusiastic about their work, dedicated towards the children and families they support and keen to improve their practice.

The outcomes being achieved for children

- On numerous occasions I have seen a graduated response being provided to meet the needs of children and families. The response is proportionate to their needs. I have observed this across Children's Social Care, Educational settings, Health providers and the Police.
- Practice is mostly strengths based, with practitioners working with families, building on their capabilities to develop an enduring means of supporting children in need of help and protection.
- Aligned to this staff consider the needs of the whole family and understand in many situations the needs of parents and carers must be addressed to enable the work with children to succeed.
- There is a strong focus on early help and support, with the Family Hubs across Telford and Wrekin being a key means of providing advice support. Recent developments have strengthened the offer of help to children and families.
- Family Connect provides an excellent service for the partnership, offering access to all levels of support through a single and well-known gateway. Contacts and referrals are handled efficiently, promptly, in proportion and sensitively.
- Repeat referrals are comparatively low and below national and regional averages.
- The number of children on repeat child protection plans are low.
- Data about families supported by the Family Hubs staff show significant improvements in their management of situations that threaten the wellbeing of their children.
- Quality assurance work has shown work of consistent high quality across a range of threats.
- The recent joint targeted area inspection of the 'front door' revealed good practice across many areas of activity.



John Clements
Independent Scrutineer
15 August 2025

Training and development

Training and development overview

A key focus for the Partnership is embedding learning and strengthening collaboration across agencies. This work is led by the **Quality, Partnership and Development Subgroup**.

In 2025, the Partnership appointed a **Review and Development Officer** to consolidate the training programme, ensuring alignment with learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) and strategic priorities.

For the year 2024-2025, Training, delivered through a blended approach the following training was undertaken by professionals from all partner agencies

Core Training Offer

Threshold Training

- Promotes understanding of the Partnership's Threshold Guidance.
- Emphasises the “Right Support at the Right Time” model, with a focus on Early Help.
- Includes the “Explore More” guide on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), co-produced with individuals with lived experience, featuring case study-based learning on contextual safeguarding and information sharing.

CSE Awareness Training

- Delivered to all Local Authority and NHS provider staff.
- Promoted across partner agencies using the IITCSE-developed training package.

Trauma-Informed Practice

- Targeted training for education settings.
- CSE trauma-informed training co-produced with lived experience consultees, delivered to children's social care, GPs, and sexual health services.

Specialist and Role-Specific Training

- LADO Training – Face-to-face delivery.
- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Training – Initial and refresher sessions delivered by partners.
- Child Protection and Safeguarding – Core offer.
- DSL Termly Network – Training and updates on practice and process.
- Governor Safeguarding Induction and Refresher Training
- Brook Traffic Light Tool – Responding to sexual behaviours in children and young people.
- Safeguarding Record Keeping
- Child Protection Supervision
- Managing Child-on-Child Abuse
- Online Safety, Filtering and Monitoring
- Keeping Children Safe in Education – Webinar format.
- Prevent Training – Including duty requirements and termly network sessions.
- Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements of the EYFS

Lunch and Learn Sessions (Past 12 Months)

- Modern Slavery Awareness
- DASH and MARAC Awareness
- Reducing Inappropriate Medication (Learning Disability/Autism)
- Online Safety and Scams
- Domestic Abuse

Partner-Led Training

- Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust – Monthly Level 3 safeguarding sessions for Ministry of Defence staff.
- Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust – Child Safeguarding Week sessions covering:
 - 1 Domestic Abuse and Children
 - 2 Youth Trends
 - 3 Misogyny and Digital Violence
 - 4 Elective Home Education vs. Missing
 - 5 Mental Health and LGBTQ+ in Healthcare
 - 6 Child Sexual Exploitation

Upcoming Training Initiatives

The Partnership continues to evolve its training offer to reflect emerging priorities and learning from reviews.

Scheduled for Rollout

Unconscious Bias and Cultural Awareness Training

- Commissioned via an external expert.
- Agreed in June 2025, linked to learning from a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR).
- Rollout begins October 2025.

Back to Basics Training

- Approved by the Safeguarding Children Board in April 2025.
- Launching September 2025.
- Focused on strengthening multi-agency practice through:
 - **Core Group Meetings** – Enhancing collaboration and clarity of roles.
 - **Child Protection Conferences** – Improving consistency and effectiveness in multi-agency decision-making.

Potential challenges and our future focus

Potential challenges

The Partnership continues to navigate a complex landscape, with several key pressures impacting service delivery:

- **Rising levels of poverty** have increased demand on services, reinforcing the critical role of Family Hubs in providing early support.
- **Financial constraints** across public sector partners—including health, police, and local authorities—are affecting capacity and sustainability.
- **The Integrated Care Board (ICB) cluster arrangements** have introduced challenges in service commissioning and operational capacity.
- **Diverging partner priorities**, such as pan-West Mercia approaches versus localised arrangements, have created tensions in aligning practice.

Future focus

Looking ahead, the Partnership is committed to strengthening collaboration and improving outcomes through the following priorities:

- **Board Membership:** Enhancing representation from health providers and the third sector, particularly in shaping the Early Help offer.
- **Data Utilisation:** Building on thematic analysis to develop a comprehensive, single-view dataset of children and families and implementation of phase 2 of the child protection information sharing system (CP-IS).
- **Embedding Family First:** Transitioning the programme into core business operations.
- **Priority Delivery:** Continuing to drive progress against strategic priorities.
- **Mutual Accountability:** Partners will hold each other to account to ensure robust and effective services during periods of change.
- **Children's Board Development:** Establishing a dedicated Children's Board to provide direct input into the Safeguarding Children Board.

Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere thanks to:

- The children and young people of Telford and Wrekin, and the members of the 56 Safeguarding Children Boards who have given voice to their experiences and feelings. You have been heard.
- The individuals and families who have courageously shared their stories and worked alongside us to drive meaningful change.
- The professionals across the borough who continue to support the Partnership, their colleagues, and the wider community with dedication and care.

To find out more about the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership and access resources please visit www.telfordsafeguardingpartnership.org.uk



