

# Impact of Safeguarding in Luton



## The Yearly Report for Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership

**2024/2025**

September 2025 – Final Version

## CONTENTS

Introduction .....	3
Safeguarding Partners' Impact and Reflections .....	6
<b>STATUTORY PARTNER REFLECTIONS</b> .....	8
<b>ABOUT LUTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP</b> .....	14
<b>LUTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP MEMBERSHIP</b> .....	16
LUTON IN NUMBERS .....	17
<b>SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE – safeguarding snapshot 2024-2025:</b> .....	22
<b>LSCP Strategic Priorities</b> .....	23
<b>Why did the LSCP choose these priorities?</b> .....	23
<b>LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE</b> .....	25
<b>Learning from Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding practice reviews</b> .....	25
<b>Impact of activity – Learning FROM reviews</b> .....	26
<b>LEARNING FROM NATIONAL PRACTICE REVIEWS AND SARS</b> .....	34
<b>SECTION 11 SELF ASSESSMENT</b> .....	35
<b>Impact of activity – SECTION 11</b> .....	36
<b>Learning from MULTI AGENCY AUDITS</b> .....	38
<b>Impact of activity – multiagency audit</b> .....	40
<b>Safeguarding children in the home</b> .....	41
<b>Neglect</b> .....	41
<b>Impact of activity - NEGLECT</b> .....	42
<b>DOMESTIC ABUSE</b> .....	45
<b>Impact of activity – DOMESTIC ABUSE</b> .....	46
<b>Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing</b> .....	48
<b>Impact of activity – EMOTIONAL WELLBEING &amp; MENTAL HEALTH</b> .....	49
<b>Private Fostering</b> .....	51
<b>Safeguarding children in the community</b> .....	52
<b>Extrafamilial harm</b> .....	52
<b>Impact of activity – EXTRAFAMIAL HARM</b> .....	53
<b>Safeguarding Education</b> .....	54
<b>Impact of activity – safeguarding Education</b> .....	55
<b>Safeguarding children through effective systems and processes</b> .....	56
<b>partnership funding contributions &amp; Expenditure 2024/25</b> .....	58
<b>WHAT ELSE DID WE DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?</b> .....	60
<b>Pan Bedfordshire Policy and Practice Group</b> .....	60

Child Death Overview Panel:.....	61
Engaging children and young people to hear their views and lived experiences .....	61
the provision of high quality multi agency safeguarding training .....	62
IMPACT OF ACTIVITY -TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT .....	63
PARTNERSHIP SELF EVALUATION – OUR ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE PLANS.....	64
Independent Chair’s scrutiny of the Partnership .....	73

## INTRODUCTION

This Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) Yearly Report 2024-25 covers the work of the [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements \(MASA\)](#) in Luton from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. It is the fifth such report and has been prepared by the LSCP Strategic Business Manager on behalf of the lead safeguarding partners.

Statutory guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)*, sets out that the safeguarding partners' yearly report should provide transparency for children, families and practitioners about the activity undertaken by safeguarding partners in the previous twelve months. It must also set out what the partnership have done because of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including learning and improvement from local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR), and how effectively the arrangements have been in practice. The Yearly Report should be reflective of work undertaken during the previous financial year (i.e. April 2024 to March 2025) and submitted and published by the end of September 2025.

In addition, the yearly report should also include:

- the contribution of each safeguarding partner to the functioning and structure of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
- any themes emanating from aggregated methods of scrutiny, for example, reviews and scrutineer activity and multi-agency audits
- evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families
- an analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities
- an analysis of learning from serious incidents
- a record of key decisions and actions taken by the safeguarding partners in the yearly cycle, including in relation to implementing the recommendations from any local and national child safeguarding practice reviews and the impact this has had
- ways in which the safeguarding partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision
- the breakdown of costs in delivering the arrangements for that period, including the financial contributions of individual partners, any changes to funding and an assessment of the impact and value for money of this funding
- evidence of how safeguarding partners are ensuring the adequate representation and input of education at both the operational and strategic levels of the arrangements
- an overview of how data is being used to encourage learning within the arrangements and evidence of how information sharing has improved practice and outcomes
- a review of the impact and learning from independent scrutiny arrangements to ensure the leadership is strong and the arrangements are leading to the desired and necessary impact
- any updates to the published arrangement with the proposed timescale for implementation

- evidence that national reforms have been implemented, taking into account key decisions and actions taken by safeguarding partners in response to reforms, and any issues or concerns encountered within the yearly cycle.

This report demonstrates how the LSCP has progressed its work from its intentions last year through to its achievements in the current year. The Luton safeguarding partners have been committed to work together effectively in a multi-agency approach to identifying where action can be taken to improve the services provided to children and their families. A structured programme of highlight reports and multi-agency audits has identified areas of good practice as well as those for further improvement. This together with analysis of data, scrutiny of performance information and learning from recent reviews informed the LSCP Strategic Business Plan for 2024/25.

The partnership as a pathfinder authority for Families First for Children has continued to work in a test and learn approach to deliver the requirements set out in '*Stable Homes Built on Love*'. The LSCP have been developing and delivering a revised approach for multi-agency working that focusses on early intervention, prevention and working in partnership with children and their families. The LSCP has reviewed the Strategic Business Plan 2024-26 to ensure it is in line with these requirements and take its work forward during the remainder of the year and to ensure compliance with the requirements of Working Together 2023 into 2025/26.

The yearly report therefore sets out the partnership activity against its identified priorities across the year, which includes their joint work with the Local Safeguarding Adults Partnership and priority areas of focus alongside the other two Pan Bedfordshire safeguarding partnerships. The agreed thematic priorities are:

#### **LSCP Strategic Business Plan - Safeguarding children and young people priorities:**

- Domestic abuse (Pan Beds and joint with adults)
- Neglect (Pan Beds)
- Emotional wellbeing and mental health (Pan Beds)
- Child Exploitation and Missing (Pan Beds)
- Child Sexual Abuse (Pan Beds)

#### **Other Learning from reviews and audits:**

- Contextual safeguarding, child exploitation and missing
- Cultural Competence and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Early Help and prevention
- Effective systems and processes
- Information sharing
- Mental Health
- Neglect
- Non-accidental injury
- Safeguarding Transitions
- Thresholds for assessment and intervention

Alongside this the LSCP has a Pan Bedfordshire focus on the work streams around the Voice of the Child, Cultural Competence and Safeguarding in Education.

### Partnership structures and governance

- Effective policy and procedures
- Impact of Training Undertaken
- Evidence of impact arising from independent scrutiny.

The report considers how well the safeguarding partnership has responded, as a multi-agency safeguarding system, to deliver on their priorities and to identify emerging safeguarding themes as a learning organisation and to make improvements where required. It recognises the progress Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership has made throughout the year whilst also highlighting those that remain and which we will continue to address together in 2025/26.

The LSCP has continued to seek assurance about the effectiveness of single agency and multi-agency adult safeguarding in Luton against its priorities and to ensure it meets its statutory obligations for practice development and sector-led improvement.

The LSCP Annual Report 2023-2024 recognised the LSCP needed to undertake further work across the following areas and had agreed to:

In terms of our future plans, we will work to our Strategic Business Plan and Strategies to:

- Ensure that we **implement and embed the revisions from Working Together** in our MASA including funding, the role of education in the partnership and how we deliver and test our priority areas of focus through effective structures and processes
- **Support the delivery of the Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme** through a test and learn approach that ensures we have the right thresholds, multi-agency case management and information sharing processes to ensure families receive early support and a lead practitioner throughout their involvement with services
- **Ensure our dataset is thematic, that it gives a clear overview of safeguarding both in Luton and across Pan Bedfordshire** that demonstrates impact and helps us determine our areas of focus and priority.
- **Make multi-agency systemic improvement into practice** around neglect, domestic abuse, preparing for adulthood, serious youth violence and, whole family approaches
- **Continue to learn from audit, rapid reviews and CSPRs** demonstrating improvements in practice and impact for children and families
- **Further inclusion of the voice of the child** and explore the role of young scrutineers as well as the requirements of the Luton Child Friendly Town 2040 Vision and Strategy
- Publish and implement its **revised MASA arrangements** by 20 December 2024.

This report therefore demonstrates how well the LSCP has addressed these areas of practice throughout 2024-2025. It also reports on evidence of the impact of this work and emerging themes. As well as why and how LSCP has revised its priorities and structures accordingly and as a result of national drivers such as Working Together 2023 and Stable Homes Built on Love.





## **SAFEGUARDING PARTNERS' IMPACT AND REFLECTIONS**





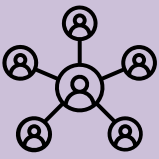

The partnership has worked to assess its impact as well as to review its function and structure. The LSCP continues to use data and to develop highlight reports to understand the context of Luton and how well partners have worked together to promote welfare and ensure effective safeguarding of children in a range of different circumstances. It undertook both thematic multi-agency audits of cases as well as the yearly Section 11 self-assessment. This safeguarding compliance audit tests how well organisations are meeting their statutory safeguarding responsibilities. The Section 11 audit which was on Neglect shows the quality of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements across the partnership. A summary of the Section 11 findings from 2024/25 are presented on page 35 which demonstrate the strength of the partnership and the effectiveness of single agencies.

The LSCP participated in a number of placed based audits including safeguarding transitions in conjunction with the Luton Safeguarding Adults Board. Pan Bedfordshire multi-agency audit on Child, Adolescent to Parent Violence Abuse (CAPVA) to seek assurance that partners are appropriately identifying and responding to the needs of children, young people and families where there is child to parent violence. These highlight the quality of practice by focusing on a small number of cases. All participants reflected on the elements of good practice and identified any gaps at a practice, organisational or system level. The audits illustrate a very strong commitment to safeguarding, and where action is required in any partner organisation, this is addressed very swiftly. More information on this audit can be found on page 40.

The LSCP has been working with our partners throughout 2024/25 to make the changes in how Safeguarding Children Partnerships are structured and introduce ways in which established practice needs to be changed and more information on this can be found on pages 6, 15 and 56 onwards.

### **Overview of changes made regarding 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023'**

	<b>System reform and multi-agency expectations for all partners including family help, family networks and lead practitioners</b>		<b>Further inclusion of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector within local multiagency safeguarding arrangements</b>
	<b>Multi-agency standards for working with parents, carers and families</b>		<b>Strengthening accountability, data monitoring and impact reporting</b>

	<b>Changes to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA) strategic leadership, chairing and funding arrangements</b>		<b>Tackling all forms of abuse with a focus on harm outside the home</b>
	<b>Defining and strengthening the independent scrutiny function</b>		<b>Support for children with special educational needs and disabilities</b>
	<b>Ensuring interdependencies with other strategic boards and organisations including safeguarding adults and NPS</b>		<b>Strengthening the role of education, early years and childcare providers</b>

To support the strengthening of Luton MASA arrangements, embedding education settings into our MASA was a priority area for the LSCP and our colleagues within the neighbouring SCPs. During 2024/25 we took robust steps to strengthen the education representation and participation in strategic decision making. We also set out to ensure partners contributed to the effective support of children and families through Family Help, Family Hubs and Networks and to make sure it is ‘front and centre’ in all safeguarding activity.

In addition, the statutory partners and relevant agencies have supported Luton Borough Council as a **‘Families First for Children Wave 2 Pathfinder’** local authority. Following notification in February 2024 of their successful application, the LSCP at pace has been heavily involved in developing the Multi-agency Safeguarding partner reforms required to deliver the pathfinder test and learn approach. They have supported innovated approaches and their staff have worked closely with the frontline to develop close and supportive partner relationships.

The LSCP continually reviews its communication with partner agencies and Luton residents which is mainly via the [Safeguarding Bedfordshire website](#), quarterly newsletter and weekly emails. There has been much development of the website throughout 2024/25 with new practitioner resources added throughout the year. The LSCP also contributed to the regular review of the multi-agency safeguarding procedures as detailed at throughout the report.

#### **Safeguarding Bedfordshire Website:**

The new Safeguarding Bedfordshire website launched in July 2023 and has continued to be developed and updated. The website hosts lots of information regarding our safeguarding arrangements, lots of useful information and advice and access to lots of resources, toolkits, case review learning and training. This has really shown the integration and engagement of staff across Bedfordshire with the resources available.

During 2024/25, **288,404** people visited the website, with **144,326** clicking on the home page. The chart below shows the top 10 pages visited in 2024/25 (after hitting the homepage).

Page	Number of hits	Rating most visited
Safeguarding Bedfordshire Training	10455	1st
Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership	9702	2nd
Luton Safeguarding Adults Board	8843	3rd
Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership	8811	4th
Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership	7327	5th
Report a concern about an adult or a child	6471	6th
Upcoming Training	6382	7th
Pan Bedfordshire - What does this mean?	5845	8th
Welcome to Children & Young People	4623	9th
What is Abuse and Neglect?	4202	10th

A snapshot of **288** training evaluations during **quarter 4** highlighted at least **60** evaluations specifically referenced the website, and how useful it is. One evaluation commented....

*"The safeguarding Bedfordshire website - phenomenal amount of information and resources!! Easy to navigate and so clear!"*

The LSCP promoted improved practice through promotion of resources to support resolution of professional disputes, escalation and professional curiosity. Wider conversations to support challenge and respectful challenge are evident and as a result there are improved interprofessional relationships at all levels. There is greater willingness to share risk across partner agencies, evidence of multi-agency collaboration and problem solving and listening to children and young people and advocating for change. The LSCP has overseen the development of the Families First for Children pathfinder and provided advice, challenge and support to ensure that the Multi-Agency Child Protection Team approach includes lead practitioners from Health, Police and Education.

## STATUTORY PARTNER REFLECTIONS

### BLMK Integrated Care Partnership

BLMK ICB along with our health partners in CCS and ELFT continue to work with our system partners to ensure the health needs of our babies, children and young people are met. That together we continue to deliver our statutory functions to safeguard children and families in the Luton borough.

Our team of Designated professionals and Named professionals provide the expertise, support and guidance across the systems and have contributed to the development of an implementation of strategies, processes , and policies across Luton place and the Pan Bedfordshire footprint. Working collectively to understand emerging themes and trends that

are impacting children and young people and using that knowledge to inform the commissioning of services.

Population Health and health inequalities continues to drive our priorities across the health system. Understanding and shared learning from our Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Safeguarding Adults Reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews as well as our rapid reviews tells us there are more to do to safeguard our population especially around Neglect, Serious Youth Violence, Violence Against Women and Girls and Mental Health and Learning Disability and Autism. The ICB promotes a culture of continual learning and improvement which enables professionals to improve practice which impacts on outcomes for children and young people. The Designated professional Team supports and encouraging professionals across the system through safeguarding supervision and reflective practice. Through this approach feedback has indicated increased confidence in recognition of potential safeguarding concerns and subsequent referrals into support services.

The ICB provide safeguarding training to Primary Care staff across Luton and have introduced a primary care safeguarding self-assessment audit tool which enable practices to review their safeguarding arrangements . The tool highlights what best practise looks like, and gives guidance around processes and policies that should be in place. In addition the team deliver bite size sessions that reflect the themes and challenges that as a partnership we are identifying across our footprint as well as sharing learning from local case reviews. We host a monthly GP forum which acts as a peer support network where good practice is shared as well as giving opportunities to other partners to deliver sessions. An example of this, is a presentation from the LA Children's MASH team who delivered a session around what makes a good referral. There have been notable improvements by the Local Authority in relation to the quality of Primary care referrals since this session was delivered.

The ICB has supported the local authority delivery of the Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme in their test and learn approach that ensures the LSCP has the right multi-agency thresholds, multi-agency case management and information sharing processes to ensure families receive early support and a lead practitioner throughout their involvement with services. Supporting with the application process and recruiting a Health lead practitioner that is co located within the Multi-Agency Child Protection Team. The ICB is an active member of the Families First for Children Executive Board and continues to support the strategic decision making on the roll out of the reforms within the partnership.

The ICB have supported the partnership with their multi-agency audit programme ,including audits such as Child to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA) as well as the multi-agency section 11 quality assurance audit around Neglect. This has helped with more effective partnership working, as gaps and challenges in practice were identified and steps put in place to support practitioners. These included disseminating guidance around the effective support and threshold documents, as well as strengthening organisation policies to support staff and improve information sharing across agencies. We continue to engage with board sub groups for neglect CSA and exploitation and input into policy development.

The ICB have restructured the role of their designated professionals to capture an all age approach to strengthen the transition to adulthood and the focus on the whole family. We have appointed a full time Children in Care Designated professional to work closely with our LA colleagues and other health teams across the system to achieve improved outcome for children in care and our care leavers. The Children in care Designate is a member of the corporate parenting panel and works closely with the LA to understand the views and voice of children and young people who have lived experience in the care system.

The ICB remain a committed partner, working collaboratively with others to safeguarding our Children and Young People across Luton and the Pan Bed .

### **Bedfordshire Police**

As a partnership, we have sought to work collaboratively and support each other across the system and at all levels of our organisations to continue identifying and responding effectively to children in need of safeguarding. Our focus remains on partnership efficiency, enabling partners to operate at the required level to safeguard children and vulnerable people.

We continue to engage at both statutory and voluntary levels around key issues highlighted nationally, to focus our efforts locally. These issues include Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, Neglect, Domestic Abuse, Missing children, and vulnerable people. Recent reviews, such as the 'Casey Review,' highlight the need for agencies to share information regarding those posing the most risk, ensuring that information sharing remains at the forefront.

Our engagement with schools, using preventative tools, ensures that children are educated and aware of risk situations they may encounter during their childhood. This empowers them to respond, and report matters to professionals as soon as possible. Enhanced methods of partnership training across Child Protection, Domestic Abuse, Trauma-informed practice, voice of the child, and understanding neglect continue to drive operational awareness and understanding.

Continuous professional development is key, as we strive to ensure our staff and officers are trained to identify vulnerability at the earliest opportunity. Our focus is on proactively identifying those posing the most risk to children, targeting those causing harm, disrupting activity, and ensuring we remain proactive in apprehending responsible individuals. Throughout, we must remain suspect-focused, victim-centred, and context-led.

We continue to support through Strategy meetings, including Initial Child Protection Conferences where appropriate, and determine the best way forward for children, considering their voice throughout their journey. We seek funding opportunities through intervention and diversionary methods to focus on procedural justice for victims.

We remain committed to investing in and driving the Victims Strategy throughout the partnership, seeking ways to improve and understand our communities better. Listening to our public is fundamental to shaping our response as a partnership, enabling us to understand our priorities more clearly. By ensuring professional challenge and demonstrating how we can achieve better outcomes, we continue to embed a culture of learning that strengthens our commitment to safeguarding children across the partnership.

## **Luton Borough Council**

2024/25 has been a momentous year for us both as an individual partner and the partnership as a whole. We have made tremendous progress over 2024/25 working with our partners to implement the social care reforms. The strength of partnership working and transformative change have been recognised by the DFE, with Luton being granted Pathfinder Status in the Families First for Children (FFC) arena. This has allowed us to pilot a neighbourhood-based approach, with small teams of social workers and family support workers embedded within communities.

The first locality to go live evidenced significant changes in practice between September and December 2024, and we are mirroring this across the wider system into 2025/26 when the rest of our services for children in need and in need of help and protection will move to this model. Our partners have supported this transition and in April 2025 we will have a health lead practitioner in our Multi-agency Child Protection Team. We recognise that change can lead to a level of concern for staff and the system and a need to adapt; our focus has been on developing consistency and embedding our Practice Framework, to support our approach with families. Luton Council has also worked to start to harness community and family partnerships and to shift our practice towards prevention and this will be evident in our evaluation of the FFC approach in Luton. We are now delivering Sector Led Improvement work and have acquired that status as result of the work delivered as part of the Family Help programme delivery.

We remain committed to partnership, working closely with our statutory partners and all other anchor organisations across the town, and across the wider Pan Beds region. Our partners remain integral to our improvement journey and with statutory safeguarding partners, relevant agencies (including education representatives) and Third Sector colleagues sitting on both strategic and operational boards, such as the FFC Executive Board and Strategic MASH Board. Our Chief Executive as our Lead Safeguarding Partner has chaired the Luton Statutory Partners Chairs Safeguarding Assurance meetings leading the strategic vision and providing challenge on reserve matters such as the budget and areas of the risk register where there was insufficient progress or highlighted risk including Right Person, Right Care, and sustaining partner contributions to safeguarding processes in the light of national reforms.

Last year we provided insight into our improvement focus following the Ofsted ILACS Inspection July 2022 and our continued work to improve early identification of need and safeguarding of children in Luton. Since this time, we have further regulatory visits which have shown continue improvement:

**Step-up and step-down processes** - which ensure that children and families receive appropriate support before being stepped down to family partnership services. Our step-up and step-down processes are improving but we recognise we still have more to do. Better application of the threshold was noted in the North Pathfinder. We believe that the Families First approach embedding across the service will assist in avoiding premature closure or step down, with more flexibility in the teams to respond to the needs of families and fewer transition points.

**Multi-agency working arrangements** - which ensure that all partners have a shared understanding of thresholds of need and reach an agreement regarding their responsibilities in

safeguarding and supporting children and families. Our Service Improvement Review found that there was inconsistency in the involvement of other agencies in determining levels of need.

The introduction of a new Effective Support document in 2025/26 will create greater consistency and accuracy in these decisions and provide support to partners undertaking the role of lead practitioner, in making referrals and understanding key points for signposting, providing extended services, or making referrals for statutory support.

**The quality and timeliness of assessments** - We have provided focussed training all front-line staff on analysis and assessment, and reviewed forms to support the capture key information. There is evidence of improvement in the quality of assessments, with some showing greater analysis. However, there is still work to be done to achieve greater consistency in the completion of good assessments. Our 6-month rolling figure for the percentage of assessments completed within 45 working days has improved from **75%** in February 2023 to **89%** completed in timescale in the 6-month period as of April 2025. Over the same timeframe, the average length of assessment has moved from **33** to **28** working days against a statutory timescale of 45 days.

**Focused Visit Care Leavers Service 2024** – Personal Advisor capacity: Since the Ofsted visit, the team of personal advisors has been strengthened increasing the team establishment to 22, an 83% increase in capacity with a target to reduce caseloads to an average of 20. This is now impacting upon the caseload allocation, but we are yet to see the full impact on the quality of the work with Care Leavers, and we will continue to monitor this in 2024/25.

**Support for Care leavers who are in custody and /or leaving custody** - We have engaged with the National Prison Lead for Care Leavers and strengthened processes for our young people in custody with probation and prison colleagues. Active monthly tracking takes place regarding visits, allowances, and pre-release dates. Young people released from custody having appropriate accommodation upon release, are actively supported by their PA and are receiving all entitlements.

**Care leavers' access to suitable accommodation** – Luton have confirmed their commitment to our care experienced young people as a protected characteristic. The council maintains some dedicated council tenancies for our young people and work continues to develop a range of housing options for our care experienced young people.

**The clarity, comprehensiveness, and delivery of the local offer** - The local offer has been reviewed by our care experienced young people, with 61 of them responding with feedback to improve the offer. We believe this is now a generous offer. The proposed changes, including various financial payments and uplifts, have been agreed by the corporate leadership team.

The Luton corporate ambition is by 2040 for Luton to be a healthy, fair, and sustainable town, where everyone can thrive, and no-one must live in poverty. Luton has high levels of deprivation, and child poverty. These factors place significant pressures on many of our families. The 2040 plan is supported by all parts of our system - for example Luton Rising, the strategic planning for our airport expansion, has taken on board Corporate Parenting and is considering the employability of our care experienced young people.

We have a joined-up approach to improving and delivering services aligned with our Population Wellbeing Strategy, with senior leaders from Children's Services contributing to the planning for Luton's response to factors such as preventing substance misuse, mental ill-health, domestic abuse so Children and young people are at the heart of our vision. We are ambitious,

and our core commitment is to provide the right support at the right time, ensuring the best start in life. Our focus on preventative work has led to a reduction in numbers of children in care, a testament to our commitment to keeping families together.

We will continue to have a focus on Families First for Children and as set out in our corporate plans and strategies for children, young people and families *'Everything we do is to serve and create a community built upon exceptional services, where all children are loved, belong and matter'* however, we recognise that there is still much work to do in the partnership space and we are committed to focus on improving practice across all areas of safeguarding with a renewed focus on areas of practice where we know there are still gaps and challenges such as child sexual abuse, continuing to improve the identification of and response to babies under 1 requiring services across the safeguarding partnerships, child exploitation and cultural competence.

We are clear that areas that may appear to be established or business as usual, such as private fostering, need continued focus by us and our partners. We will inevitably be working to ensure our partnership delivery remains compliant with Working Together 2023 and other statutory guidance introduced in the coming year. While we still have much work to do, we look forward to showcasing and evidencing our progress with this into 2025/26.

### Signed by Lead Safeguarding Partners

#### Chief Officers



Luton Council – *Mark Fowler – Chief Executive*



BLMK Integrated Care Board – Chief Nurse on behalf of *Felicity Cox – Chief Executive Officer*



Bedfordshire Police – *Detective Chief Superintendent on behalf of CC Trevor Rodenhurst*

## ABOUT LUTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

During 2024/25, **Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP)** has continued to operate under the [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#), which were revised in October 2024 in line with requirements in [Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2023](#) with the three safeguarding partners, **Bedfordshire Police**, **BLMK Integrated Care Board**, and **Luton Council** (the Local Authority) having a shared and equal duty, ownership and accountability.

The LSCP provides the safeguarding arrangements under which the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies work together to coordinate their safeguarding services, identify and respond to the needs of children in Luton, commission and publish local child safeguarding practice reviews and provide scrutiny to ensure the effectiveness of the arrangements.

### Our Purpose

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) as a safeguarding children partnership has retained its name as the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership's (LSCP). Its main objective is to assure itself that local safeguarding arrangements and relevant agencies act to protect young people from abuse and neglect. We do this by ensuring that children and young people in Luton are effectively safeguarded, properly supported and their lives improved by all agencies working together.

### Our principles

The overarching principles that the safeguarding partners work within are to:

- Have an informed understanding of safeguarding arrangements and performance in single agencies and an authoritative oversight of the quality of front-line multi-agency practice.
- Have effective governance arrangements and operating structure, with clear lines of accountability with other strategic partnerships, and be able to demonstrate its influence on the work of those partnerships. Partnerships have a strong culture of challenge that is the responsibility of all Partnership members.
- Ensure learning from audits, case reviews, Serious Case Reviews, Significant Incidents and Safeguarding Adult Reviews is identified and is used to develop practice and service provision.
- Ensure the provision of high quality multi-agency safeguarding training and evaluate the impact on practice of such training

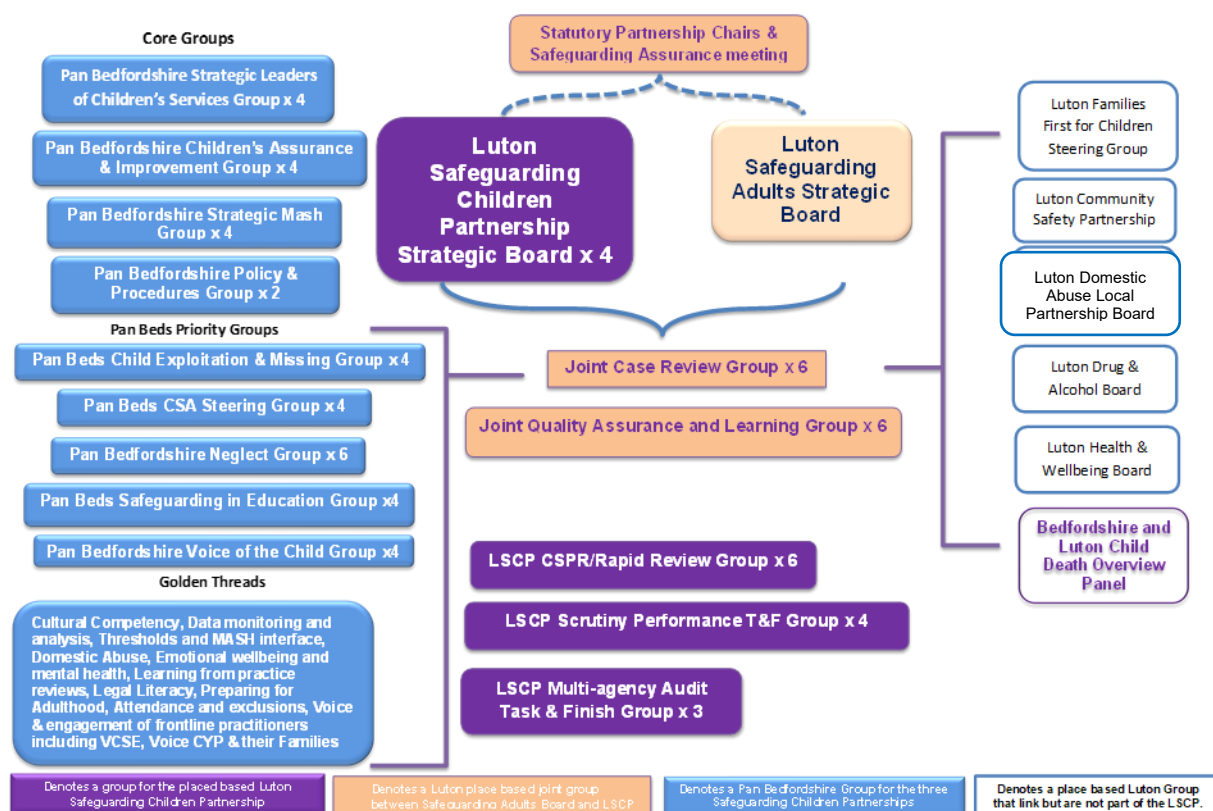
The three statutory partners are accountable for the safeguarding arrangements with the LBC Director of Children's Services taking the role as Partnership Chair from December 2024. The Independent Chair then became the Independent Scrutineer to work with the safeguarding partners and offer scrutiny on the effectiveness arrangements and their impact on outcomes for children and their families. The Independent Chair role has always had an element of scrutiny and in the shift to Independent Scrutineer role there has been evidence they have held partners and relevant agencies to account for their financial contributions, training and delivery of services to safeguard children and has challenged areas of practice such as Child Sexual Abuse where there are any concerns or items requiring risk management.

The statutory delegated safeguarding partners have met regularly with the independent scrutineer to provide oversight and governance to the work undertaken by the LSCP Strategic Board and our subgroups to achieve our priorities. The statutory partners are equally accountable for assuring the robustness and quality of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) and demonstrating impact on practice as well as bring focus on the LSCP priorities and objectives. The activity against agreed priorities is progressed through its designated subgroups, and task and finish groups.

The LSCP also brings together representatives from each of its relevant agencies and meets every three months as a Joint Quality Assurance and Learning Group alongside the Luton Safeguarding Adult Partnership to work on cross cutting themes within reviews, audits and dissemination of learning. It also meets together as a Joint Case Review Group to undertaken statutory and non-statutory learning activity and to ensure that all practice reviews are showing progress and actions plans are being implemented and showing impact.

The LSCP is also part of a wider network of strategic partnerships, which exist in different forms across Pan Bedfordshire and includes the Luton Children's Trust, Luton Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board and the Health and Wellbeing Partnership. The LSCP multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and relationship with the Pan Bedfordshire SCB subgroups is shown below and also shows the relationship with wider strategic partnerships as of July 2025.

### LSCP Structure and Partnership Links 2024 – 2025

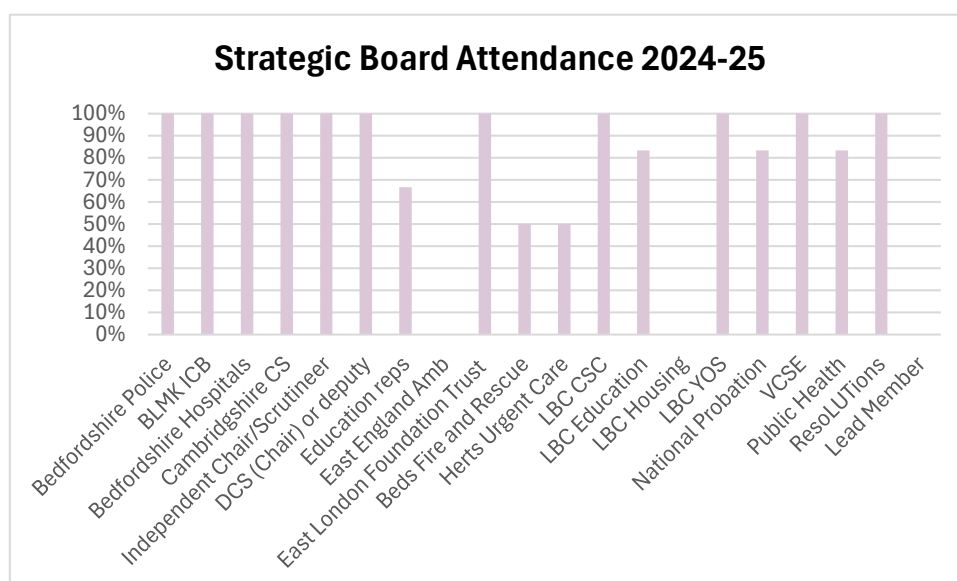


An accessible LSCP structure chart as updated in July 2024 is available [here](#).

## LUTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP MEMBERSHIP

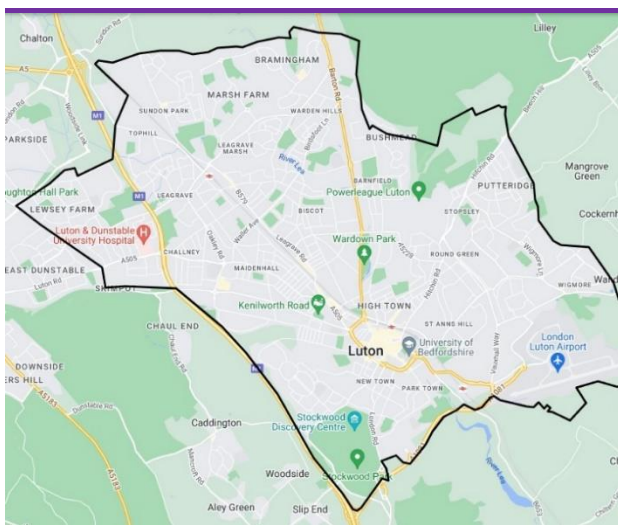
The Luton Statutory Partners (SPCSA) hold a quarterly executive meeting to set strategic direction and vision. The LSCP Strategic Board is made up of the following partners, relevant agencies and lay members who are residents of Luton with links to the community and are able to bring information to and from the Lead Safeguarding Partners. The LSCP meets at least four times a year with a themed agenda linked to the LSCP priorities. In 2024/25 the Strategic Board met six times including its annual Development Day.

	<b>Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes NHS Integrated Care Board (BLMK ICB)</b>
	<b>Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service</b>
	<b>Bedfordshire Police</b>
	<b>Bedfordshire Hospitals Foundation NHS Trust</b>
	<b>Cambridgeshire Community Services</b>
	<b>Department of Work and Pensions</b>
	<b>East of England Ambulance Service</b>
	<b>East London Foundation Trust</b>
	<b>Education representation including from primary school, high schools, further education and complementary education establishments</b>
	<b>Luton Council including Children, Families and Education, Housing, Public Health &amp; YOS</b>
	<b>National Probation Service - Bedfordshire</b>
	<b>Voluntary, Community &amp; Social Enterprise Sector including NSPCC and ResoLUTiONs CGL</b>



The LSCP has seen good attendance across its partners and relevant agencies, while East of England Ambulance Trust and Cafcass have not attended meetings they have supported learning activities such as Rapid Reviews, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and audit.

## LUTON IN NUMBERS



**Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) is one of three safeguarding partnerships, which operate within the County of Bedfordshire.**

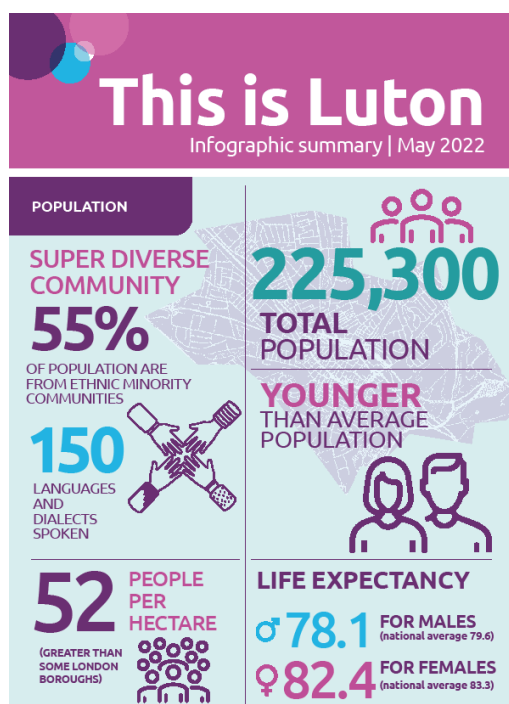
**The demographic of Luton is unique when compared to the rest of Bedfordshire and is detailed in the section on population.**

### Population 2021

- ❖ **225,300** residents in the town up by **10.9%** Higher than overall increase for England (6.6%),
- ❖ One of the youngest populations in the country – **27%** of residents aged below 18.
- ❖ Super diverse town – **55%** non-White-British.
- ❖ Approximately **50%** population churn since 2011. 225,300 in 2021. where the population grew by nearly 3.5 million to 56,489,800.

### Economy

- ❖ Luton economy worth **£7.2** billion per year prior to the pandemic.
- ❖ **Among the worst-impacted places in the country during pandemic** – second highest number of vulnerable jobs during the pandemic of major towns and cities.
- ❖ Claimant count of **8.4%** - up from **3.4%** in March 2020 – the sharpest rise in the country.

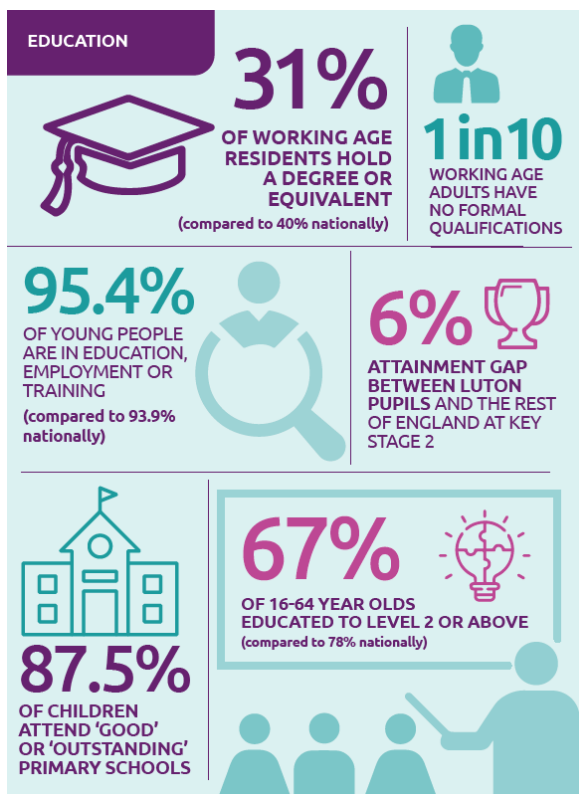


## Employment

- ❖ **75.3%** working age adults in employment.
- ❖ **24.7%** of working age adults economically inactive.
- ❖ **More than 1 in 4 workers** earning below the Real Living Wage.
- ❖ **23,000 employees on zero-hour** and agency contracts.

## Education

- ❖ **1 in 10** working age adults have no formal qualifications.
- ❖ **67% of 16-64 year olds** educated to level 2 or above compared to 78% nationally.
- ❖ **6%** attainment gap between Luton pupils and the rest of England at key stage 2.



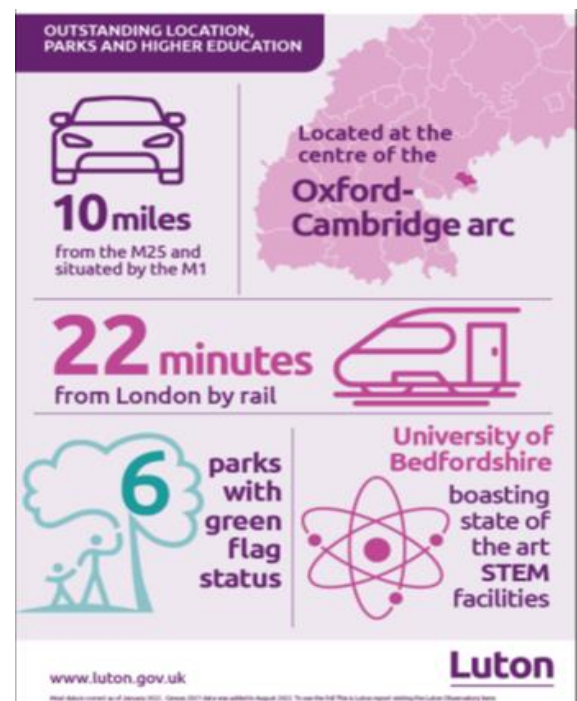
## Housing

- ❖ The median house price in Luton is **£258,000 – 34%** increase since 2015.
- ❖ The Median house price is **8.5 times** the median gross annual earnings for residents.
- ❖ **22%** of Luton households are in the private rented sector.
- ❖ **15,000** additional homes required by 2031.



## Outstanding Location

- ❖ Located at the centre of the Oxford-Cambridge arc.
- ❖ 22 minutes from London by rail.
- ❖ 10 miles from the M25 and situated by the M1.
- ❖ Home to London Luton Airport – the international gateway to England's Economic Heartland.



### London Luton Airport

- ❖ 5<sup>th</sup> largest airport in the UK.
- ❖ Over 17 million passengers per year prior to the pandemic – down to 5.4 million in 2020/21.
- ❖ Contributes £1.8 billion per year to the UK economy.
- ❖ Provides more than 11,000 jobs directly, with more through supply chains.

### Poverty

- ❖ **39.6%** of children growing up in relative poverty in March 2021.
- ❖ **6th** most deprived area in East of England by Indices of Multiple Deprivation.
- ❖ **4** wards in Luton are within the **10%** most deprived in the country.
- ❖ **26%** of working households in relative poverty.

### Skills

- ❖ **36%** of Luton businesses have skills gaps in their existing workforce.
- ❖ **29.7%** of workers are in level 4 occupations, but only **23.6%** of employed residents are in these jobs.
- ❖ **48%** of vacancies in Luton are in Level 2 occupations.

### Health and Wellbeing

- ❖ Life expectancy gap of **6.9** years between women in Luton's most deprived and most affluent wards – for men this gap is **5.1** years.
- ❖ Male life expectancy in Luton one year less than the national figure.
- ❖ **381** children in care in Luton as of March 2022.
- ❖ **26%** of 10-11 year olds in Luton are obese.

Percentage of children aged under 16 in relative low-income families	2019/20	2020/21		2022/23	2023/24
United Kingdom	19.30%	18.70%		19.30%	18.70%
<b>Luton</b>	<b>30.90%</b>	<b>27.80%</b>		<b>42%</b>	<b>43%</b>
Neighbouring Local Authorities					
Milton Keynes	18.00%	18.10%		21.00%	23.10%
Bedford	17.10%	14.90%		23.10%	24.10%
Buckinghamshire	12.00%	13.00%		15.00%	16.00%
Huntingdonshire	12.40%	11.20%		12.40%	11.20%
Central Bedfordshire	11.40%	10.80%		14.00%	15.00%
Dacorum	11.30%	10.20%		15.00%	15.00%
North Hertfordshire	10.60%	10.00%		15.00%	15.00%
South Cambridgeshire	8.70%	7.70%		11.00%	12.00%
St Albans	7.50%	6.90%		11.00%	11.90%
Luton wards with highest relative low income percentage					
Dallow	18.00%	18.10%		18.00%	18.10%
Biscot	17.10%	14.90%		17.10%	14.90%
Northwell	12.00%	13.00%		12.00%	13.00%
Farley	12.40%	11.20%		12.40%	11.20%
South	11.40%	10.80%		11.40%	10.80%

The chart above shows that poverty rates, despite dipping in 2020/21, have grown significantly across Bedfordshire. Although poverty rates have also increased in both Bedford and Central Bedfordshire over 2022-24, Luton remains the area with the highest level of relative poverty with a percentage rate that is over double that of children in other parts of Bedfordshire<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> **Source:** Department for Work and Pensions & Office for National Statistics, MYE Population 2021 and 2023.

## SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE – SAFEGUARDING SNAPSHOT 2024-2025:

All safeguarding partners and relevant agencies submit data, narratives and themed highlight report to the LSCP to form the multi-agency dataset at the Joint Quality Assurance and Learning Group (JQAL). Each partner discusses their data and produces a themed highlight report each quarter. Key trends and emerging issues are reported to the LSCP Strategic Board to identify any actions required. Data and narratives are collated by LBC Business Intelligence who provide an annotated scorecard. This along with the thematic highlight reports are provided every quarter from partners.

The Independent Scrutineer conducted quarterly task and finish groups with safeguarding leads and their business intelligence leads to provides scrutiny and analysis and to ensure the LSCP is using data well. The Pan Beds Neglect group also meet quarterly to focus on a Pan Beds Neglect dataset which provides comparison of data across Pan Bedfordshire and highlights gaps and challenges at place.

### Year in Review Data on children and young people

- During 2024/25 the partners made **12,040** contacts and **3,137** referrals, which is a similar position to last year but significantly less than its peak of **16791** contacts in 2021/22.
- Schools (27.6%) and Police (27.3%) continue to make the highest number of referrals into MASH
- The number of Domestic abuse (23.8%) referrals continues to increase and is the most common reason for referral, followed by physical abuse (14.3%) however, this has reduced from 20% in 2023/24.
- The age of child at referral, the age range 10-15 continues to be the highest at 34.4% with under ones accounting for less than 10% of children referred to MASH.

The partners have worked closely with members of the LBC Business Intelligence team and single agency business intelligence and improvement leads to improve its Performance Scorecard, benchmarking and data analysis. In April 2024 it began to report in a defined data cycle to support the provision of robust data analysis and intelligence in a timely way. The scorecard measures have been developed and in 2025/26 a Pan Beds Senior Safeguarding Business Analyst will extend the work across the Pan Beds space and to explore and overlay accessible data collection systems that reflect local context.

Sampling of strategy meetings suggests that threshold is applied appropriately in considering whether a strategy meeting is required but the rate of section 47 enquiries (s.47) that do not conclude in a conference suggests the partnership is becoming less risk adverse and starting to understand the families first for children modelling of hold risk within other parts of the system. A further review of section 47 enquiries is planned for 2025/26 including the timeliness of strategy discussions to determine whether a S.47 is needed. The LSCP Safeguarding Snapshot can be found at [Appendix A Data Snapshot](#).

## LSCP STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

### WHY DID THE LSCP CHOOSE THESE PRIORITIES?

The LSCP undertook significant work to review and evaluate its work against its strategic priorities during 2024-25. In July 2024, the LSCP held an in person development day to assess its progress, measure change and consider the impact of priorities previously set. This included a review of the cross cutting work being undertaken with the Luton Safeguarding Adults Board as well as work undertaken across the Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership.

The day was well attended by the Strategic Board members, Subgroup Chairs and designated safeguarding leads across the partners and relevant agencies. The group were provided with performance information, audit CSPRs and rapid reviews outputs, and partners safeguarding assurance reports. The group considered what the LSCP had done well, any remaining barriers or challenges to success and what the Strategic Board needed to do next to meet its objectives.

#### What have we done well?

The discussions highlighted some positive work that had taken place over the previous year. It was noted that partners had continued to work together to tackle the issue of neglect, develop a refreshed Neglect Strategy and Action plan which included work to upscale and embed the use of tools to assess neglect such as the Graded Care Profile 2. However case reviews, rapid reviews and audit had highlighted there was still further work to be done.

The partnership identified several strengths against its priorities and golden threads:

#### Early Intervention and Collaboration:

- Worked on embedding family help within Children's Social Care (CSC) to focus on early intervention and assigning lead practitioners to work with children and families.
- Reduction in anti-social behaviour and first-time entrants to the Youth Partnership Service for five consecutive years.
- Effective collaboration with schools, including named safeguarding leads and discussions on safeguarding arrangements.

#### Education and Safeguarding:

- 95% of children in Luton attend schools graded as "Good" by OFSTED.
- Efforts to revamp education strategies with trauma-informed practices to address disruptive behaviour and prevent exclusions.

#### Data Utilisation and Analysis:

- Improved data collection and analysis, such as the LSCP scorecard, to understand trends and effectiveness in safeguarding.
- Increased awareness and reporting of domestic abuse, supported by public confidence and police efforts.

### **Mental Health Support:**

- The LSCP Scorecard data for mental health showed positive trends compared to previous years, but there is a need for more detailed data, such as the number of children living in Luton and their referral outcomes.
- Training on responses to children who were not brought to appointments had improved practitioner responses.

### **Exploitation and Missing Children:**

- Strengthened mapping and MAGPan processes for exploitation and missing children.
- Support from St Giles Trust and the Pan Beds Violence Exploitation Reduction Unit was improving outcomes for children and young people at risk of exploitation
- Work to raise awareness of indicators and risk had been delivered to services, schools and other education settings.

### **Neglect Strategy:**

- Tools like Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) and Day in Life Tools have been promoted to support referrals and better interventions.
- There had been a reduction in neglect cases through joint working and early help initiatives.

### **Learning from Reviews:**

- There was good evidence of the implementation of learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR) and rapid reviews, focusing on neglect, undiagnosed learning needs, child exploitation, serious youth violence and vulnerabilities of young carers.

### **Cross-Border Collaboration:**

- Evidence of aligning MASA arrangements across Pan Beds while maintaining Luton-specific priorities like the Families First Pathfinder program and maintain locally compliance with Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2023.

### **Voice of the Child**

- Pan Beds Voice of the Child work such as its conference for young people was seen as positive. However, concerns were expressed that the Pan Beds Voice of the Child was now a task and finish group rather than a subgroup and whether it is a "golden thread" integrated into every meeting. As a result it was reinstated as a Subgroup in 2025.

These achievements reflect the partnership's commitment to safeguarding children effectively through collaboration, data-driven strategies, and early intervention. However, the Strategic Board concluded that while much work has been undertaken to further the strategic priorities, which is outlined in this report, there are some gaps in practice remaining that it still needs to address, in particular around Neglect and using GCP2. Following the Pan Beds Child Sexual Abuse Snapshot undertaken with the NSPCC, Child Sexual Abuse was added as a priority.

As the Partnership moved forward with implementing the changes required for *Working Together 2023* it was agreed that moving forwards other key areas of work and focus would be to review the LSCP response and structures in relation to exploitation, our joined-up

response to child sexual abuse and to continue developing our quality assurance and analytical work.

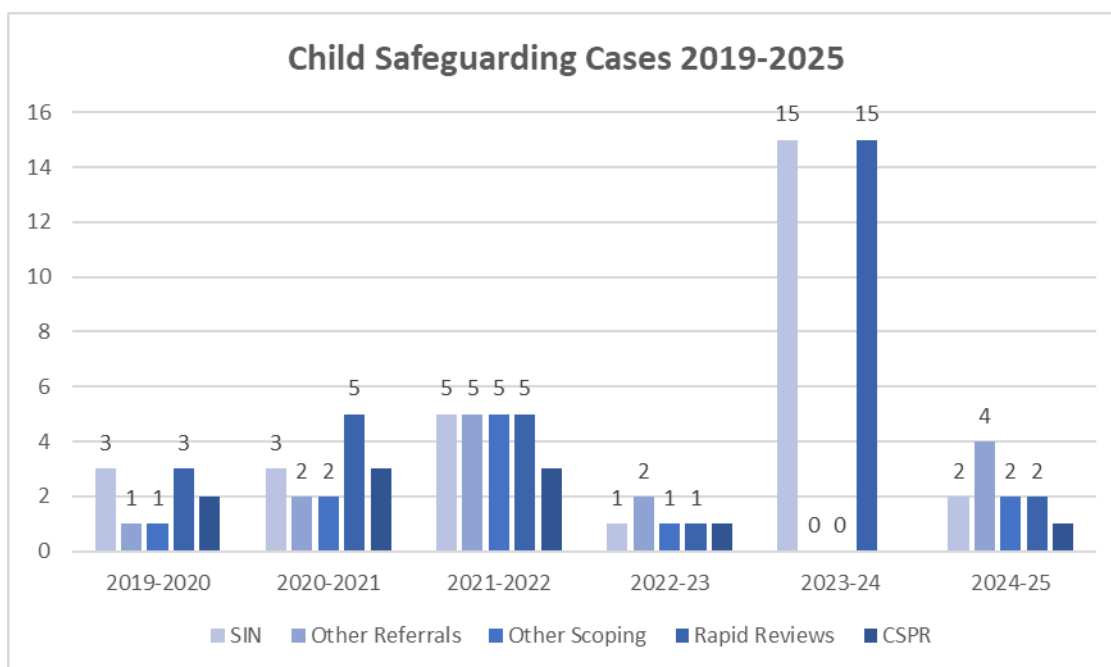
The LSCP has updated its priorities, impact measures and governance structures to support delivery and measure impact, as outlined in its [LSCP Strategic Business Plan 2024-2026](#).

## LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

The LSCP ensures rapid reviews, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs), audits and other types of review of cases yields learning both around good practice and improvements required to enhance and develop practice and service provision. It uses a themed highlight reports to process to monitor the impact of this learning.

## LEARNING FROM RAPID REVIEWS AND CHILD SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE REVIEWS

**How much:** The partnership assesses Serious Safeguarding Incidents as defined by *Working Together* and decides whether a Rapid Review or Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) is required, in order to identify how to improve safeguarding responses in future. From April 2024 to March 2025, **two** serious incident notification were submitted and considered by the partnership. The LSCP was also asked to contribute to a rapid review being conducted by another local authority, which did not proceed to a CSPR.



The chart above shows how activity around Serious Incident Notifications and Rapid Reviews decreased considerably in the last year and there was learning over a range of cases including non-statutory learning activities. Themes were very different to last year where there was a significant focus on group related serious youth violence. This year the themes have been

around **domestic abuse and homicide as well as non-accidental injury and transitions**. The LSCP Case Review Group and safeguarding partners have revised rapid review processes and worked hard to ensure the right cases come to the LSCP at the right time and extract the right system learning for practice improvement. They have also ensured that any rapid reviews or CSPRs undertaken address issues of equality, diversity and inclusion. The LSCP also provided information for a rapid review where no further system learning was to be gained and therefore no CSPR was required.

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## IMPACT OF ACTIVITY – LEARNING FROM REVIEWS

As a result of this activity the safeguarding partnership undertook two local rapid reviews and agreed to undertake one CSPR. In both these cases the decisions made were supported by the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.

The impact of this work is being regularly evaluated through the analysis of data and theme based audits as highlighted earlier in the report.

- The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel provided feedback to the LSCP that our Rapid Review reports are of good quality and evidence robust decision making.
- The LSCP sought assurance from the safeguarding partners regarding their response and evidence of impact to the recommendations from the published CSPRs and rapid reviews action plans which are showing measurable impact
- Strong partnership working with a shared responsibility for learning and practice improvement.
- Robust action plans taking forwards the learning from the rapid reviews and addressing any gaps in practice with innovative responses.

The Partnership published an integrated Child Safeguarding and Adults Safeguarding Review [Family T Integrated CPR/SAR Sept 2024](#) - This case reviewed practice up to September 2022 around endemic child neglect, severe parental self-neglect, escalation, GCP2, poor physical health and disability, housing, hoarding, adults' needs prioritised above the children's needs, lack of whole family approaches. The integrated safeguarding practice review considered the practice across a range of agencies working with both the adults and the children and made the following findings and recommendations for the LSCP and LSCP:

### Key Findings:

- **Chronic Neglect of Children:** Arnie and Ruby experienced extreme chronic neglect over several years, with no sustained improvement in their living conditions or care. Their physical and emotional needs were not adequately met, and their roles as young carers were overlooked.
- **Focus on Parents Over Children:** The needs and views of the parents were often prioritised over the children's welfare. Professionals were reluctant to challenge the parents due to their disabilities, leading to delays in decisive intervention.

- **Lack of Joint Working:** There was insufficient collaboration between adult and children's services, resulting in disjointed practice and gaps in information sharing. Agencies often worked in isolation, focusing on either the adults or the children without considering the family as a whole and ensuring both needs were met.
- **Housing and Living Conditions:** The family lived in cramped, unhygienic, and unsafe conditions, which significantly impacted their lives. Professionals struggled to resolve the housing issues due to complications with the joint tenancy and a lack of clear responsibility among agencies.
- **Missed Opportunities for Early Intervention:** Despite escalating concerns, there was a lack of decisive action at an earlier stage. Professionals often restarted interventions without considering the historical context of neglect, leading to delays in addressing the children's needs and understanding of the adults self-neglect.
- **Inadequate Assessments:** Assessments of both the children and parents were incomplete and lacked depth. The children's roles as young carers were not formally identified, and the parents' mental health and capacity to parent were not sufficiently assessed.
- **Professional Disputes and Escalation:** There were significant delays in resolving professional disagreements and escalating concerns. Agencies did not consistently use formal escalation procedures, leading to fragmented responses.
- **Voice of the Children:** The children's lived experiences, wishes, and feelings were not adequately recorded or acted upon. Ruby expressed her unhappiness about her responsibilities at home, but these concerns were not addressed effectively.
- **Impact of Neglect:** The cumulative impact of neglect on the children's development and well-being was not fully appreciated. Professionals underestimated the long-term harm caused by neglect and adultification, where the children were expected to take on adult responsibilities. The enduring self-neglect by the adults was not assessed and despite them having significant care needs and not being able to keep themselves safe, practitioners did not consider their mental capacity to make unwise decisions
- **Systemic Issues:** High staff turnover, inadequate supervision, and poor-quality assessments contributed to delays and inconsistent casework. Professionals lacked curiosity and critical thinking, leading to missed opportunities to understand the family's dynamics and risks.

The review highlighted the need for better multi-agency collaboration, timely intervention, and a child-centred approach to safeguarding while also recognising the safeguarding risks to adults from self-neglect. It highlighted systemic challenges, including the normalisation of neglect, lack of professional curiosity, and insufficient focus on the lived experiences of the children and their role as young carers to their parents who both had disabilities and whose self-neglect was seen by adult facing services as an unwise decision and within their capacity.

### **Recommendations and evidence of impact**

1. Partner agencies should review and improve the local understanding and application of joint working together to safeguard adults and children. Develop a Multi-Agency Protocol for working with disabled parents at all levels of intervention.

- Protocol and supporting resources published [Luton joint protocol for working with parents with disabilities \(updated June 2025\)](#)
  - [Young carers and young adult carers](#) (August 2024)
  - [Seven Step Briefing Adults / Young Carers](#)
  - Launch of protocol, webinar, and briefing planned (October 2025).
  - Audit of young carers completed (March 2025), with mixed evidence of support under Section 17Z Children Act 2024 and Care Act 2014.
2. The Luton SAB and the Children Safeguarding Partnership should seek assurance that the partners, understand each other's roles and that they are working collaboratively to ensure that the child is at the centre of all decision making. This should include a strengthening of the current case escalation procedures.
- Revised Neglect Guidance developed as detailed in priority on neglect.
  - There have been a number of joint practice sessions held across the partnerships to share the learning and establish how to work collaboratively in similar cases with adult self-neglect and parental neglect.
  - Revised case escalation protocol published [LSAB escalation and resolution of professional disputes \(April 2024\)](#)
  - Improved partnership working, escalation routes, and referral outcomes.
3. Plans to safeguard and promote the welfare of children should be owned and serviced on a multiagency basis. Early Help and CIN meeting and plans should be regarded as multi-agency planning and intervention meetings.
- The LSAB threshold guidance 'a framework for a shared understanding of adult concerns' reflects the principles within the Care Act requirements and there are 7 minute briefings on making a good referral.
  - Adult's Social Workers are recognising the need to assess parent's unmet care and support needs either through a carer's assessment or by referral to Adults MASH.
  - Luton as a FFC pathfinder authority has been testing out the reforms which are intended to improve practice in working with complex families. In cases such as Family T, families are now supported through Family Help, Family Hubs and Family Networks which are teams made up of multi-agency alternatively qualified workers and social workers who can assess their capacity to parent and the level of support they need to improve their parenting.
  - A Whole family approach 7-minute briefing has been published as well as a 7-minute briefing for young carers and working with disabled parents.
  - The impact of these changes is improved recognition of young carers and an improved think family focus across the partners.
4. There is a need for the partnership to ensure that there is clarity, guidance and training for all practitioners working locally about the required effective and timely response which is required to address the significant harm caused to children as a result of parental neglect.
- The Pan Beds Neglect Subgroup have a revised Neglect Strategy and Action plan that focusses on upscaling of GCP2.
  - There is regular reporting of the Neglect dataset to establish patterns and trends and areas of challenge or barriers to upscaling.

- The local authority is providing free training places for practitioners on the GCP2 licenced training.
  - The thresholds for criminal investigations and the wilful element as a requirement to proceed and the burden of proof have been strengthened in procedures. The use of body worn footage for consideration of evidence led prosecutions is monitored and reported on.
  - We have identified any gaps and the tools we have to support upscaling of GCP2 and the Neglect screening tool. The challenging is evidence this filtering down to frontline and how we see impact of this as not all GCP2 that are started are concluded due to improved circumstances and better outcomes for children and families
  - Different forms of communication are being explored with a Pan Beds Neglect campaign being delivered with a focus on stop, think, neglect. A new booklet 'in this together is being launched' in September 2025.
5. Safeguarding training for professionals must stress the importance of exercising professional curiosity to ensure that professionals consider all the adults in a child's life, both from a strengths and risks perspective from the adult to the child.
    - Safeguarding training includes learning from this review and promotes all the revised guidance referred to in the SAR activity and impact update.
    - [LSAB/LSCP 7 minute briefing professional curiosity](#) published
    - [LSAB/LSCP 7 minute briefing - think family](#) and whole family approaches published
    - [LSAB/LSCP 7 minute briefing Risk Management \(Sept 2024\)](#) published.
  6. In this case, there was some good practice in seeking out the children's views. However, safeguarding training for professionals needs to ensure that they offer children active opportunities to share their experience at home particularly if older children appear to be quieter, more withdrawn.
    - Training delivered through Safeguarding Bedfordshire includes the key messages from this review.
    - The Pan Beds Voice of the Child Subgroup encourage the use of the voice of the child and 'day in the life' tools.
    - There is improvement in practice since September 2022 with evidence of ASC working closely with CSC in relevant cases through new roles and enhanced partnership working alongside MDTs where appropriate.
  7. Partnerships to consider whether given the importance of housing in this case (and others) housing should be involved routinely in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
    - Strategic Housing lead now sits on LSAB/LSCP boards.
    - Housing roles embedded in MASH processes.
    - Strong linkages established with homeless and rough sleeping teams.
  8. Recommendation to The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel to investigate why neglect tools developed over the last ten years are not having the required impact on practice.
    - Completed and awaiting a response from the National Panel.

- LSAB / LSCP joint space is seeking understanding of the wider issue through ADASS and the wider role of neglect in families.

The LSCP also published an extract from a legacy Serious Case Review as well as a legacy Child Safeguarding Practice Review which are summarised below:

**Child Sylvia:** Legacy Serious Case Review, 2 month old baby who suffered multiple fractures. A 7-minute briefing has been published here: [7 step briefing Sylvia](#)

**Child Lena:** Child Safeguarding Practice Review to consider the serious harm experienced by Lena through, sexual and criminal exploitation. The review has been published and can be found here: [Child Safeguarding Practice Review Lena](#). A large scale in person event called '*They keep drawing me in*' took place in April 2024 which focussed the dissemination of learning through reflective conversations which was well received. Much was identified in terms of good practice and what is going well including MACE and MAGPAN, multi-agency information forms, multi-agency partnership working and improved learning and practice sharing from CSPRs.

Activity to address the learning commences at the point of the rapid review, evidence of how well the learning has embedded in practice can take time to establish and is often tested through audit. Reporting focusses on the practice learning activity undertaken since the last report was produced. Work streams around learning from experience have been themed and taken forward in unified delivery plans which have been linked to priorities. The 'golden threads' of 'cultural competence' and 'voice of the child' also run through these work streams.

The LSCP Joint Quality Assurance and Learning Group as well as the Pan Bedfordshire subgroups have been utilised as delivery arms to ensure that the learning is given the widest reach and impact. Within the LSCP Strategic Board meetings, the model has moved to specific practice learning activity linked to the themes and data as well as inviting those with lived experience to speak about what worked well, any gaps in service provision, and how service delivery can be improved from their perspective. The outputs are to disseminate the learning, distil key messages and ensure that practitioners have access to appropriate resources and training to support them in practice.

This work is overseen through the governance structures and reported across structures, accountability and final decision making sits with Statutory Partners Chairs Safeguarding Assurance meeting which acts as a joint Executive group for the two safeguarding partnerships. They have received as part of this oversight of learning from reviews:

- the detail of all recent action plan activity linked to CSPRs and rapid reviews
- an overview of how the Subgroups have triangulated the learning from reviews and are ensuing it is being taken forward
- an overview of the changes made to policy and practice guidance as a result of the learning from reviews
- the annual training report information including courses linked to learning from reviews.

The learning is disseminated through a number of mechanisms:

- ❖ Presentation at place based and Pan Beds learning events, training and workshops
- ❖ Presentation at Luton Council practice weeks and education strategic group
- ❖ One page summaries for each CSPR published on the LSCP website
- ❖ Regular review of all rapid reviews and CSPR actions plans to 'close the loop'

### Themes from Rapid Reviews

**Family U** - systems learning from a rapid review detailing the tragic deaths of three family members, including two children, and the subsequent investigation and safeguarding review process. The tragic murder of two siblings and their mother who were murdered by a close family member with very limited prior indicators of risk or unmet needs. There was also no indication to agencies prior to the murders that the teenaged perpetrator was planning them, nor of their disturbing online history and violence fixation. The following themes were found in the rapid review.

- Practitioners did not fully explore the family's cultural background and beliefs.
- Cultural aspects related to mental health and special educational needs were not adequately addressed.
- Cultural competence and humility in safeguarding practices was emphasised as an area requiring additional focus.
- Historically there had been delays in police referrals regarding domestic abuse, impacting timely support at the time, but evidence of ongoing improvements.
- The school had the case hypothetically with CAMHS due to consent issues, leading to a lack of documentation.
- The need for clearer referrals and better communication by MASH regarding similar safeguarding concerns was noted.
- Similarities were found with previous reviews regarding early identification of mental health needs.
- The case was unique due to limited prior involvement with services.
- Existing action plans from previous reviews were referenced for potential improvements to continue.

A decision was made not to proceed with a Child Practice Safeguarding Review (CSPR) due to the limited new learning in the case, the unusual nature of the case and that this could be picked up and reviewed within the resulting domestic abuse related death review.

**Baby X** - a Rapid Review Report concerning serious harm suffered by Baby X aged 2 months, focusing on the family's background, the incident details, and the involvement of various agencies in the child's case. The themes emerging from the case included practice round:

- Voice of the Child and understanding of lived experience
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)
- Application of Thresholds, Policies, and Procedures
- Maternal Mental Health and Vulnerabilities
- Father-Inclusive Practice

- Domestic Abuse and Risk Assessment
- Multi-Agency Information Sharing
- Quality of Assessments and Plans

The case was agreed as a CSPR and the rapid review made the following recommendations:

- review of the Injuries to Immobile Babies pathway and its application in practice.
- enhanced training on mental health and trauma-informed approaches for practitioners.
- the importance of father-inclusive practice and understanding the dynamics of domestic abuse needs to be promoted.
- A reflective practice event for involved practitioners to discuss decision-making and threshold application should be held.

The above activity is in place and the CSPR is due for publication in 2025/26 once the review and associated legal proceedings are concluded.

### Themes from other scoping:

**Child Y** – This scoping in relation to transitional safeguarding processes highlighted significant gaps in safeguarding processes, transition planning, and professional curiosity. Key Themes and Findings included:

#### Complex Case Presentation:

- Child Y exhibited mental health issues, self-harm, criminal exploitation, and possible honour-based abuse.
- Concerns included physical abuse, domestic violence, lack of education, and absence of primary healthcare registration.

#### Professional Challenges:

- Lack of professional curiosity and inconsistent application of thresholds for section 47 enquiries.
- Over-optimism regarding family circumstances despite significant history of abuse.
- Limited cultural competence and understanding of honour-based violence.

#### Transition Issues:

- Poor planning for transition from children's services to adult services.
- Inadequate preparation for mental health care transfer from CAMHS to CMHT.

#### Multi-Agency Coordination:

- Good information sharing during strategy discussions, but plans did not align with the complexity of concerns.
- Missed opportunities for joint assessments and safeguarding planning for siblings.

#### Legal and Medical Oversight:

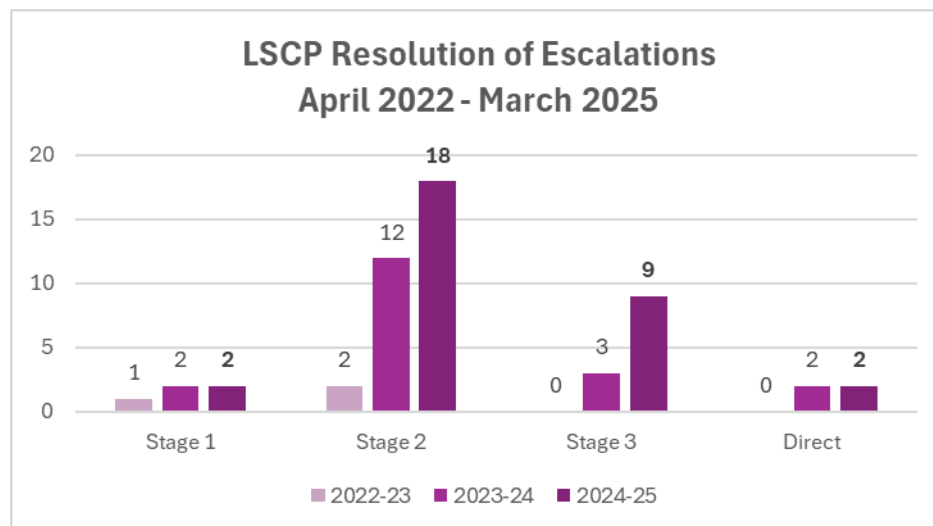
- Lack of legal advice on mental health assessments and placement options.
- Child Protection Medical assessments for injuries were not consistently carried out.

Addressing these issues through the agreed recommendations and focus on transitional safeguarding will improve future practice and ensure better outcomes for others like Child Y.

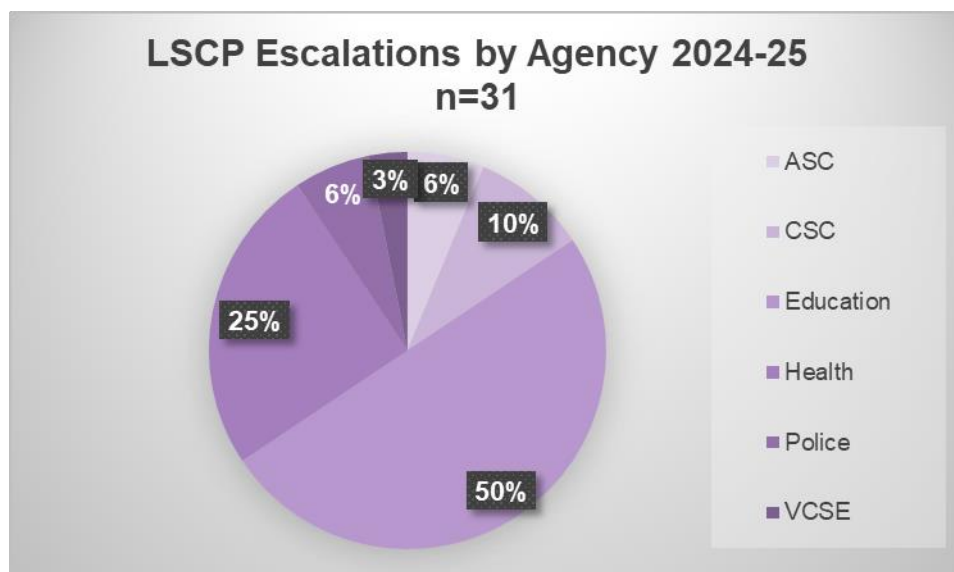
The LSCP also reviewed three other cases which were considered to be possible near misses in terms of harm going to children but where there had not been evidence of serious harm. The themes from these cases were the subject of lunch and learn sessions on modern slavery and sexual exploitation and domestic abuse. Learning from a historical, management of allegations case resulted in the partnership developing a LADO dispute resolution protocol.

### Dispute Resolution and Escalation:

As a result of findings within CSPRs and rapid reviews the partnership has undertaken work on resolving professional disputes and escalations. There has been significant awareness raising undertaken and it has also been a theme in some of our cross cutting work with LSAB. Escalations are reported on in the quarterly partnership single agency highlight reports that accompany their dataset. The chart below shows how the number of escalations has not only increased but how their resolution has progressed.



The chart shows escalations have increased year on year with **31** escalations in 2024/25. Stage 2 escalations were at their highest at **18** escalations with **50%** moving to Stage 3. All Stage 3 escalations were satisfactorily resolved within nine working days of being raised to Stage 3. It is positive that there has been an increase in notifications as this shows better awareness of the resolving professional disputes and escalation protocol. There have been **no** professional disputes or escalations that reached Stage 4 of the Escalation protocol.



The chart above shows that escalations have also been made by a range of agencies across the partnership where there are concerns about outcomes for children and young people. Education remains the sector with the highest percentage of education notifications and they are also more likely to escalate professional disputes to Stage 3. There has been significant work completed with Designated Safeguarding Leads to support escalation and to reduce any anxiety in the system around effective risk management of cases within Family Help.

The LSCP recognises that there is always more that can be done to support resolving professional disputes at the earliest stage, including better utilising the [Pan Beds Stop and Review meeting guidance](#) which promotes non-adversarial dispute resolution processes in a supportive and non-judgmental approach. Several of the cases above were reviewed for partnership learning and fed into the themes above from non-statutory incidents learning.

## LEARNING FROM NATIONAL PRACTICE REVIEWS AND SARS

### Learning from national reviews

The following national reviews and reports have been shared and informed the LSCP's learning from practice during this reporting period:

[‘Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel annual report: 2023-24’](#) is the fifth annual report from the independent Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. It looks at the child safeguarding system, based on serious child safeguarding incidents occurring between April 2023 and March 2024. It highlights key themes and patterns in practice for national government and local safeguarding partners to improve the protection of vulnerable children. The LSCP considered the key findings from the document and how they might respond to:

- Child Mental Health Needs
- Pre-School Children with Parents with Mental Health Needs
- Extrafamilial Harm
- Multi-Agency Collaboration
- Voice of the Child
- Adult-Child Service Interface

- Threshold Barriers

The LSCP has considered how these findings highlight systemic challenges and opportunities for improving safeguarding practices across the three spotlight themes and sought to.

- Strengthen multi-agency collaboration and information sharing.
- Ensure the voice of the child is central to assessments and plans.
- Improve links between adult and child services.
- Address service gaps, including early intervention and support during waiting periods.

[CSPRP Elective Home Education Oct 2024](#) is a briefing from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel focusing on safeguarding issues related to children who are electively home educated in England. The LSCP considered the themes from the review and fed into their strategic planning the need to understand safeguarding issues related to EHE as below:

- Partners need an evidence-based / data for its understanding of EHE issues.
- Partners need to address systemic issues like silo working which hinder child protection.
- Key agencies must all be aware of a child's EHE status to address potential risks.
- Professionals in local EHE services need to understand their safeguarding roles and responsibilities.
- The voices and needs of children should be considered in home education decisions.
- Health professionals must understand their role in safeguarding EHE children.

### Safeguarding Adult Reviews

The LSCP contributed to a Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) for **Adult Kiara** 24-year-old South Asian woman who had been a looked after child in Luton. It examines her experiences with mental health, abuse, and agency involvement within the context of safeguarding practices. Following a significant suicide attempt in 2022, Kiara has been in hospital receiving medical and social care support. She is now recovering and looking forward to her future, expressing a desire for the SAR to help others in similar situations. The report will be published in May 2025 and actions to improve safeguarding practices, address systemic gaps, and children in care or care leavers like Kiara receive the support they need. The outcomes and impact of these actions will be reported on in the next annual report for 2025/26.

The Safeguarding Bedfordshire training offer and local website content has been reviewed and revised to ensure learning from local and national reviews was incorporated.

## SECTION 11 SELF ASSESSMENT

**Section 11(4) Children Act 2004** requires each person or organisation to which the Section 11 duty applies to have regard to any guidance given to them by the Secretary of State, for more information about this guidance click [here](#). The self-assessment forms part of the independent scrutiny arrangements and feeds into the reporting requirements as set out in [Chapter 4 - Working Together 2023](#). The three Safeguarding Children Partnerships have a statutory duty to assess whether agencies in their areas are fulfilling their statutory obligation to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, as described in Section 11 Children Act 2004.

The three SCs in Pan Bedfordshire have collaborated for several years and asked all partners to undertake a self-evaluation on specified standards. The self-evaluation has traditionally focussed on two to three of the eight standards. However, the Section 11 self-assessment focus for partners was across all eight Section 11 Standards with an emphasis on neglect. All Partners were asked to consider the following questions:

- *What areas in your Section 11 do you want to highlight as good practice?*
- *What areas in your Section 11 do you need to improve on?*
- *What would be helpful from other agencies to help you meet these standards?*
- *What evidence do you have that there are improved outcomes for children, young people, and their families where neglect is a concern?*

Partners identified, as appropriate, key areas which they may need to further develop. These areas of development have been collated into an action plan which is being monitored through the **Pan Bedfordshire Assurance and Improvement Group**.

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## IMPACT OF ACTIVITY – SECTION 11

The tool assessed each agency against the following 8 standards based on the requirements of Section 11 Children Act 2024 as set down in the '[Statutory Guidance on Making Arrangements to Safeguard & Promote the Welfare of Children under Sec 11 Children Act 2004](#)' (pages 13-17). Throughout the self-assessment, consideration must be given to **evidencing improved outcomes for children young people and their families** as a result of the arrangements.

The Pan Bedfordshire Assurance and Improvement Group have monitored the action plans from the 2023-2024 Section 11 which focussed on Neglect). In 2025 – 2026 it was agreed that the relevant partners would consider all the following 8 standards, last assessed in full in 2017.

1. Senior management have commitment to the importance of safeguarding and promoting children's welfare
2. There is a clear statement of the agency's responsibility towards children, and this is available to all staff
3. There is a clear line of accountability within the organisation for work on safeguarding and promoting welfare
4. Service development takes into account the need to safeguard and promote welfare and is informed, where appropriate, by the views of children & families
5. There is effective training on safeguarding & promoting the welfare of children for all staff working with or, depending on the agency's primary functions, in contact with children & families
6. Safer recruitment procedures including vetting procedures and those for managing allegations are in place
7. There is effective inter-agency working to safeguard & promote the welfare of children
8. There is effective Information Sharing.

The two Safeguarding Children's Partnerships Scrutineers for Bedford Borough, Luton and Central Bedfordshire's SCPs concluded based on the evidence provided that:

- Understanding of common areas of need across the safeguarding children system.
- Good examples of robust supervisions models and use of escalation.
- An increased understanding of neglect and its impact on practitioners.
- The use of the Think Family approach
- There were good practice examples within Luton Borough Council's submission and in particular their approach within Youth Partnership was seen as trailblazing.

"This year's Section 11 assessment highlighted some really good collaborative and partnership working to target neglect. Agencies were able to show how they are developing and improving their services to better meet the needs of children who are suffering from all forms of neglect. This year's assessment also emphasised that we must never be complacent in this area and recognised some areas that needed to develop and improve. During the next year, we will be seeking assurance that those areas of development have been progressed."

Overall, the partners felt that there was a good response to neglect across the partnership in all areas, Standard 1 (*effective leadership*) scored particularly strongly with the majority of agencies scoring good across all areas with some areas of outstanding practice (*there only 2 requires improvement scores*). Standards 3 (*Intervention*), 4 (*Information sharing*), 5 (*Service development*) and 7 (*Interagency working*) overall scored well. Standards 2 (*Prevention*) and 6 (*Effective training*) were areas where agencies identified more examples where requires improvement were needed.

**A follow-up multi-agency Neglect Audit** took place in February 2025, the aim of this activity was to seek assurances that understanding and working with neglect is a priority for children in Central Bedfordshire, and that partners were working with families and each other in collaboration. Overall findings were that children were RAG rated Green overall: the work was having a positive impact on families and there were good outcomes for children.

- 4 children were RAG rated Amber overall: the work evidenced positive trajectories and outcomes, however the impact of neglect needed to be more explicit, and children's plans needed to be more specific.
- Where there were individual professionals' Red RAG ratings, they related to concerns about the impact of neglect on children's attendance at school and their attainment, the impact of parental mental health and the need to understand the children's lived experiences.
- The deep dive enabled professionals to share further information and the work they had undertaken with the families, which therefore resulted in increased RAG ratings to Amber. All children were safe.
- The audit tested whether neglect was identified as a risk factor, whether neglect was prioritised when assessing children's needs and plans, whether interventions were of a good standard and having a positive impact, and whether working with neglect was overseen by good quality management.

- There was overall evidence of a collaborative approach to understanding and supporting causal factors of neglect and the impact that had on children and their development. Children's diverse needs were broadly and collectively understood across the whole partnership and were appropriately planned for.
- There was little to no drift evident in children's lives and an improvement had been made regarding the partnership's response to child neglect. Referral information was generally sufficient.
- Positively, the children selected for this audit did have a GCP (Graded Care Profile) completed or planned as part of assessing neglect. There was some evidence of good and excellent partnership working; all families received a multiagency response, resulting in improved outcomes for children in a timely way.
- Professionals worked quickly to identify and offer specialist support i.e., domestic abuse support and practical solutions to address neglect i.e., deep cleaning, skip hire, food parcels etc. However parental engagement often depended on there being practical support and when that was exhausted, too many parents appeared to disengage.
- Where there were large sibling groups, the impact of neglect was generally understood and evidenced much better than in previous assurance work, but the needs of each child were not always specifically identified in plans and therefore measuring progress for each child was complicated and not easily identified.
- Where there was evidence of strong family networking, plans were co-produced, owned and driven by families themselves. Positively Fathers and were generally considered and included in planning.
- Management oversight and grip on casework was generally strong.

#### Timetable for 2025/2026 Section 11's

- March 2026 - All agencies to submit their Section 11 Self Assessments by the 31.03.2026
- April 2026 - submissions are scrutinised by the Independent Scrutineers
- May 2026 – A Pan Beds event is proposed to discuss the findings and agree workstreams required.

### LEARNING FROM MULTI AGENCY AUDITS

The LSAB **Joint Quality Assurance & Learning Group** had an established rolling programme of audits and highlight reports throughout 2024/25 which included themes linked to learning from reviews. The audits undertaken in 2024/25 are summarised below, many of the findings in the audits were similar in terms of general practice that needed to be improved.

**Transitions Audit April 2024:** The transitions audit was agreed primarily to ensure young people and adults are dealt with in accordance with the Luton safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure transitioning to children and adult social care was being appropriately applied. The audit was conducted as a joint audit with the Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership.

The audit sample size was 10 cases randomly selected on the following criteria.

- Individuals aged between 17½ - 25
- Individuals who have been involved in a safeguarding enquiry section 42
- Enquiries must have been closed/completed in the last 12 months
- There must have been multi-agency involvement with the individual at the time of the concern and or enquiry

Single agencies assessed their involvement with the individuals and graded the cases. This information was collated into an audit scoring matrix which was moderated in a multi-agency audit meeting where partners considered the quality of the multi-agency interventions in a face-to-face event, to enable the involved agencies to evaluate, reflect and learn from the effectiveness of multi-agency working.

### **Overview of key Findings:**

- Children with a diagnosed disability and those who were Looked After Children were more likely to have a robust planned and successful transition into adult services. Children and young people subject to Child in Need plans, contextual safeguarding, transitioning to adult social care under safeguarding were not automatically considered or robustly transitioned.
- Learning disability was recorded in case work, often without a clear diagnosis and discussed in relation to Global developmental delay and when this moves into a specific diagnosis.
- There were barriers linked to neurodiversity especially where there was coexisting mental health, alcohol, and substance abuse. In some cases there appeared to be a lack of skills to manage diagnosis, behaviours, and physical conditions.
- There is a need for a Luton Adult safeguarding threshold document and staff training in relation to Autism, ASD, and learning disabilities.
- There were sometimes gaps in the information provided to adult social care and they refused to accept referrals for safeguarding plans due to the lack of previous knowledge or assessment by children's social care.
- The awareness of transition needs to be addressed from the age of 14 – 18 with children and young people who are looked after children, child in need. The risk of sexual exploitation in adulthood did not always lead to a referral to Adult Social care while they were still a child.
- There are different transitional pathways within health. A Luton Multi agency Safeguarding transitions pathway has been identified as a clear theme for all agencies to access.
- The awareness of transition needs to be addressed by practitioners from the age of 14 – 18 with children and young people who are looked after children, child in need. Transitional plans need to be discussed in supervision.
- A lead professional was not always identified to act as a key conduit and contact point with regards to the delivery and co-ordination of services.

- Historical information was not shared between agencies, particularly at the point of referral to Adult Social care or information such as perpetrator organised rings to the Police.
- In individual cases good information sharing was noted to and from Bedfordshire Hospital Trust and Adult Social Care and from Children Social care.
- The risk of sexual exploitation did not always lead to a referral to Adult Social care.
- Parents were often assumed to be the protective factor for children and young people.
- Think Family approaches were often not applied.
- When undertaking a Mental Capacity Assessment, the risk of sexual harm to individuals or others were not always assessed properly.
- Legal literacy was not always applied to connect legal legislation with Mental Capacity Assessment and professionally curious practice.
- A lack of professional curiosity around patterns of interest/sexual harm. Also, around DARVO (deny, attack, reverse victim, and offender)
- The Pan Bedfordshire Children's Policy WAS NOT BROUGHT could be applied to working with vulnerable adults and not as clear cut for adults than in children's processes. Adults who have capacity do not have to attend apps if they do not want to.
- Gender based abuse was not always identified, assessed, and considered as a high risk.
- Professionals did not always consider complexity within individual cases and whether such cases should have been referred to the Luton CASPA.
- The use of MDT meetings can vary within the partnership. Different models of joint working and barriers and facilitating of these meetings can become blurred with so many approaches.
- When escalating a case to adult social care, agencies are not always sure of the escalation processes.

A **Pan Bedfordshire Child to Parent Violence Multi-Agency Audit** was also undertaken in October 2024 with 9 cases identified (*3 from each local authority area*) from the last 12 months. The aim of the audits was to consider the impact of child to parent violence on children, young people and their families and seek assurances that partner agencies are appropriately identifying and responding to the needs of these children, young people and their families.

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## IMPACT OF ACTIVITY – MULTIAGENCY AUDIT

**Transitions:** The systems learning from this audit including the policy and procedures work identified within this audit has been reviewed and overseen by the Joint Quality Assurance and Learning group and Pan Beds SAB Steering Group. **Good practice** was identified:

- Paediatric Team at the Bedfordshire Hospital Trust with regards to their involvement and recording secondary diagnoses such as allergies.
- The voice of the child or young person and Making Safeguarding personal were noted as clear and concise in most cases but could be improved in a few.

- In eight cases there was clear evidence of young people being spoken to alone and in two cases there was no evidence whether this did or not happen, in nine cases there was some consideration of complex needs.
- Transitions work is being led by the DASS and Service Director Children's Operations and includes children and young adults in a range of circumstances.
- The systems learning has been fed into this work and the LSAB / LSCP are developing a joint safeguarding transitioning pathway for vulnerable young people and adults when transitioning in safeguarding processes.

**The Child to Parent Violence Multi-Agency Audit** had some great examples of partnership working and positive interventions being put in place with children and families, particularly some intensive work from within Children's Services, which led to the family's situation improving to the extent that families could be stepped down from services. Here are some examples of learning and areas for improvement from the audit based on the case information provided.

- A Think Family approach was missing.
- Limited info regarding sibling-to-sibling violence.
- Parents not being viewed as victims or seeing themselves as victims.
- Communication between children/adult services could be improved.
- Terminology/abbreviations used by children/adult services have different meanings and potential different consequences in terms of next steps and interventions for the child/young person/family.
- Aggressive behaviour started at a young age for some of these young people but again limited exploration/curiosity as to why they were behaving in this way and seen as low-level concerns. In some cases, the aggression/violence had escalated from the home to school.
- Missed opportunities to explore past experiences, trauma, learned behaviours.
- Case closure sometimes premature - assessments not fully completed, support in place but no evidence it has made a difference, or the family have made changes, and no further incidents reported.
- Lots of themes featured in these cases have already been seen in historical SARs for young adults/adults with similar background/history.

partners agencies are responding questions arising from the audit to the Pan Beds Assurance and Improvement Group who are in the process of addressing these and seeking assurances.

## **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN THE HOME**

### **NEGLECT**

Neglect has been a priority in Luton over a number of years and it remains a challenge for the partnership. The LSCP has continued to work closely with the two other Safeguarding Children

Partnerships in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire, utilising a Pan Bedfordshire approach to raising awareness of neglect and helping frontline practitioners to identify and tackle neglect.

The [Pan Beds Neglect Strategy 2024–25](#) and action plan were updated and monitored with partners submitting highlight/assurance reports twice yearly to evidence impact. The revised Terms of Reference for the group were signed off to bring a renewed focus to:

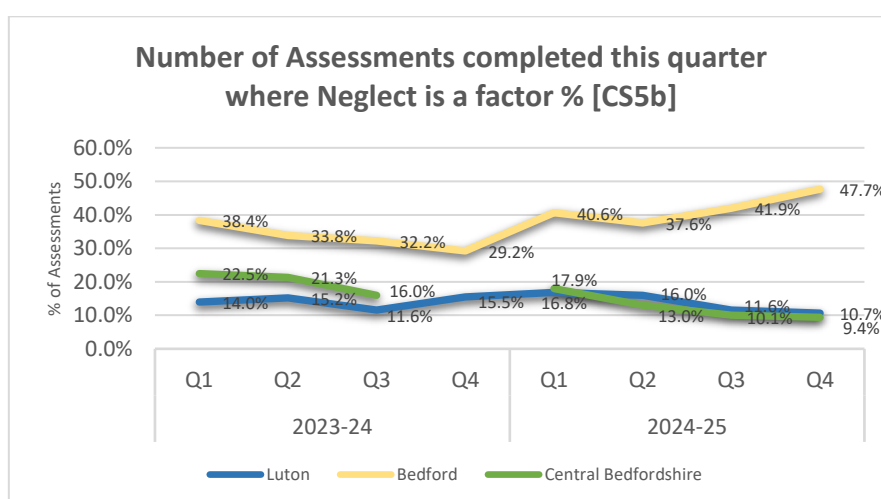
- improve the early recognition of neglect in families
- to improve agencies' responses to these families, and
- to ultimately improve positive outcomes for children, young people and their families.

The Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group is Chaired by NSPCC, Assistant Director East of England and has steered its strategy and action plan and challenged the group on use of GCP2 for assessment of neglect and other tools such as the neglect screening tool.

Practitioner briefings were published on different types of neglect including adolescent neglect, affluent neglect, medical neglect, and tips for identifying and working with neglect. Guidance highlighting the safeguarding considerations when working with children experience dental neglect and neglect through Obesity guidance was also updated within the [Neglect briefings collection](#).

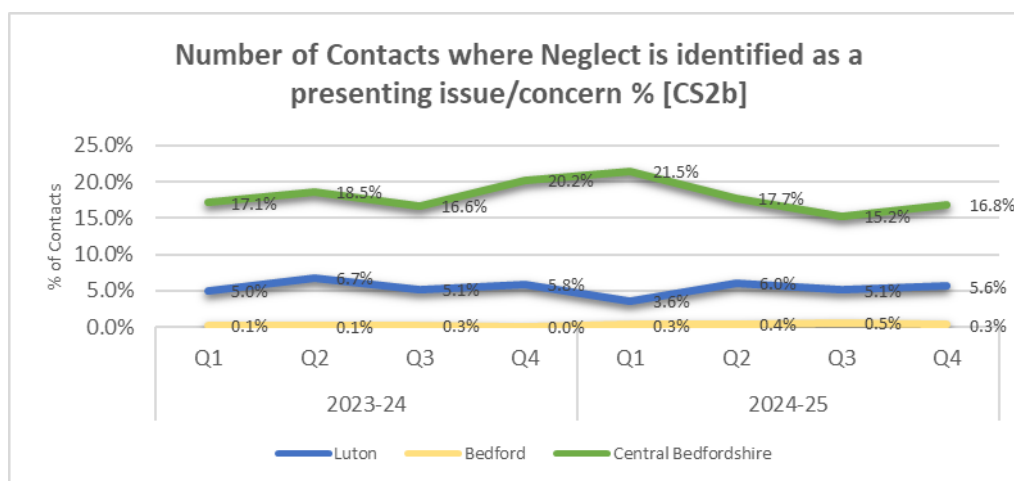
## IMPACT OF ACTIVITY - NEGLECT

Progress was made on the Pan Beds Neglect Scorecard to track indicators and compare performance across Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, and Luton. It is a strength that the data is reported across local authority areas for identification of emerging patterns and trends and any areas of good practice that can be replicated across the Pan Beds footprint or in a local place placed way. A number of key indicators are shown below:



The number percentage of Assessments completed this quarter where Neglect is a factor has seen Luton at the lowest over the last two years and gradually declined throughout 2024/25. This is replicated in the number of contacts where Neglect is identified as the primary

concern. Please note that there is a gap in the CBC data from 2023/24 but there is full data for 2024/25. However, Luton has maintained a lower percentage profile during 2024/25.



There was notable variance in neglect prevalence data across boroughs (Central Beds was higher at **20%**, Luton was steady at **5–6%**, and Bedford was much lower at **under 1%**). Agreed changes to data definitions have made for more consistent reporting, with a requirement for agencies to provide commentary alongside figures. The recruitment of a Pan Beds Senior Safeguarding Data Analyst will strengthen analysis and contextual interpretation in 2025/26.

The group continued to work on the roll-out and embedding of the GCP2 (Graded Care Profile 2), [Neglect Screening Tool](#), and [Day in My Life tools](#), with targeted promotion across health, education, and social care. Learning from audits and reviews was shared at the group who have worked to address barriers including time constraints, multi-agency engagement, and practitioner misconceptions. ELFT developed a neglect training module for Level 3 safeguarding.

### Campaigns & Public Engagement

- Designed and soft-launched **‘Stop, Think: Neglect’ Campaign** in November 2024, with official launch in February 2025.
- Three strands: practitioners, community/parents & carers, and young people.
- Launch featured lived experience speakers, Police, Health, and NSPCC “Listen Up, Speak Up” sessions. Campaign to run for 2 years with ongoing youth input, including a young person–designed logo.

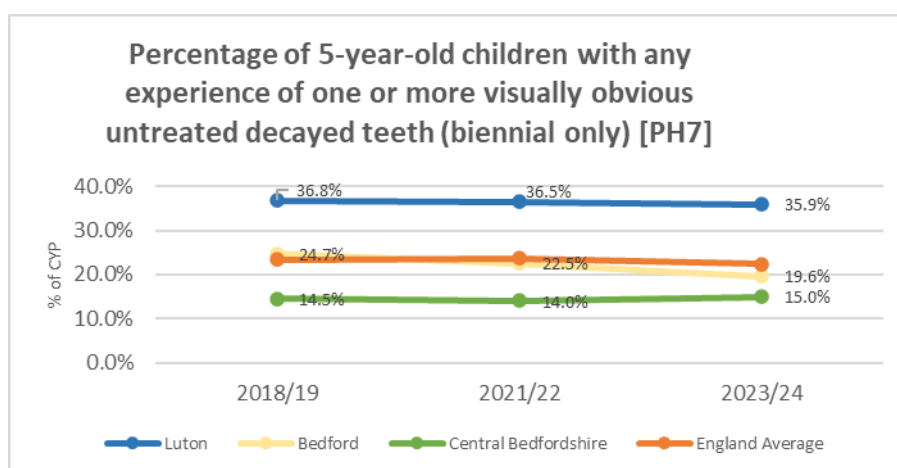
### Partnership & National Links

- Contributed to the National Safeguarding Review Panel thematic review into neglect, focusing on love and care as core parental responsibilities.
- Engaged with NSPCC research (“Too Little, Too Late”) highlighting early help funding, national neglect strategy needs, and multi-agency coordination.

### Specialist Issues

- Dental neglect barriers addressed through interim parent resources.

- Review of parental problematic drug/alcohol use shows differing patterns across boroughs.
- Recognition that childhood obesity may signal neglect in some cases, prompting practitioner awareness guidance.
- Medical neglect audit revealed challenges in assessing missed appointments' significance and consent issues.



Concerns for dental neglect remain highest in Luton where dental neglect is twice the England average and much higher than either Bedford or Central Bedfordshire. This type of neglect will continue to be a focus within the Pan Beds Neglect Strategy and Action Plan.

Additional activities in 2024 carried out by Cambridgeshire Community Services have included, CCS redesigned the [Graded Care Profile 2 \(GCP2\)](#) tab on their clinical recording system to be a neglect tab. This tab has various tools on it including GCP2, neglect screening tool, obesity screening tool as well as links to the clutter scales and fire safety assessments. It is hoped this tab will help support practitioners when they have a neglect concern to identify tools to support their assessment of this and a place to review and analyse the concerns.

#### Graded Care Profiles:

GCP2 completions	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21
Children's Services	54	93	18	105	55
Cambridge Community Services	14	38	11	42	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>107</b>

The data demonstrates that use of the GCP2 is lower than expected given the number of referrals and Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) for Neglect, as it is good practice for a GCP2 to accompany any referral for neglect and it should be reviewed as part of any ongoing work. The LSCP has challenged agencies to use GCP2 and following an increase in the number of Accredited GCP2 Trainers and roll out of training they hope to see an increase in GCP2 within early intervention to improve the lives of children and young people who are at risk of neglect.

Neglect remains the most common form of child abuse across Luton and the LSCP aims to ensure that there is early recognition of neglect cases and that there is an appropriate, consistent, and timely response across all agencies from early help to statutory intervention. The LSCP therefore needs to do more to upscale local use of GCP2 and the neglect screening tool so that children and young people have their needs met by their parents or carers, and support is provided where this is not the case.

Further information on the impact of work on Neglect can be found in [Section 11 Self-Assessment](#) process on page 35 as Neglect was its key theme across all standards, For more information on neglect please visit our [Safeguarding Bedfordshire](#) and [NSPCC](#) websites.

## DOMESTIC ABUSE

The LSCP shares a joint priority with the Luton Safeguarding Adult Partnership and the other two safeguarding children partnerships in Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire. Domestic Abuse work in Luton is led the Luton Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (DALPG) and governed by the [Luton Community Safety Partnership](#) and DALPB have developed a [Luton Domestic Abuse Strategy](#). Services, resources and training are delivered by the [Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership \(BDAP\)](#)

As shown on our structure chart the LSCP is represented on [Pan Beds Children's Strategic Leaders Domestic Abuse Strategic Group](#) as well as the [Luton Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Group](#) who coordinate and provide strategic oversight of the local activity around domestic abuse in Luton. The [Pan Beds Domestic Abuse Strategic Leaders Group](#) provides oversight and traction in the development of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requirements across Bedfordshire and Luton. The purpose of the group is to:

- ensure a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to address concerns about domestic abuse in Bedfordshire
- provide consistency in approach, explore and agree joint working opportunities and common messaging
- maintain a strategic overview of domestic abuse across Bedfordshire.

Domestic abuse remains one of the single highest risk factors identified at point of contact and is a common feature in cases where there are other identified risk factors. With the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children and young people living in households where domestic abuse is happening are classed as victims in their own right due to the trauma they experience. Further information can be found in [Appendix A Data Snapshot](#)..

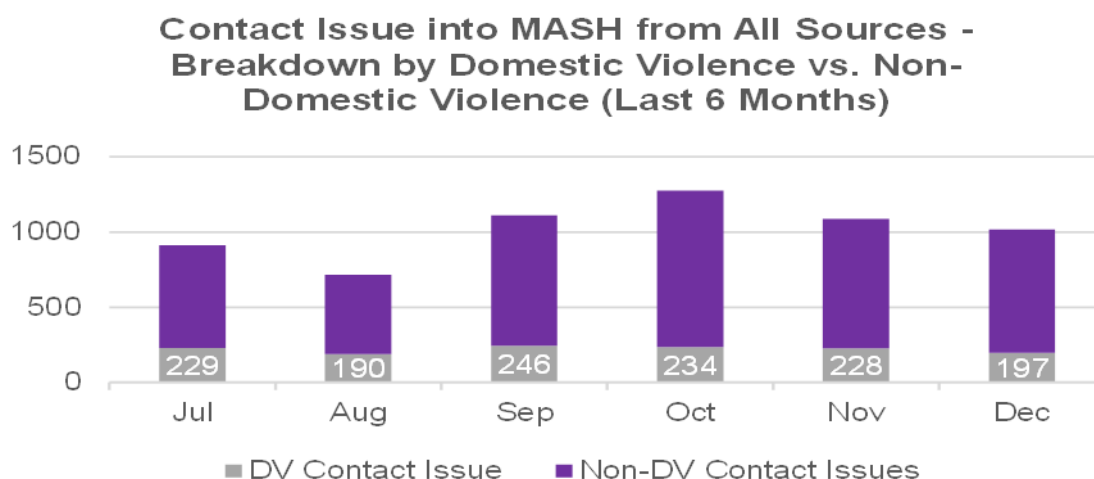
Children and young people who are exposed to domestic abuse are greatly impacted in terms of their health, wellbeing and development. This is not just the children and young people who witness domestic abuse, it is all children living in the house who may hear the arguments, items being smashed and see the injuries or damage to the house, both during and after an incident. Some children are also verbally or physically abused too and may try to intervene and get hurt.

Other children and young people come to accept the behaviour as normal and behave in a similar way towards the non-abusive adult or grow up to be abusive in their own relationships. Raising public awareness of domestic abuse is an important piece of work for LSCP to ensure that those who experience it, or know of someone that is, can access help and support.

## IMPACT OF ACTIVITY – DOMESTIC ABUSE

### Proportion of Contacts for Domestic Abuse going down

The figure below shows a monthly breakdown of domestic abuse vs non-domestic abuse contact issues. The numbers of Domestic Abuse contacts have been reasonably consistent usually at between 190 and 246. However, we can see from the proportion of Contacts, Domestic Abuse has decreased from **27.6%-26.6%** in July – August to **19.4%-23.0%** in October – December. This is down 1.3% from the previous report (April – September 2024), where Domestic Violence cases were at 28.9%, following increases over the months before that.



As a result of this information the Joint Quality Assurance and Improvement Group completed a deep dive into the difference between the July to August figures to identify any relevant factors for future learning outcomes. They identified seasonal trends in the reporting linked to school term times but there were no other factors identified. They also received single agency assurance reports and further information of their impact on Domestic Abuse and any further system requirements required can be found in [Appendix B Partners Snapshot](#).

The LSCP contributes to the Luton Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board and supports its priorities. The Luton Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-2024 is built around the four priorities:

- Prevention and early help
- Partnership:
- Provision and Improvement
- Protection

The strategy measures outcomes for participants using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The LSCP received an end of year report in June 2024 containing the following outputs and data:

### Services Commissioned by Luton Council for Domestic Abuse:

- **Impact Housing:** Support for victims fleeing domestic abuse, including those with complex needs.
- **Women's Aid General Refuges:** Three refuges, including one for Southern Asian women, with specialist workers and family support.
- **Women's Aid Refuge for Complex Health Needs:** A 5-bed refuge for women with mental health, drug/alcohol, and BME complex needs.
- **Women's Aid Children Family Worker:** Support for children and families affected by domestic abuse.
- **Harmful Practices Support Advocacy:** Advocacy for victims of FGM, including court and safeguarding support.
- **Ebonista Project:** A 3-day perpetrators program with victim support.
- **KIDVA-Embrace:** Two full-time IDVAs supporting child domestic abuse victims and child-to-parent violence cases.
- **Flexi Fund – Impakt:** Financial support for domestic abuse victims for urgent needs like travel, clothing, and accommodation.

### Equalities Monitoring:

1. **Age Range:** Majority of participants aged 30–40.
2. **Relationship Status:** 36.5% married/cohabiting, 25.8% single.
3. **Religion:** 35.5% Muslim, 25.8% no religion.
4. **Disabilities:** 29% mental health concerns, 9.7% neurodiverse.
5. **Substance Misuse:** 9.7% drug addiction, 16.1% alcohol addiction.
6. **Ethnic Origin:** 32.3% Pakistani, 25.8% White British.

Working together with partner agencies such as the IDVA service and BDAP has led to a change in process for Clare's Law. Since the implementation in February 2024 there has been significant increase in right to ask and right to know applications. Positive feedback has been received directly from individuals disclosed to allowing them to make informed decisions regarding their relationship status. Further data will be included in the LSCP dataset in 2025/26.

The LSCP also participated in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, which is an annual international campaign that began on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and which ran 10 December, Human Rights Day. The LSAB undertook to promote the daily activities taking place and for partners to participate in selected activities and to mark White Ribbon Day and the start of 16 Days of Action in a bid to end gender-based violence against women and girls.

Luton Council and several of its partners have been White Ribbon accredited, and to demonstrate our commitment to preventing violence against women and girls and to help promote equality. The [White Ribbon Day](#) theme was '*It starts with men*', in order to address the attitudes and behaviours that contribute to a fear of violence for women in their daily

lives and to specifically encourage men to hold themselves accountable to women and to each other to affect positive change to transform harmful cultures. Monday 25 November was also the start of 16 Days of Action Against Gender-Based Violence, an international campaign to challenge violence and abuse against women and girls.

A number of events happened in Luton and across Bedfordshire during the 16 days, including the #TooManyNames event, on Friday 29 November at Luton Point where the women who have lost their lives due to male violence were honoured. This year, 118 names of women and girls who were killed, four of whom lived in Bedfordshire, were read aloud. This event serves as a tragic reminder of the devastating impact of gender-based violence not just in Bedfordshire, but across the UK and the rest of the world. This event was organised by the [Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership](#). The campaign also demonstrates the raw emotions survivors face when going through and rebuilding from domestic abuse, sexual assault and other crimes.

In February 2025, information about Stalking Protection Orders was added to Section 3, of the *Pan Beds Multi-Agency Safeguarding procedures Specialist Domestic Abuse Services* and Support. Information about the timeframe for introduction of Domestic Abuse Protection Orders and Domestic Abuse Protection Notices was also updated.

The LSCP will seek data regarding the use of domestic abuse procedures in 2025/26.

## MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Much of the work undertaken has been as a result of learning from Child Safeguarding Partnership Reviews as well as continuing to progress system change from Rapid Reviews undertaken during the year, as detailed in the section on Learning from Experience.

The LSCP provides guidance, advice, and resources from partners in relation to the mental health and wellbeing within families, in particular we have shared resources through our website, newsletters and email circulation or distribution lists. Mental Health and wellbeing are recognised as a concern both locally and nationally) due to rising numbers of children, young people and adults needing to access services.

Partners offer a range of educational and mental health support services for children and young people in Luton. These include school-based initiatives, local authority resources, and charities that focus on emotional well-being and mental health. The services aim to improve mental health literacy, provide early intervention, and offer specialized support when needed.

**East London Foundation Trust (ELFT)** made 348 referrals to Children's Social Care in 2024–25, a **17%** reduction from **420** in 2023–24. Issues of under-recording due to multiple electronic systems. New process from April 2025 with mandatory InPhase incident report form alongside these referrals will mean better oversight, accuracy, and intervention. Their holistic

risk assessments include voice of the child and contextual risks. ELFT challenge decisions if not in child's best interest. They have a strong stakeholder relationship via CAMHS and Community Access Pathway. New multi-agency cooperation and escalation protocol has been developed to improve joint working across Luton.

The LSCP has promoted the growing number of ways young people can access self-help and online support using a range of self-help apps such as [REFLECT](#) a free, confidential and 24/7 text support service for young people in Milton Keynes who need advice or help. REFLECT is delivered by trained volunteers and clinicians who are available around the clock to listen and support anyone who is feeling anxious, lonely, overwhelmed or not quite themselves. It is part of the wider network of Shout services across the UK.

[CAMHS Discovery College \(DiSCO\)](#) an educational project, was launched with a focus on improving young people's wellbeing. DiSCO welcomes any young person aged 13 to 18-years-old living in to join free workshops held online and face-to-face to support them to explore their potential, learn new skills and flourish within their community. All the workshops are coproduced in a culturally sensitive way with young people or volunteers to promote resilience within local communities. The LSCP has promoted these services across the partnership via an updated support service list and a wide range of emotional wellbeing related training.

**Trauma Informed Care** - As part of their focus on emotional health and wellbeing the Joint Quality Assurance & Learning Group received presentations on the Pan Beds approach to Trauma Informed Care (TIC) from East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT)

This gave examples of where Luton and Bedfordshire are in relation to their counterparts and how they are meeting regularly to update each other and deliver training.

Examples of current practices already practicing in trauma informed way:

- Violence Reduction Initiative – safety huddles utilising the TIC approach
- Consistent staff offering care
- Dialogue to identify people's needs
- Offering choice re intervention /staff

The LSCP Strategic Board received presentations from Bedfordshire Police and ELFT on the roll out of the **Right Care Right Person** initiative, which is an approach designed to ensure that people of all ages, who have health and/or social care needs, are responded to by the right person, with the right skills, training, and experience to best meet their needs. Central government agencies as well as local partners have also been at the centre of planning and delivery as often the right care is delivered by mental health or other support services.

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## IMPACT OF ACTIVITY – EMOTIONAL WELLBEING & MENTAL HEALTH

The key changes in RCRP governance structures aim to streamline operations, improve coordination among partners, and enhance monitoring and escalation processes and include:

- **Transition to Business as Usual (BAU):** Current project arrangements will cease, and new BAU processes will commence from 6th May 2025.
- **RCRP Partnership Steering Group:** A central steering group will oversee governance, including policy requirements, training, communications, legal implications, data monitoring for performance, and lessons learned.
- **Multi-Agency Partnership Escalations:** A new escalation process will be implemented, with reviewed and approved Terms of Reference and MS Forms.
- **Closure of Non-Essential Meetings:** Partnership meetings not required under the new governance structure will be closed.
- **Integration with Local Governance:** Local governance structures for Bedford Borough Council, Luton Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, EEAST, ELFT, and Acute Trusts will be incorporated into the RCRP framework.
- **Streamlined Oversight:** The governance structure will include oversight from various boards and groups, such as the Chief Exec Forum, AMHP Governance Group, BLMK Integrated Care Board, and Local Safeguarding Boards.

The reported outputs from the three stage initiative were cited as:

**Reduction in Concern for Welfare Calls:** Police attendance for concern for welfare calls dropped from 80% to 51%, potentially indicating better allocation of resources and reliance on appropriate agencies for non-urgent welfare concerns and indicating improved processes for managing these incidents. Around 300-400 calls per week are made to the mental health crisis line, showing active engagement with mental health services.

**Improved Crisis Response:** The establishment of the Healthcare Professionals Line and new processes was established in October 2024 to ensure rapid advice and guidance for urgent face-to-face assessments by crisis teams (East London NHS Foundation Trust). A new process was introduced in November 2024 for patients seen by police and requiring urgent face-to-face assessments by crisis teams. suggest faster and more effective responses to mental health crises. Referral numbers to Bedford and Luton crisis teams have remained steady, indicating consistent support for individuals in need.

**Enhanced Multiagency Coordination:** The implementation of RCRP governance structures, including multiagency escalation processes and streamlined oversight, are seen to improve service delivery and support for vulnerable individuals. EEAST reports a reduction in mental health demand, which could be attributed to seasonal averages or the implementation of RCRP. This is being monitored to determine the exact impact.

**Training and Pathway Development:** EEAST has provided bespoke training for ambulance staff and developed mental health pathways, which may enhance care for vulnerable individuals requiring emergency or non-emergency assistance.

Within Right Care Right Person (RCRP), the LSCP has been able to provide a child welfare focus and received data regarding the numbers of calls for welfare and their outcomes. Of the **197** incidents called in across Pan Bedfordshire, the police attended **82 (40%)**, it is estimated that

previously they would have attended **171 (83%)** incidents. Signposting these services have freed up resources for other core police activities.

Where risks are related to Children's Services they have been addressed as follows

- Concern regarding families where the adult is known to adult services but child is not.
- If family is not known to social services and there are concerns then a MASH referral can be made. The earliest response for this is 4 hours (RED referral).

Mitigations:

- Where the adult is known the adult team will ascertain welfare.
- Where the child/family is known, the allocated social worker will ascertain welfare.
- Where the child is unknown, a MASH referral should be made.
- Where there is imminent risk and the child/family are not known to social services the Police should be contacted.

The LSCP will continue to receive regular updates now RCRP has become business as usual and will continue to provide oversight and scrutiny on its impact to child wellbeing and safeguarding effectiveness.

For more information on this area of practice please access information [here](#). Further information on the impact of rapid reviews and CSRs can be found on pages 21 to 34.

## PRIVATE FOSTERING

The LSCP Strategic Board has remained concerned that the reported numbers of children within private fostering arrangements remained low with **four** children under the age of sixteen at the end of 2023/24. Private fostering continued to be a focus with an annual assurance report being provided to the Strategic Board in November 2023.

During 2024/25 the private fostering team supported **three** children who met the definition of private fostering. This is lower than last year:

Whilst there is always more to do to increase awareness in Luton we are happy to report that:

- Partners promoted the CORAM BAAF Private Fostering awareness day
- The Fostering Team run monthly paid adverts in E-Luton throughout 2024/25. These are changed monthly to promote different areas of fostering. August focused solely on private fostering. 33,000 residents are signed up to receive E-Luton this should increase reach.
- Luton Council Communications Team post regularly to social media, Facebook and Instagram. Private fostering is regularly featured.
- Attendance at events and information stands to promote all areas of fostering, including private fostering. Events attended have included:
  - Christmas Markets
  - Community Awards
  - Eid Festival
  - Picnic in the Park

- St Patricks Day parade
- St Georges Day
- Pride
- International Women's Day event

The LSCP is aware private fostering numbers remain low, however, they are committed to continue to promote awareness and also to seek assurance and challenge partners as needed.

## SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN THE COMMUNITY

### EXTRAFAMILIAL HARM

**Contextual Safeguarding, Child Exploitation and Serious Youth Violence** have been key themes across Luton during this yearly reporting period. Partners have continued their work to ensure that children and young people in Luton and Bedfordshire are protected from extra-familial harm and missing episodes are reduced. The contextual safeguarding approach promotes thorough assessments and safety plans around children and young people who are at risk of significant harm beyond their own family.

This strong partnership approach has identified adults and locations of concern and a prompt response of community safety, youth worker outreach, visits to premises, and perpetrators of exploitation served with Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWN), along with warning notices and convictions for Modern Day Slavery offences.

The [Bedfordshire Serious Violence and Exploitation Strategy 2025-2027](#) has been published, marking a significant step forward in tackling violence and exploitation. Alongside the publication of the strategy, the Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit (VERU) become the [Violence and Exploitation Prevention Partnership \(VEPP\)](#). The change to VEPP represents more than a new name. It is a strategic realignment that will look to:

- Better communicate their purpose and priorities – moving from a unit to a collaborative partnership model.
- Emphasise prevention as a central pillar in tackling the root cause of violence and exploitation.
- Reinforce their role in coordinating partnership activity, enabling a consistent and integrated approach across agencies.

Over the past year, this strategy has been developed through close collaboration with partners, including workshops, interviews, and joint planning.

The new VEPP will coordinate three core workstreams:

- Serious Violence Duty (SVD): Supporting partners to meet statutory requirements.
- Prevention Partnerships: A newly formed government initiative, focused on targeted early intervention, being piloted via VRU areas.

- Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) Programme: Continuing to deliver the VRU within Bedfordshire embedding a public health approach to serious violence and exploitation.

[Bedfordshire Against Violence and Exploitation \(BAVEX\)](#) Pan Beds Exploitation Communication Group continues to meet on an 8-week basis, this group has evolved to include violence and exploitation; the group is to coordinate and deliver Pan Beds Multi Agency communications across the Partnership regarding violence and exploitation. This group is overseen by the Pan Beds Exploitation & Missing Strategic Group and the Serious Harm Partnership Board.

A Pan Beds Partnership Response was coordinated in 2024/25 on the recommendations from the Criminal Exploitation Needs Assessment presented to the Pan Beds Exploitation & Missing Strategic Group. Due to changes in the role of the Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation and Missing Coordinator this group did not meet after January 2025. However, the strategic work of this group has continued and also been addressed by the Serious Harm Board, resulting in the [Bedfordshire VEPP serious violence and exploitation strategy 2025-2026](#). This uses a whole systems approach to prevent and reduce violence and exploitation and launched in 2025/26.

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## IMPACT OF ACTIVITY – EXTRA-FAMILIAL HARM

**Bedfordshire Police** launched “Lost Boys” VR campaign on Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE). New CSE Silver Group adds extra scrutiny and daily analysis of risk, victims, and perpetrators. Implemented Philomena Protocol for looked-after children at risk of going missing, ensuring faster, more informed responses.

The **Violence & Exploitation Reduction Unit (VERU)** have a network of Youth Voices. They have embedded trauma-informed practice into their strategy. Commissioned services that have reached 8,000 young people facing disadvantage. Delivered prevention campaigns (e.g. Just Drop It) linked to reduction in knife crime and increased weapons surrendered and awareness campaigns reaching 600,000 plus people across Bedfordshire. Commissioned services like Bedfordshire Open Door to provide specialist counselling service for victims of crime and exploitation.

The **Emergency Department Navigator Service** is in place in Luton and Dunstable Hospital to support young people aged 12-25 presenting at hospitals with injuries and emergencies arising from involvement in violence and criminal exploitation, including gangs and county lines and help them to move away from this activity. The service will aim to reduce presentations at emergency department services for violence/exploitation related issues, reduce involvement with the criminal justice system and encourage positive engagement with other services. The service will use a trauma informed approach that will involve building a relationship of trust, beginning in the ‘reachable moment’ and continuing until the young person has reached sufficient stability, confidence and motivation to engage fully with other services (statutory and voluntary sector) that can provide further support. The length of engagement with each young person will vary, depending on the complexity of their needs.

### Other evidence of impact

- Increase in **Pan Beds Multi Agency Information Submission Forms** when campaigns and training have been delivered.
- Increase in the use of the **Pan Beds Child Exploitation Tool** in referrals and assessments.
- **VERU website** continues to perform above average with their **Just Drop It campaign** being the most visited page. There is also good engagements with the **BAVEX website**.
- Professional challenge during exploitation cases improved outcomes for young people.
- Practitioners have reported increased confidence in safeguarding processes and escalation around exploitation cases.
- Bedfordshire Open Door have reported that 57 Young people who have been victims of crime and or exploitation registered and receiving weekly one to one counselling April 2024 to Dec 2024.
- Through a collaborative, community-led approach, the VERU has supported those at-risk of harm, empowered young people to be part of the solution to tackling issues that affect them and worked with partners to educate young people on dangers of things like knife crime and county lines. Over the last 12 months, their impact has been felt through early intervention programs, targeted outreach initiatives and the strengthening of crucial partnership between Bedfordshire Police, Bedford Borough Council and other statutory and community services. For more information, please see [Appendix B](#) and [Appendix C](#).

## SAFEGUARDING EDUCATION

The **Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group** is a strategic group, tasked to bring education as the fourth safeguarding partner and reporting directly to the Pan Bedfordshire Assurance and Improvement. It ensures that the voice of the education sector within Bedfordshire is heard and represented across Luton building a shared understanding of priorities. The Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group was established in 2022 to support, strengthen and inform the vital work of the BBSCP.

It is chaired by the three Bedfordshire Local Authority Service Directors for Education (on a rotating basis) and has representatives from schools across Bedfordshire. The group provides a communication channel between education settings, including Governors, Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) forums and the three Safeguarding Children Partnerships. It provides support and Governance to the local cluster/hub arrangements as they share themes, challenges, and good practice in their safeguarding work.

The Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group has met four times this year with engagement in the meetings being good. The DfE National Adviser for Education attended one group to talk about the education requirements within Working Together 2023 and expectations on MASA around education representation. The group has discussed a range of topics linked to both practice reviews and the Partnerships priorities.

As part of the groups standing agenda there is a dedicated time for the DSL and Cluster Forums to raise issues or information that they would like feedback to from the Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group. Local schools and colleges are invited to take part in audits and case reviews where relevant and the LSCP communicates with schools via a local monthly newsletter dedicated for schools.

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## IMPACT OF ACTIVITY – SAFEGUARDING EDUCATION

**Bedfordshire Police** have completed significant work through their Education and Diversion activities during 2024/25 which has shown the following impact:

- **Education and Diversion Team statistics** – During the academic year 2024/25 the Bedfordshire Police Education and Diversion team have to date engaged with 58,252 children and young people with 762 early interventions being undertaken. The team have also delivered 574 educational inputs and have supported 300 partner events.
- **Pol Ed** – In April 2024 Bedfordshire Police provided high quality lesson plans and assemblies on a range of policing priorities to all educational establishments in the county through the Pol-Ed programme [A positive force in education | Pol-Ed - A positive force in education](#). To date 99% of all schools and other educational establishments across the county are signed up to use the resources (with 100% sign up across Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire). So far this academic year 69,690 children and young people have received a Pol-Ed input which includes 2,700 receiving an input around MVAWG, 1,740 receiving an input around harassment, 3,260 receiving an input around digital safeguarding and 2,460 receiving an input around sexual related offence.
- **School based meetings** - The Education and Diversion Team continue to hold regular Education and Police partnership forums allowing attendees to discuss current safeguarding themes and looking at ways to work together to tackle concerns. In addition, representatives from the Education and Diversion team sit on the three local authority regular DSL forums.
- **Youth cabinets** - The education and Diversion team have worked with both the Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Youth Cabinets around key safeguarding areas with workshops taking place with both sets of young people to empower the elected members to work in partnership to tackling specific topics. The Bedford Borough Youth Cabinet picked up MVAWG as part of their work around community safety and the team are working with them to deliver a campaign in two areas of Bedford based around the “Ask for Angela” scheme but aimed at young people
- **VR headsets** - Through home office funding 35 VR headsets have been purchased by the force with part of their use to engage and educate students around key policing priorities by immersing them in realistic situations including several safeguarding themes. A new campaign called “Lost boys” has recently been launched which includes a VR film based around CCE.
- **Amber** – In January 2025 the Amber unit was relaunched for Luton seeing two E&D police officers and two youth workers from the Luton Youth Partnership Service working

together to provide a first response service for specific incidents in order to prevent exclusions and assist DSL's with initial safeguarding incidents.

- **Theatre in Education** – Theatre in Education continues to be an important opportunity to provide education to children and young people across Bedfordshire. This academic year has seen 15,192 attend a performance and follow up workshop around MVAWG

**Luton Borough Council:** Safeguarding in Education practice is well embedded across the education sector and continues to provide safeguarding support, challenge and intervention as required. A reviewed and strengthened Education strategy reflecting learning from 2023/24 was finalised and embedded within the service and schools. This has been collaboratively reviewed and updated to capture the entire service and delivery. Our SEF looks back over the previous year and provides contextual information about Luton and the services for children, young people and their families. Individuals and Teams from across children's social care, early help, education, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have all contributed.

For the academic year 2024-25, there was a **100%** return rate on S175 audits from schools. These audits highlight in regard to the LSCP Strategic Business Plan that domestic abuse and neglect are key priorities within schools. Information within the audit returns indicate that schools are completing lots of work within the L2 space regarding neglect including supporting with free breakfasts, coats, shoes and vouchers. Schools are receiving **Operation Encompass** notifications which is shaping their awareness/context to families. Within the Local Authority, Safeguarding in Education have completed a review of Operation Encompass to ensure the system is supporting schools regarding domestic abuse.

#### **What difference has this made?**

- Education strategic representation has been strengthened at the LSCP Strategic Board and all subgroup meetings with education taking part in strategic decision making.
- Public Health work within education settings has supported both children, young people, staff, parents and the community in respect of mental health issues.
- The Police Education and Diversion Team have received positive feedback for the work and support they provide to a lot of young people who are victims of crime who report back that this work and support has made them feel more positive about things.
- Multi-agency open and honest discussions leading to resolutions about the issues that affect schools, such as thresholds, escalations or the use of the GCP2.
- The Safeguarding in Education Team continue to support meetings within the MASA to voice the views of education and work is underway as to how we represent their voice first hand, ensuring that schools play a direct part in strategic decision making within the MASA across a variety of different meetings.

### **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN THROUGH EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES**

The LSCP and its counterparts in BBSCP and CBSCP have worked hard to review and revise their governance arrangements across Pan Bedfordshire and Luton place based arrangements

especially in the light of the publication of national guidance and consultations. The LSCP has ensured it was able to make an informed contribution to national consultations.

In March 2024, the three SCPS held an away day with the three delegated safeguarding partners, Chairs and Business Managers from each local authority area to begin to shape principles and structures for ensuring compliance with '*Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023*' and continued Pan Beds arrangements. These included the Lead Safeguarding Partners, Partnership Chair, Independent Scrutiny and the role of Education and revised structures and governance arrangements were proposed for review and agreement in 2024/25.

The LSCP MASA cover the Local Authority area of Luton. The three Safeguarding Partners are Luton Borough Council, Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board, and Bedfordshire Police. The Partnership's core objective is to coordinate and hold partners to account to make sure they are protecting children and young people in Luton who might be or are at risk, and to ensure that timely learning from serious safeguarding incidents is identified and implemented.

The LSCP has continued to work collaboratively with our neighbouring Safeguarding Children Partnerships in Central Bedfordshire and Luton to ensure there is a more joined up approach to safeguarding, this includes several Pan Bedfordshire groups. This is particularly important where agencies are delivering services across the three local authority areas and are represented on several Partnerships. In agreeing a common approach and response to specific safeguarding and child protection issues such as child exploitation, neglect for example Pan Bedfordshire groups operate across the three Partnerships.

The LSCP acknowledges the support from relevant agencies with their participation in Luton and Pan Bedfordshire groups, delivery of training and engagement with multi-agency audits and case reviews for example. As referenced above the LSCP has named education representatives on its Strategic Board and subgroup. All the relevant agencies have a role to play in safeguarding children and young people across Luton. The LSCP will continue to review its relevant agencies on an annual basis as part of its annual Development Day.

### **Lead Safeguarding Partners**

The following Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) lead and drive the changes that the government set out in Working Together 2023.

- Luton Borough Council – Robin Porter, Chief Executive during 2024/25.
- Bedfordshire Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board (BLMK ICB) – Felicity Cox, Chief Executive.
- Bedfordshire Police - Trevor Rodenhurst, Chief Constable.

All three LSPs have equal and joint responsibility for the LSCP MASA. On behalf of their agency the LSPs will speak with authority, take decisions and commit them on policy, resourcing and practice matters. They are responsible for holding their own agency to account, on how

effective they participate and implement the BBSCP MASA and are responsible for discharging their own statutory duties.

### **Delegated Safeguarding Partners**

The following Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) are senior representative from one of the three statutory safeguarding partners who are responsible for the operational delivery of safeguarding arrangements within Luton. DSPs are vital for the effective operational implementation of the MASA, working collaboratively to protect and promote the welfare of children. 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 MASA.

- Luton Borough Council – Dheeraj Chibber, Director for Children, Education & Families.
- Bedfordshire Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board (BLMK ICB) – Sarah Stanley, Chief Nursing Director and Simon Hardcastle-Waugh, Deputy Chief Nurse.
- Bedfordshire Police – John Murphy, Assistant Chief Constable and Zara Brown, Detective Chief Superintendent.

The DSPs and Independent Scrutineer met quarterly this year to provide space to reflect on previous Board meetings and plan for future Boards. These were also opportunities to assure themselves that the MASA was embedded and working. The Strategic Board continued to develop and improve the format for their meetings, to give a greater focus on scrutiny and assurance regarding key practice and safeguarding priorities.

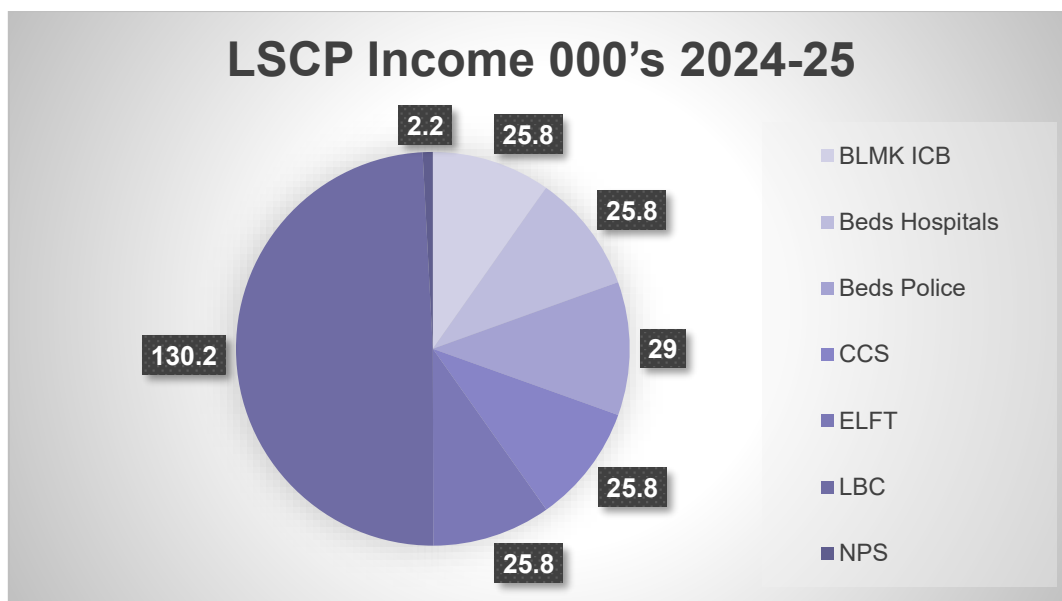
The meetings provided opportunities for collective reflective sessions to enable partner agencies to provide evidence regarding the effectiveness of their safeguarding arrangements for children and young people within their agency and multi-agency. This meant that the Strategic Board could challenge, utilise and seek assurances around practice and safeguarding priorities.

### **Scrutiny Arrangements**

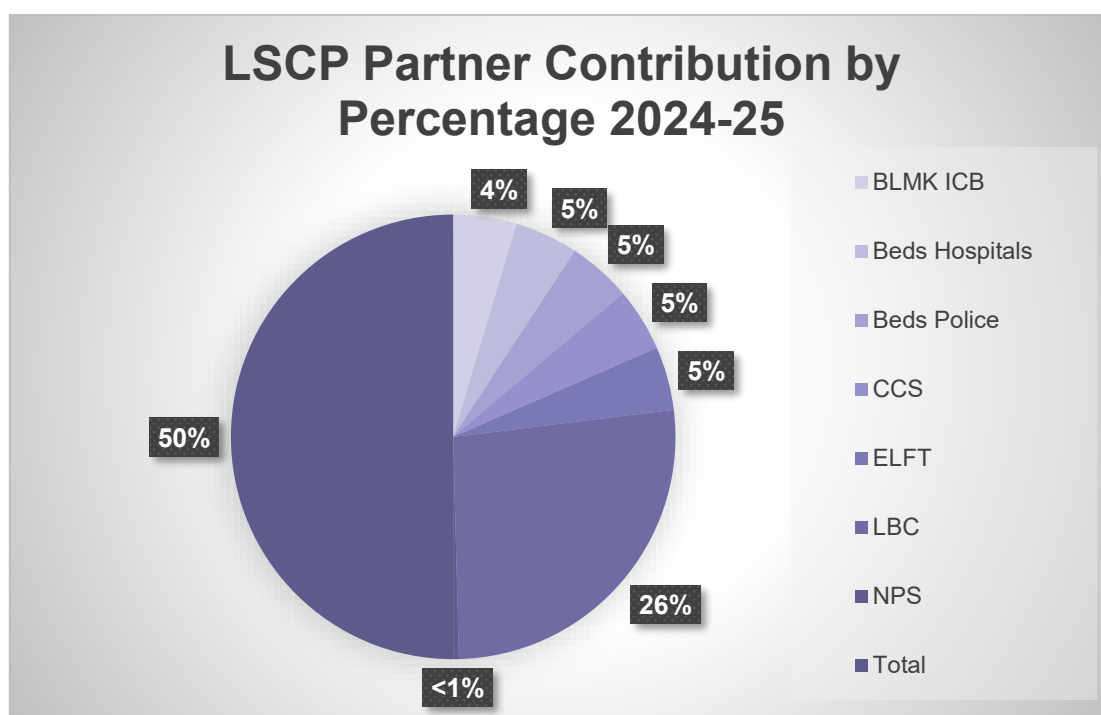
In 2024/25 scrutiny has been provided by Alan Caton OBE as the LSCP Independent Chair who moved to the Independent Scrutineer position in December 2024. The scrutiny role will be taken up by our new Independent Scrutineer, Jon Brown in 2025/26.

## **PARTNERSHIP FUNDING CONTRIBUTIONS & EXPENDITURE 2024/25**

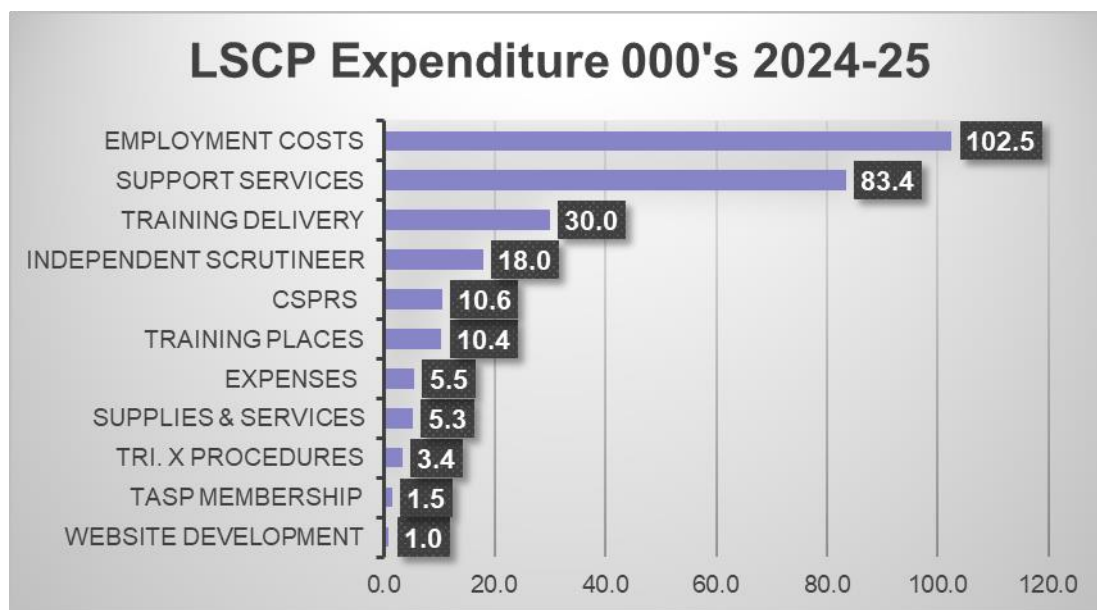
The LSCP annual budget for 2024/25 was set at the same level as 2023-24 at £264,600 with no additional growth and disinvestment in some areas to achieve a balanced budget. The statutory partners and health relevant agencies agreed the following financial contributions the partnership in the amounts below:



In reducing the contributions to keep expenditure within the previous expenditure envelope it was highlighted that it may require an additional contribution in the event of further CSPRs or learning activity from rapid reviews within year.



These contributions cover the total Business Costs of the LSCP including staffing, provision of training, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, practice improvement, chairing and scrutiny costs, communications, LSCP development initiatives, office costs, website and multi-agency procedures. The chart below shows the actual expenditure in 2024/25.



The biggest LSCP expenditure is on employment costs which took up **38%** of its budget as the total cost of staffing in 2024/25 was £102,500. However, the Local Authority also provide the LSCP Business Support Officer and Business Apprentice as a central function at no additional cost to the LSCP. The costs of the LSCP training function equate to **15%** of expenditure with the CSPR costs accounting for **4%** of total spend in 2024/25.

The LSCP has been served by a joint business unit arrangement since 2018, implemented at a time when responsibility for the LSAB and LSCP sat within the same 'People' directorate. Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care now sit in separate directorates and due to regulatory changes and other factors it was felt that the business functions of both the LSAB and LSCP would be best supported by separate dedicated business units.

An Organisational Change Assessment in January 2025 and in March 2025 agreed to separate the joint business unit arrangement into two separate business units. The underlying principle of this was that the resulting business unit arrangements would not cost the partners any more than their current contributions. The units would also continue to work to whole family / think family approaches and on cross cutting themes.

The implementation plan to create two separate business units began in April 2025 and the resulting efficiencies and impact of the changes will be reported in the yearly report 2025/26.

## WHAT ELSE DID WE DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

### PAN BEDFORDSHIRE POLICY AND PRACTICE GROUP

The Policy and Practice Group meets twice a year and has a rolling programme of work that continues throughout the year linked to the updates required in May and November. The

procedures have been updated, linked to learning from reviews from Luton, across Bedfordshire and Nationally. [Amendments to procedures](#) can be found here and are linked to learning from reviews and audit within Luton.

This has been another busy year with the group providing **93** new and/or revised procedures and guidance which can be accessed at this [link](#). There has been a number of one-page briefing documents developed on issues arising from Reviews that practitioners have given feedback have been helpful in raising awareness of safeguarding issues, for example.

[The importance of history to safeguard children and young people,](#)

[Working with large sibling group families](#)

[Impact of poverty on children.](#)

### What has the impact been?

- The development of a suite of briefings has provided practitioners with quick, concise, awareness raising opportunities on a number of subjects for example see above with positive feedback from Partners that practitioners are using the documents in daily practice and finding them user friendly.
- The Pan Bedfordshire [Injuries and Bruising Protocol for Immobile Children 0-18 years](#) pathway/protocol has supported a more combined and collective approach to guidance.

## CHILD DEATH OVERVIEW PANEL:

The BLMK CDOP Panel has not yet produced its Annual Report for 2024-25. However, they continued to progress their action plan for 2024-25 as detailed on page 18-21 of the CDOP report for 2023/24: [BLMK Child Death Overview Report 2023/24](#). Progress reports regarding safeguarding issues or themes have been provided to each CDOP meeting throughout 2023-24. More information can be found here: [CDOP](#)

## ENGAGING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO HEAR THEIR VIEWS AND LIVED EXPERIENCES

The **Pan Bedfordshire Voice of the Child group (VOC)** is a core element across all three Safeguarding Children Partnerships and following recognition of a gap, the Pan Beds VOC Group was reinstated in back into the partnership structure in 2024. There had been Task and Finish group meetings held to deliver the **Voice of the Child Conference** in November 2024 to address the following issues **Bullying & Healthy Relationships**. Follow-up sessions were held in special schools and alternative provisions, and their feedback was incorporated into partnership plans. There is further information about individual partners responded to the views and lived experiences of children in [Appendix C VoC Snapshot](#).

Their group have developed a VOC Strategy and annual calendar of engagement opportunities revised its Terms of Reference, and work plan which were agreed in Jan 2025. Plans are underway for the next Conference in November 2025 with the theme of *Feeling safe*

*in our community and lives.* Work is underway to engage some young people to join the group with recognition and reimbursement schemes being explored.

### **Emerging themes and risks identified by the Pan Beds VOC group to take forward in 2025/2026**

- Lack of robust transition processes in education → vulnerability for pupils not placed in first-choice or without clear pathways.
- Need to embed harmful behaviour & unhealthy relationship education in schools.
- Continued focus on reducing disproportionality in youth justice.
- Growing capacity challenges in participation teams (ELFT reduced from 7 to 2 staff).
- Importance of safeguarding language to avoid victim-blaming in exploitation cases.

### **Some examples of programmes & initiatives across the Partnership:**

- [Mentors in Violence Prevention](#) pilot in Luton schools to shift from passive to active bystander behaviours (links to misogyny, knife crime prevention).
- The [VERU/VEPP](#) have commissioned navigators in schools, A&E, and communities to address serious youth violence, domestic abuse, and exploitation.
- [Healthwatch Luton](#) shared information about their work with young people and in recognition of the challenges of today's world, how they actively engaged with young people around mental health and LGBTQIA+ issues.
- [Bedfordshire Police](#) are developing listening circles to improve child engagement and perception of policing.
- [Luton Youth Council](#) promotes the voices of children in the decisions of the council. Youth Councillors sit on some committees and are co-producing a Youth Leadership Programme.
- [Luton Public Health](#) undertook the extensive SHEU survey to seek insight from children and young people
- [Luton Children's Services](#) undertook a Bright Spots survey and the YPS have regular youth consultation project. They have strengthened their participation offer to children and young people, with the recruitment of their participation lead.
- In [ELFT](#) young people are involved in website development.
- The Pan Beds Partnerships provides VOC training which is promoted across partnerships.

## **THE PROVISION OF HIGH QUALITY MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING TRAINING**



Training has been commissioned in collaboration with the other two safeguarding partnerships in Bedfordshire for the last seven years under the banner of [Safeguarding Bedfordshire Training](#). It provides a multi-agency programme to meet the priorities of the three local safeguarding partnerships (Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, and Luton).

Safeguarding Bedfordshire is the multi-agency training provider for the Safeguarding Children Partnerships in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton. Training is aimed at those working or volunteering with children and young people. Our multi-agency approach ensures a shared understanding of the priorities held by each of the Partnerships and promotes partnership working in order to safeguard children and young people with the ambition that they will lead safe, happy and healthy lives, with opportunities to learn, develop and fulfil their potential. Luton SCP received quarterly reports throughout 2024/2025 to its Joint Quality Assurance and Learning Group which demonstrated impact set out below and in the detailed training report here: [Appendix A Data Snapshot](#).

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## IMPACT OF ACTIVITY -TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

### Key messages and data

[Safeguarding Bedfordshire](#) is the multi-agency training provider for the Safeguarding Children Partnerships in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton. Training is aimed at those working or volunteering with children and young people. Our multi-agency approach ensures a shared understanding of the priorities held by each of the Partnerships and promotes partnership working to safeguard children and young people with the ambition that they will lead safe, happy and healthy lives, with opportunities to learn, develop and fulfil their potential.

- Safeguarding Bedfordshire delivered **67 learning events** in 2024/25: with an **82% increase in attendance**. This rise is attributed to a wider offer of free events, and the recent introduction (January 2025) of Designated Safeguarding Lead training.
- **eLearning** registrations/ completions **reduced by 18%** in 2024/25; this is in line with our work to cleanse the system, ensuring those accessing funded eLearning are working with children/ young people in Bedfordshire, and our regular monitoring of claimed but unused licences. Although registrations are down, **overall completion rates are up to 89%**.
- Our 2024/25 **training programme was enhanced by colleagues from our Partner Agencies joining training pools** to co-deliver 'Understanding Neglect', 'Domestic Abuse' and 'Multi-Agency Information Submission Form' sessions, alongside awareness raising webinars following local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and 'Risk Assessments and Thresholds' and launching the Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Campaign.
- **Satisfaction rates increased** year on year, to 99% for paid learning content, 100% for free CPD events and 91% for eLearning.
- **Impact of training;** as a result of attending Safeguarding Bedfordshire events, participants identify increased knowledge, skills and confidence in recognising and responding to safeguarding concerns, increased understanding of local procedures/ thresholds and improved referrals. They appreciate the opportunity to learn in a multi-agency environment, train the trainer/ facilitators subject knowledge and have taken action including disseminating learning within their organisation, updating policies and procedures, introducing child friendly policies, initiating audits, improving record keeping (particularly around voice/ lived experience of the child) and using escalation procedures.

- Late **cancellations/ non-attendance of learning events decreased** by 3% for paid learning events. Reasons for non-attendance include staff shortages/ capacity issues, medical appointments and attendance of safeguarding meetings/ court.
- The Pan Bedfordshire **Safeguarding Partnership website had 288,404 visits**, with 16,837 interactions with the training pages.
- Safeguarding Bedfordshire **worked with Bedfordshire Against Violence & Exploitation (BAVEX)**, supporting a series of exploitation themed events including 'Mind your Language: Exploitation and Victim Blaming' and 'Child Exploitation & Home Office Toolkit' webinars and a Pan
- Bedfordshire conference (all funded by BAVEX). We also **worked with YGAM** to deliver free 'Online Gaming and Gambling Harms' webinars.

## PARTNERSHIP SELF EVALUATION – OUR ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE PLANS

The Partnership's core objective is to coordinate and hold partners to account to make sure they are protecting children and young people in Luton who might be or are at risk, and to ensure that timely learning from serious child safeguarding incidents is identified and implemented. The LSCP has continued to work collaboratively with our two neighbouring Safeguarding Children Partnerships in Central Bedfordshire and Bedford to ensure there is a more joined up approach to safeguarding. This is particularly important where agencies deliver services across and are represented on several Partnerships. In agreeing a common approach and response to specific safeguarding and child protection issues such as child exploitation, neglect for example Pan Bedfordshire groups operate across the three Partnerships.

The three statutory partners of the three safeguarding children partnerships meet via a **Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leadership Children Group** that meets bi-monthly to discuss key issues, demands and to prioritise areas of work to be taken in regard to the safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children. The [LSCP Strategic Business Plan 2024-26](#) sets out the partnership priorities and how it measures impact through audit, performance data and the voice of the child. This model has worked well with actions delegated to the appropriate lead safeguarding Partnership or subgroup and monitored via action plans held by the **Pan Beds Coordination Group** with regular highlight reports from the sub-groups, and progress reported back to the **LSCP Strategic Board**.

In order to reduce pressures and demand in the system, Pan Bedfordshire activity especially around audits is coordinated by the **Pan Beds Assurance and Improvement Group**, which means that the partners were able to participate in the wider audit programme. It was also able to gather evidence of good practice in the system and benchmark against the neighbouring SCPs.

LSCP is unique in the county in that it also has joint arrangements with the Luton Safeguarding Adults Board and their joint work is overseen by **Statutory Partners Chairs Safeguarding**

**Assurance Group** who act as executive for each Strategic Board and ensure that their vision and strategic direction takes account of cross cutting priorities and a shared Risk Register ensures that each Board is alert to system risks.

There has been significant joint work including via a cross cutting section on development day and examples within operational practice where the relationships established at strategic level have supported innovative practice. An example of this has been input into the On Street Sexual Exploitation Strategy and action plan. The LBC contextual safeguarding strategic lead and Strategic Business Manager have contributed to Operation Delivery Groups on early intervention and prevention, as well as input into an action plan on international recruitment irregularities operation due safeguarding concerns for both adults and children.

A key focus for the LSCP has been responding to Working Together 2023 which now underpins all of the activity of Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership. The LSCP has worked hard to respond to the new joint functions of lead safeguarding partners to:

- **Set the strategic direction, vision, and culture** of the local safeguarding arrangements, including agreeing and reviewing shared priorities and the resource required to deliver services effectively.
- **Lead their organisation's individual contribution** to the shared priorities, ensuring strong governance, accountability, and reporting mechanisms to hold their delegates to account for the delivery of agency commitments.
- **Review and sign off key partnership documents:** published multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including plans for independent scrutiny, shared annual budget, yearly report, and local threshold document.
- **Provide shared oversight of learning** from independent scrutiny, serious incidents, local child safeguarding practice reviews, and national reviews, ensuring recommendations are implemented and have a demonstrable impact on practice (as set out in the yearly report).
- **Ensure multi-agency arrangements** have the necessary level of business support, including intelligence and analytical functions, such as an agreed data set providing oversight and a robust understanding of practice.
- **Ensure all relevant agencies, including education settings,** are clear on their role and contribution to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements."

The LSCP was in a strong position to respond to the revised responsibility as it has an existing quarterly meeting Chaired by the LBC Chief Executive as lead safeguarding partner. This group quickly took ownership of the functions above and were clear in their responsibilities and those of the delegated safeguarding partners who head up the LSCP Strategic Board.

The partnership has established strong leadership and constructive, critical challenge of practice with the three statutory partners meeting monthly to provide greater oversight, drive on priorities and to evaluate risk, resource and capacity in the system. The wider partnership meetings have good representation from both statutory and voluntary organisations, including schools and have retained lay membership. Relevant agencies have demonstrated their commitment to safeguarding by contributing across a range of meetings and subgroups many of which are across Pan Bedfordshire.

The LSCP has benefited from having the same person as Independent Chair and Independent Scrutineer to ensure that where possible we address activities together. This has helped to promote and foster good working relationships with the Safeguarding Adults Board members. Having a shared Joint Quality Assurance and Learning Group has supported the connectivity across services and helped to identify and support possible gaps in domestic abuse, drug and alcohol use, Right Care Right Person and transitional safeguarding to name a few of the themes it has worked on together.

Key assurance has been sought and evidenced around the priorities and how they have made a difference to outcomes for children and young people. As highlighted in the partnership safeguarding snapshot and through the report there has been scrutiny of both single and multi-agency performance and assurance information. There have been several audits presented to the LSCP that provide a window into the multiagency safeguarding system. The LSCP has also participated in the Pan Bedfordshire section 11 self-assessment and provided challenge to partners and relevant agencies regarding their evidence against the safeguarding standards set with a focus on Neglect practice as highlighted at page 35.

Assurance around systems, structures, processes and governance was collated with oversight by the Pan Beds Strategic Leaders Group. The LSCP has reviewed its funding for partnership activities and has undertaken an Organisational Change Assessment of its business support this financial year. This was in the light of additional pressures in the system such as evaluation and evidence of impact under Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme delivery. With the retirement of the LSAB Independent Chair / LSCP Independent Scrutineer and new requirements of Working Together 2023 it seemed a good time to review the shared business support function with the LSAB who have also seen increasing volumes of impact of review work as well as subgroups and task and finish groups.

This has resulted in a decision to separate the integrated business unit into two bespoke business units for each partnership. The LSAB undertook a sector led peer review which highlights opportunities and recommendations which have some implications for cross cutting work with the LSCB. These key changes will be considered as part of the LSCP Development Day in June 2025 and translated into an implementation plan around revised support, structure and governance.

Funding contribution levels from partners have remained static with the Local Authority remaining the largest financial and in kind contributor to the arrangements. This remains a priority for the LSCP to resolve, not least to comply with the Working Together 2023 funding requirement for equitable and proportionate funding from the three statutory partners and to ensure the LSCP has sufficient funding to function and be effective.

**Luton Council** are delivering on our the '*Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme*' and the '*Child Friendly Luton*' strategy and we are engaging with our young people to understand

what they would like to see delivered as part of this. Partnership pledges from all key partners have demonstrated a clear commitment to delivering on both these initiatives.

### Key Improvements from April 2024 to March 2025

- Continued Improvement Activity, scrutinised by the Children's Improvement Board, which Luton decided to continue to run following DFE's decision to end formal intervention in our services.
- Collaborative engagement with partners to complete the SEND SEF.
- Reviewed the Practice Model to align with the new Families First for Children Pathfinder test and trial period, commencing on 1st July 2024. This has been collaboratively reviewed with Partners, Management, front line staff and families.
- Permanent social worker recruitment in our front line teams is continuing to improve and is supported through our Workforce Strategy, Social Work Academy and the Temp to Perm conversion programme. We have seen a significant increase to the number of Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) positions supported in the service. We have developed a Social Work apprenticeship model and have a cohort of 10 apprentices throughout the service.
- Our agency rate is currently **27.7%**, compared to **36%** September 2022; Our aim is to reduce our agency usage to **20%** by the end of 2025.
- We have seen a small reduction in staff turnover and an increase in the numbers of permanent Social Workers joining the service, due to our strengthened recruitment campaign, induction processes and staff development programme.
- Together with our Eastern Region partners we have developed a new Social Worker recruitment microsite.
- The introduction and further consolidation of our Collaborative Audit process has strengthened the local authority's approach to auditing, which is enabling social workers to develop greater understanding of the audit process, how it can help their practice and allow real time practice development for workers.
- Recent audit activity evidences the impact of our work to improve outcomes for children and families.
- Management oversight strengthened. Achieved through an extensive programme of bespoke support, including the addition of QA practice development officers into key services.
- Regular practice weeks continue to support professional development and practice improvements.
- The Safeguarding in Education practice is well embedded across the education sector and continues to provide safeguarding support, challenge and intervention as required.
- The Edge of Care Service is well embedded within our Social Care model and continues to provide intensive whole family support to enable children to remain within their family network, utilising our multi-disciplinary approach.
- Regular multi-agency meetings for young people going missing and at risk of exploitation continues; this is providing positive interventions through strengthened safety planning, shared intelligence and the development of targeted disruption plans.

- Our strengthened Contextual Safeguarding offer has further developed our understanding and response to young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families, building on the positive work and footprint of our Edge of Care team, MAGPan and our MACE panel chaired by an IRO.
- Work is underway in 2024/25 for new SEMH residential unit (Horizon House) which is due to be completed and open in 2025/2026.

### Our priorities for the next 12 months

- We continue to focus on the “Magnificent Seven” as set out in our practice framework.
- To meet the key objectives of the Wave 2 Pathfinder for Families First for Children and embed the social care reforms in our practice.
- Review and embedding the updated Practice Framework to strengthen the service provided to children and families, aligning with the new Families First for Children.
- A reviewed and strengthened Education strategy will be finalised and embedded within the service and schools. This has been collaboratively reviewed and updated to capture the entire service and delivery.
- A review of the Effective Support threshold document, to align with PAN Beds, Practice Framework and the new approach being offered from Luton social care through Families First for Children.
- Mockingbird and hubs implementation.
- Strengthening Youth Participation groups
- Holistic assessments that address the individual needs of all children in the family, ensure that the voices of children are captured and inform future planning, and clearly demonstrate analysis of information using a sound evidence base.
- Robust plans addressing identified risks and needs, with clear and concise actions and interventions that have named owners and timescales that ensure children’s needs are effectively met in a timely manner, and with well described contingency plans should risks increase or needs not be met.
- Effective and meaningful direct work and visit recording that fully evidences that children are being safely cared for, thriving, supported and their voices are heard. This ensures their lived experience directly influences our support and service planning.
  - To maintain the improvements made regarding our Initial Health Assessment timeliness.
  - To maintain the continued focus on the quality and consistency of management oversight and case supervision
- Ongoing recruitment of a permanent workforce to ensure that any changes of social workers are minimal thus enabling children and young people to develop positive relationships with their social workers.
- Continue to work in collaboration with health partners to deliver Family Hubs in local communities.
- All cases graded as requiring improvement or Inadequate, will have a robust SMART plan to improve the quality of the outcomes, with each audit being robustly re-audited to ensure progress

**BLMK-ICB** continues to work well as a statutory partner, working together with the local authority and police to ensure that their functions are exercised for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in Luton Borough.

#### **Key Improvements from April 2024 to March 2025**

- This includes the key areas of focus: Neglect, Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), Exploitation, Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing and understanding where gaps in service provision at local level exist.
- Ongoing support is provided to frontline health practitioners who see children and young people to use the threshold guidance document to escalate into the partnership when there are concerns about the safety and welfare for this group.
- The ICB continue to engage with board sub-groups for Neglect, CSA and exploitation and to input into policy, pathways and multi-agency initiatives. We have engaged with the development of a neglect dataset, training, awareness raising, promoting GCP2 and voice of the child conference. We have contributed to multi-agency audits and work around multi-agency chronologies.
- The ICB have introduced a GP safeguarding audit tool, which is used in support visits to GP practices to highlight what safeguarding practice looks like and where support may be helpful. During the last 12 months the safeguarding team carried out supportive safeguarding visits to 33 GP practices. These visits were led by the Named GP for safeguarding, and the Designated Nurses for Adults and Children.
- We have provided safeguarding training for GP and practice colleagues. We have delivered 10 level 3 adult and children safeguarding training sessions with attendance of 168.
- The team have delivered 9 safeguarding bitesize themed training sessions with attendance of 126.
- 12 MCA bitesize training sessions have been delivered to 228 attendees.
- The ICB continue to develop the Primary Care Forum and have held 3 forums which count towards GP's safeguarding training hours, which were attended by 307 GPs.
- We have strengthened links with the quality and primary care team to ensure early identification of potential risk and a multi team response.
- The statutory requirements for the ICB are set out in the Safeguarding Accountability and Assurance Framework developed by NHS England. The ICB contributes to the national safeguarding tracker, this is to enable greater scrutiny and better understanding of the themes and learning from statutory reviews. It is populated with information regarding Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Rapid Reviews, Safeguarding Adult Reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews.
- The ICB is assured that commissioned services have appropriate safeguarding arrangements. Contracts contain a safeguarding statement and commissioned health partners have regular contract meetings and provide regular returns and exception reporting.
- The ICB ensures that internal safeguarding arrangements are sufficient, and that safeguarding is embedded in practice. The ICB has developed a training matrix to

ensure all ICB staff are trained in safeguarding to the appropriate level for their roles and responsibilities as set out in the Intercollegiate Guidance document.

- We offer a safeguarding supervision offer to any patient-facing colleagues in the ICB and in health provider organisations.
- Designated professionals provide support to the system around escalations and resolving blockages.
- The ICB have promoted and helped to develop the Child Protection Information Sharing Service (CPIS). This system enables health and social care to share information securely to proactively protect Children and Young People. All Children who are on a Child Protection Plan and Children in Care are now flagged in 7 health care settings including: A/E departments, walk in centres, maternity services, ambulance trusts and out of hours services. Work is underway for CPIS to be expanded to cover all health care settings.
- Following learning from case reviews of both Children and Adults the ICB have set up a transition workstream. Transition planning and preparedness for transition are now seen as fundamental and should follow best practice to commence preparation for adulthood as indicated by the young person and their needs.
- The Deputy Chief Nurse chairs the regional East of England Transition Network meeting. Local health partners transition leads are linked into this meeting to ensure transition remains a priority.
- Training, supervision and support is provided to health practitioners to recognise, refer and seek support for children, young people and their families who present in primary care, community and hospital settings.
- There is regular contact and informal discussions with primary care safeguarding leads and practice managers and attendance at GP practice safeguarding meetings to discuss cases of concern and offer reassurance about referral and escalation pathways
- Primary care colleagues feel more reassured about contacting key staff for support and guidance when concerned about the safety and welfare of a child or young person. This has also led to an increase in referrals into the system ensuring that children and young people in Luton are accessing good timely interventions and are being kept safe.

### **Our priorities for the next 12 months**

- Continued support to be provided to practitioners to refer into and liaise with specialist safeguarding services.
- There is good ICB representation at boards to understand emerging themes that are impacting our service users. The ICB uses this information to support our commissioned services and gain assurances about how our population is being safeguarded through contract monitoring work and development of organisational policies, as well as strategies across the town e.g. youth violence strategy, domestic abuse and VAWG strategies.

- Provider services have reported increased confidence to recognise potential safeguarding issues and refer users into support services, because of the ICB support provided.
- The quality of referrals into services has been made more robust- however some professionals need support to refer into services. Communication between agencies have been strengthened to support better safeguarding practice for the coming year.
- Future developments include an internal review of the safeguarding team structure and redevelopment of roles.
- A safeguarding community of practice will be established to engage all safeguarding leads across health, share learning and best practice and promote a health economy approach.

**Bedfordshire Police** as a fully committed statutory partner to LSCP have made the following improvements and achievements:

- MVAWG is embedded in strategic governance (Gold/Silver/FTTCG) and remains a key priority for the force.
- Power BI dashboards and performance frameworks in place. Enhanced performance management with Detective Inspectors sign off and new robust process for some crime types for example Neglect, Rape and SSOs and GBH offences.
- Scrutiny panels (DA, RASSO, stalking) review victim care and outcomes. These are chaired by an independent chair, allowing for feedback, learning and reflective practice.
- New Victims and Witnesses Board monitors compliance with the Victims' Code.
- New Commissioned services for KIDVAs and CHISVAs have commenced in April 25, providing therapeutic support for our child victim recovery. This has streamlined our approach with services now providing support for both adults and children.
- New Silver groups for CSE and DA chaired by Detective Superintendents across the Public Protection Unit with analysts providing daily scanning around these thematic crime areas and highlighting persons of concern, repeat victims and perpetrators and high-profile cases alike. These new monthly meetings provide an extra layer of scrutiny, holding officers and supervisors to account and provide an opportunity for learning and reflective practise.
- Multiagency Child Protection Team – Bedfordshire Police have a qualified Detective Constable suitable for working within the new MACPT at Luton Town Hall. The officer will be seconded and become embedded into the team in August 2025 to represent Police. The advert to recruit a civilian member of staff suitably qualified will continue to be published to find a longer-term approach to the team.
- Safeguarding/Child Abuse Training - Pan Beds training across the 3 Local Authorities including Working Together and Neglect training and a new Child Sexual Abuse 2-day course being run originating from the NSPCC.
- Further to this, Bedfordshire Police have contributed towards a series of Multi agency training days, being funded through the Luton Pathfinder project, on back-to-basics

Section 47 investigations for practitioners. Internal training on Child Protection, Safeguarding and Voice of the child has been rolled out over the past 2 months to all front-line Patrol teams.

- Op Encompass - During this review period Bedfordshire police have invested in the use of technology to improve the response to Operation Encompass, the statutory requirement to notify education providers when a child has been involved in a domestic abuse incident.
- Police Quality Assurance manager has been working with partners to drive improvements in relation to the nature and quality of police referrals. Regular multi-agency referral audit meetings have been implemented that allow a detailed exploration of content, timeliness and effectiveness of work being referred to MASH. The findings from these reviews are then used to inform practice improvements for police.
- Philomena Protocol – Police have been working with the wider partnership to implement the Philomena Protocol. This is the process whereby looked after children who are identified as being at risk of or have gone missing have a focused response document completed, giving the care giver an opportunity to better understand any underlying issues or context to missing episodes, therefore being able to consider intervention work. It then provides a detailed personal document that can be used should the child go missing to assess risk and provide lines of enquiry to locate them. The use of the protocol promotes the safety of those at-risk children and ensures a swifter, better informed response.

### **Our priorities for the next 12 months**

The Police intention is to continue with this work into 2025/26 and to start to measure the impact of this across Luton and Pan Beds using enhanced data collection and analysis and utilising the work of the Pan Beds Senior Safeguarding Data Analyst to drive work forwards around the Strategic business Plans and Priorities.

### **Conclusion**

The LSCP has worked well throughout 2024/25 and has a strong cohesive partnership, where partners come together and progress partnership work well, but are also able to debate and challenge each other in a positive way when needed.

- With Jon Brown as the Independent Scrutineer there are opportunities for the role to enrich and improve the scrutiny overview of the Partnership. There has been good progress made in engaging education and the LSCP will continue to engage and embed education as our fourth safeguarding partner across the LSCP structure to ensure that education is able to fully participate in strategic decision making as an equitable partner and relevant agency.
- In particular throughout the year the Partnership has carried out a large amount of quality assurance and audit work along with several case reviews and Rapid Reviews with all recommendations being acted upon.
- This has identified that we need to place more focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and to develop our workstreams on Cultural Competence and Humility.

- The partnership has worked hard in the areas of neglect to raise awareness of neglect and increase the use of tools such as the graded care profile and the day in the life tools, however work by partners to really embed the use of these are still needed.
- The Partnership has a strong multi-agency training offer and development of learning webinars following our case reviews has been a very positive addition this year. Our voice of the child work continues to grow each year, and we are keen to further strengthen this year on year.

Moving forward throughout the next year the Partnership is also keen to consider ways in which we can offer partnership development opportunities and also really develop the ways in which we measure the success and impact of the work we do, to ensure the work of the Partnership is making a difference to the children and young people within Luton.

This report evidences a significant level of activity to safeguard children and young people and the appetite to learn and improve. The Partnership needs to continue to build on capturing impact of its activities. Some significant pieces of work, such as the Stop Think Neglect campaign and work to address Child Sexual Abuse for example will continue in 2025/2026, alongside the priorities for the Partnership. Our Partnership work around exploitation is an area which has been identified as a key area for us to continue developing and strengthening throughout the new year ahead. The Partnership will continue to consider the impact it expects these to have and how they are able to be measured.

The Partnership will continue to work on the following and demonstrating its impact:

- Child Sexual Abuse responses including strategy and practice enhancement
- Embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion into practice
- Embedding learning from audit and reviews into practice and
- Our response to Neglect
- Performance Management & Quality Assurance
- Review of our structure and governance to deliver the best outcomes for children.
- Voice of the child, young people and their families

## INDEPENDENT CHAIR'S SCRUTINY OF THE PARTNERSHIP

*"Independent scrutiny should drive continuous improvement and provide assurance that arrangements are working effectively for children, families, and practitioners. It should also consider learning from local child safeguarding practice reviews, national reviews and thematic reports. The independent scrutineer or scrutiny group should be able to demonstrate knowledge, skills and expertise in the area being scrutinised and consequently add value to the work of local agencies." – Working Together 2023*

The role of Independent Scrutineer is to act as a 'critical friend' to provide rigorous, evidence-based challenge and assurance across strategic and operational levels. This role was fulfilled by Alan Caton OBE in 2024/25 and following his retirement at the end of March 2025, the LSCP Statutory Partners undertook a robust recruitment process and they are pleased to have

appointed Jon Brown in the role of Independent Scrutineer from May 2025/26. Jon has since he started in post scrutinised the work undertaken by LSCP during 2024/25 and has offered the following analysis and reflections.

I am pleased to provide this foreword as the newly appointed Independent Scrutineer for the Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP). Since taking up this role, I have been impressed by the depth of commitment, child focus, professionalism, and collaborative spirit that underpin the LSCP's work. This yearly report reflects the complexity of safeguarding in Luton, the progress made, and the opportunities ahead to strengthen our collective impact.

The role of Independent Scrutineer, as outlined in *Working Together 2023*, is to provide rigorous, evidence-based challenge and assurance across strategic and operational levels. My focus is on driving continuous improvement, ensuring statutory duties are fulfilled, and embedding learning from both local and national reviews. Central to this is amplifying the voice and lived experience of children, young people, and their families—ensuring their perspectives inform policy, practice, and strategic direction. Equally important is ensuring that the voice and experience of frontline practitioners is heard and reflected in practice and governance.

Luton's safeguarding landscape is shaped by its highly diverse and relatively young population, socio-economic pressures, and evolving risks; and these factors sit within a strong community spirit, a vibrant grassroots voluntary and community sector and sense of identity. The LSCP has responded with agility and innovation, particularly through its work on neglect, domestic abuse, and contextual safeguarding. The 'Stop, think: Neglect' campaign, the *Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme*, and the integration of education as a fourth safeguarding partner are notable achievements. However, scrutiny must remain focused on ensuring these initiatives lead to continuous and measurable improvements in outcomes for children and families.

Key priorities for scrutiny in the coming year include:

- Evaluating the impact of the Stop, Think: Neglect campaign and the use of GCP2 tools.
- Scrutinising the effectiveness of multi-agency responses to domestic abuse and child sexual abuse.
- Assessing the integration and influence of the voice of the child in strategic decision-making.
- Reviewing the implementation of *Working Together 2023* reforms, including MASA governance and funding equity.
- Supporting the implementation of the agreed recommendations arising from the pan Bedfordshire review of Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements
- Supporting the development of cultural competence and equity, diversity, and inclusion across safeguarding practice.
- Ensuring learning from audits, CSRs, and rapid reviews is embedded and leads to tangible improvements.

- Scrutiny will be undertaken through a range of methods including interviews, focus groups, data analysis, and peer review, always ensuring that the voice and experience of children and families are central.

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility that demands courage, curiosity, and collaboration. I look forward to working alongside all partners to ensure our efforts make a meaningful and measurable difference in the lives of children and families in Luton.

**Jon Brown**

**Independent Scrutineer Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership**