



**SSCP**  
SUNDERLAND  
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN  
PARTNERSHIP

# Annual Report

April 2019–March 2020



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# Foreword

This is my final annual report as Chair. For the first half of the year I chaired the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board; from September 2019 we became the Sunderland Safeguarding Children's Partnership (SSCP). Just one small change of name, but larger changes in structure and purpose, in response to the Government's legislation. The statutory responsibilities for overseeing safeguarding rest now equally between the three "Statutory Partners" – the Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Police.

Sunderland retains a clear focus on the needs of children and families within the borough, but there is a greater concentration on shared working across the Northumbria region, to exchange best practice, support each other, and provide a continuity of service and approach across the region. Plans have been developed and followed to develop this new way of working, with a greater attention to improving the quality of direct practice that professionals of all agencies demonstrate in their work with children and families.

The Board's work covered its normal broad spread. Our attention the previous year had been on the very high demand for child protection services, and we commissioned work to explore whether we could "turn the curve". We focussed heavily on strengthening the multi-agency working of the Integrated Care and Referral Team (ICRT), and saw significant progress within a dedicated team.

We have overseen the partnership's introduction of "Signs of Safety" – a strength-based approach to working with children and families which is already bringing real benefits to all. The data suggests that we have indeed "turned the curve" on the demand into the system – whilst the level of initial contacts remains high (probably as a result of improved recording), the number of referrals has reduced, as has the figure for Children in

Need and the number of Child Protection Plans. Rates of children looked after remain high, but at least we have flattened that particular curve.

Then out of a clear blue sky came Covid-19. Although it appeared in Sunderland at the very end of the year that this report covers, it is relevant to discuss what we learnt from it in this report. In the crisis that hit our borough and our nation, our true nature was revealed, and the partnership within Sunderland proved itself to be extremely strong.

Covid-19 hit Sunderland hard. There are high levels of deprivation within the borough, and an age profile which has higher than the average proportion of elderly people; these factors meant we suffered high levels of infection and deaths. But it brought out the best in partners. Services adapted very rapidly to the new challenges, communications were fast and efficient, and partnership working flourished. Some of the new ways of working – using video systems for meetings, for example – have proved to be more efficient than the old ways. Schools remained open to support vulnerable children and the children of key workers.

Before this, though, the Board oversaw a year of progress and achievement. Early Help Services have continued to expand and improve. We have shone a light on access to mental health services, attracting an increase in funding and a reduction in waiting times, despite seeing a continuing rise in demand. Our consultations with children and young people have become firmly established: in this year we held a Children's Safeguarding Conference in June 2019 and a Young Person Safeguarding Conference in January 2020. We engaged with 96 children and 72 young people during these two events and some of these children and young people had additional needs.

We undertook rapid review meetings following serious child safeguarding incident notifications being made by the local authority. These rapid reviews led to decisions to convene two learning reviews and two Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel has agreed with each of the SSCP's decisions. This is more review work than we have had for a time, and it will be important that we adopt a proportionate approach to these. Looking through the rear view mirror is a vital part of driving safely, but looking ahead, and planning for what is to come, are even more important.

As ever warm thanks are due to our central team – to Lynne Thomas, the Board Manager for many years who sadly left us in June, and her excellent team. The change in safeguarding arrangements brings a complete change in the staffing of the unit, ready to adapt to the new expectations of partners. The team was set up at a time of real challenge to services in Sunderland. It feels a bit strange to look back now, from a position of a strong and healthy partnership, and recall some of the stresses of those early days.

It is never possible to give a total assurance that all children in Sunderland are safe. As we discovered this year, situations can change in an instant. But the services in Sunderland provided by all partners continue to improve. The pandemic tested the strength of our partnership, and it was proven to be strong. Working with children and families in Sunderland can be challenging – there's no doubting that. But morale is good across the partnership, and the people of Sunderland have much to be proud of and grateful for within their local services.

As I leave Sunderland Safeguarding Children Partnership this autumn, I feel confident in the strength of the partnership, the quality of the services in place, and the engagement of the wider community with our work. It has been an honour and a joy to work with you all over the last three years.

### **Sir Paul Ennals Independent Chair**

Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board

# Introduction

This Annual Report covers a period of time when the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board ended, and the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) started on 5 August 2019. This change was required by statute in line with the implementation of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) have a statutory responsibility to publish an annual report<sup>1</sup>. The three Safeguarding Partners<sup>2</sup> are also required to publish an Annual Report which includes:

- evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families from early help to looked after children and care leavers
- an analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities
- a record of decisions and actions taken by the partners in the report's period (or planned to be taken) to implement the recommendations of any local and national Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, including any resulting improvements
- ways in which the partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision.

The report will be published on the [SSCP Website](#)

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<sup>1</sup> The LSCB Annual Report must evaluate the effectiveness of child safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the local area. The report should provide a rigorous and transparent assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services.

<sup>2</sup> The three Safeguarding Partners are Sunderland City Council, Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group and Northumbria Police



# Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

Many local organisations and agencies have a duty under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to ensure that they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their functions. The responsibility for this join-up locally rests with the three safeguarding partners who have a shared and equal duty to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area.

The three safeguarding partners must agree on ways to co-ordinate their safeguarding services; act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others; and implement local and national learning including from serious child safeguarding incidents. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 removed the statutory basis of LSCBs and required the statutory safeguarding partners (local authorities, Police and Clinical Commissioning Groups) in an area to agree their multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA).

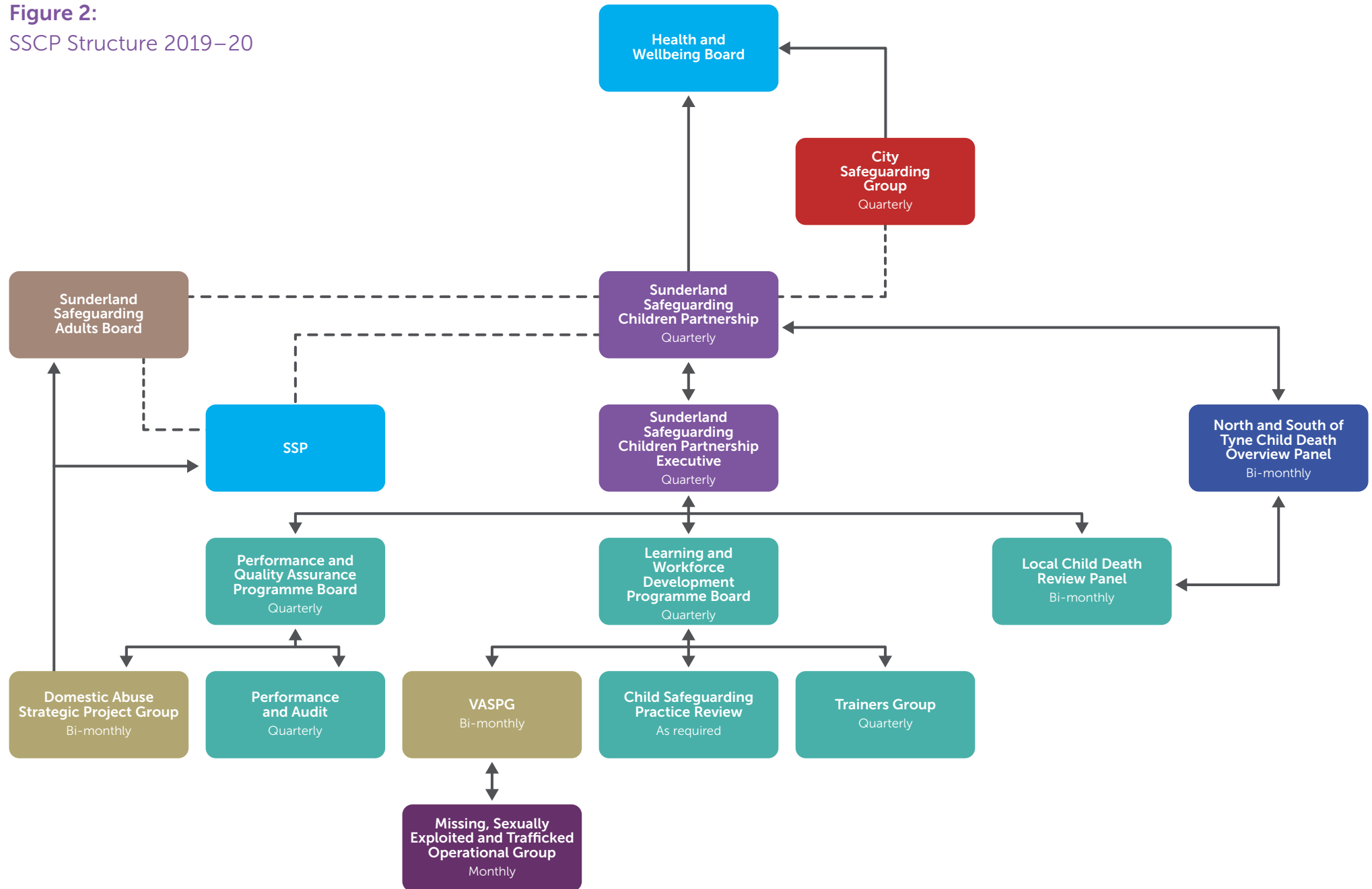
The SSCB arrangements transitioned into the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) in 2019. Interim arrangements and plan, covering the period September 2019–September 2020, were put in place; the plan can be found [here](#) and the Strategic Priorities for the partnership and the SSCP Structure for the same period are included in Figure 1 and Figure 2 respectively.

**Figure 1:** SSCP Priorities for 2019–20





**Figure 2:**  
SSCP Structure 2019–20



The multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for 2020–21 are being developed with a more streamlined structure already agreed:

### SSCP Executive Board

A new Executive will be established comprising Chief Executives (or equivalent) from the three statutory partners and the Independent Scrutineer. Through bi-annual meetings, the group will seek assurance that system improvements have made a difference to outcomes for children and young people in Sunderland.

### Sunderland Safeguarding Partnership Board

A streamlined Board will be established bringing together key senior officers of the three statutory partners, wider partners and the Independent Scrutineer. Meeting at least three times per annum, the remit of the Partnership Board is to receive updates on the work of the SSCP sub-groups and report activity and progress to the Executive.

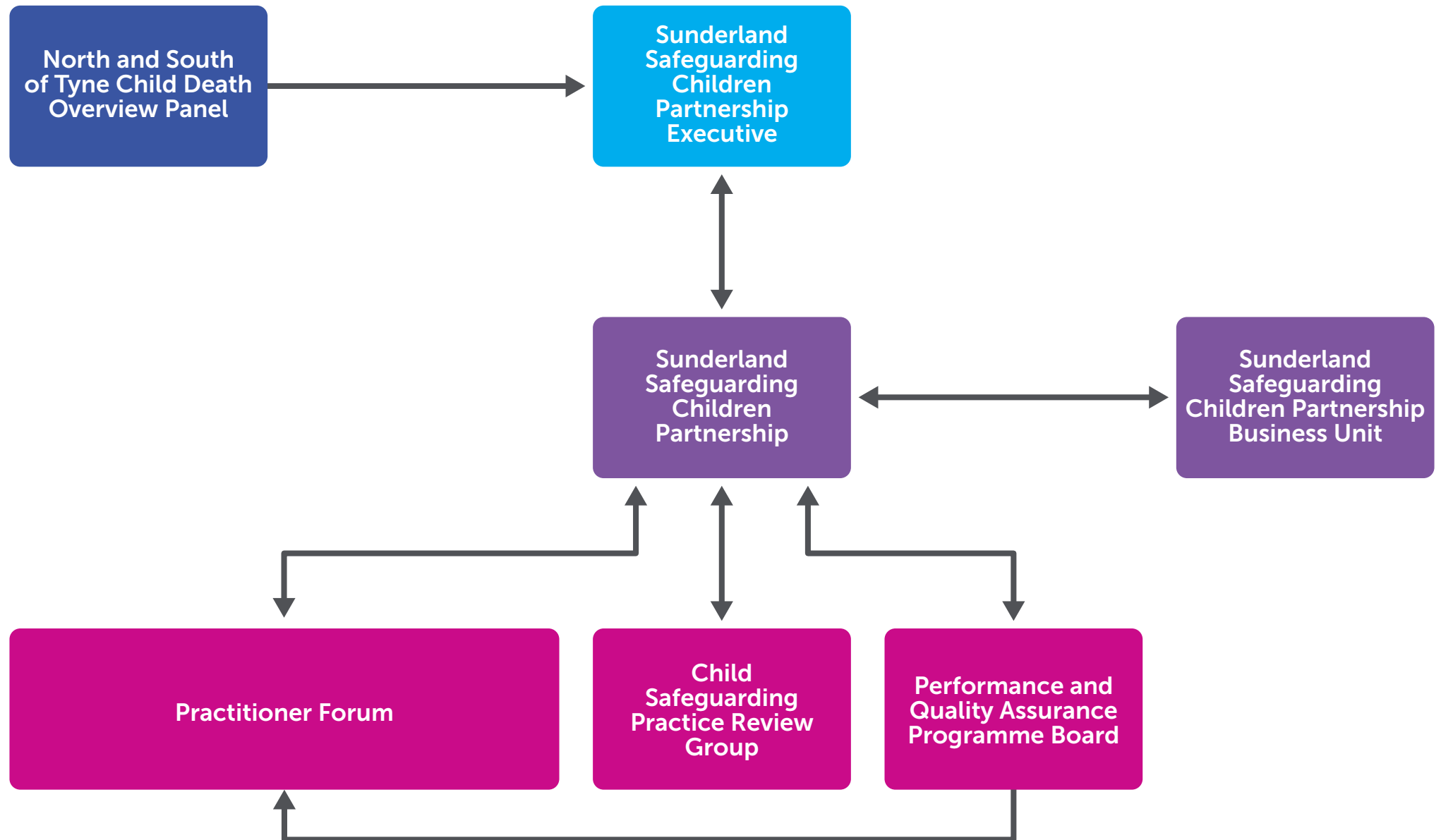
A practice-based approach will be taken to the overall work of the partnership at a local level. A 'learning hub' model will be developed focussing on thematic safeguarding priorities for the city to evidence impact for front line practice. This will not be a static model and could engage a wide range of partners at several different levels based on particular themes. The learning from the 'Bexley model' implemented in 2018 will inform the development of our approach. The SSCP structure from October 2020 is included at Figure 3.

### Child Death Reviews

The Act also removed the statutory responsibility for the Child Death Review (CDR) process from LSCBs and gave it to local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups, who are known as the Child Death Review Partners.

As the CDR arrangements were robust under the three LSCBs, it was agreed by the Safeguarding Partners for the three areas to retain these arrangements within the LSCP structure. It was also agreed that the South of Tyne Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) would combine with the North of Tyne CDOP from April 2020 to comply with the statutory guidance to review at least 60 child deaths per year. The Annual (South of Tyne) CDOP report can be found [here](#).

**Figure 3:**  
SSCP Structure – October 2020





# What have we achieved?

What we said we would do	How we said we would do this	How do we know we have done it	Did we make a difference?
<b>Implement the Sunderland multi agency safeguarding arrangements plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the work of the SSCP</li> <li>Review the support arrangements to the SSCP</li> <li>Implement the requirements of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together 2018</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safeguarding Partners consulted with the partnership agencies<sup>3</sup>, relevant agencies and the SSCP Independent Chair</li> <li>Options appraisal presented for decision making</li> <li>Raised awareness of changes to multi agency safeguarding arrangements</li> </ul>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agreed plan in place that meets statutory requirements</li> </ul>
<b>Strengthen regional work and maximise the use of resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the Business Manager Collaboration Plan</li> <li>Implement Early Adopter regional work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safeguarding Partner attendance at Early Adopter work</li> <li>North and South of Tyne CDOP established</li> <li>Shared training pack developed based on learning from regional reviews</li> <li>Regional multi-agency scorecard, dataset and reporting templates agreed for implementation in 2020</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training pack used to inform 2019-2020 training offer</li> <li>Learning from practice is embedded into future training for the workforce</li> <li>Shared learning undertaken across the region</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider may be required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children with regard to local need



What we said we would do	How we said we would do this	How do we know we have done it	Did we make a difference?
<p><b>Evaluate the impact of Operation Encompass to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit to be undertaken to evaluate the process and the outcomes for children and young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit planned and held in 2019 – sample of 30 children impacted on by domestic abuse</li> <li>Audit findings reported to P&amp;QAPB in 2019 with clear actions for improvement</li> </ul>	<p><b>Further work is required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of child concern notifications is variable due to some challenges of identifying which school the child attends when there has been domestic abuse</li> <li>Quality of school support and engagement with the child is variable. Some schools are excellent at supporting children</li> </ul>
<p><b>Implement Operation Endeavour</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver briefing sessions on the model</li> <li>Developed robust recording templates for schools</li> <li>Established evaluation process to understand impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model implemented on 05/11/19 as planned</li> <li>Briefing sessions delivered Audit planned for 2020-2021</li> </ul>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <p><b>Section 175 Audit findings –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full participation. All notices in term time responded to with actions and evaluations. Those out of term time recorded as information</li> <li>Staff are aware that the school is involved in Operation Endeavour all staff have had refresher training - notifications are received and appropriate actions have been taken</li> </ul>

## Work of the SSCP Groups and Programme Boards

**Executive Group** – comprising the three safeguarding partners, the Chairs of the two programme boards and the Independent Chair. The purpose of this group is to address: cross-cutting issues arising between the two Programme Boards; any hurdles in delivering the Business Plan on time; and some small-scale multi-agency issues that do not warrant consideration by the full Partnership but need collaborative resolution.

Work Task	Outcome
Monitored and challenged the work of the SSCP Strategic Integrated Contact and Referral Team (ICRT) Group to improve multi agency working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assurance provided that improvements in multi-agency practice were achieved and maintained</li> <li>Improved understanding of the reasons for the high level of referrals made</li> </ul>
Produced the options appraisal report for the new model for the SSCP	Multi agency partners contributed to the new way of working
Agreed the SSP Business Plan 2019-20	Plan in place for the strategic work
Overseen development of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA) plan for Sunderland	MASA plan in place as per statutory requirements

## Performance and Quality Assurance Programme Board (P&QAPB) –

a multi-agency strategic programme group that leads, oversees and progresses the programme of activity related to the delivery of the Partnership's functions in relation to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of multi-agency practice in respect of safeguarding children in Sunderland on behalf of the SSCP.

Work Task	Outcome
Contributed feedback to a regional Section 11 Audit Tool that was undertaken in 2019-20	Assurance provided that all partner agencies are compliant with their statutory safeguarding children duties under Section 11 Children Act 2004
Contributed feedback to a regional Section 175 Audit Tool that was undertaken in 2019-20	Assurance provided that schools and education providers in Sunderland are compliant with their statutory duties under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002
Produced and reported on quarterly multi-agency performance reports to the SSCP Board	Provided assurance to the SSCP Board on multi-agency practice
Highlighted performance issues for further exploration such as discrepancies in missing from home and care data	Identified areas for improvement in multi-agency practice for resolution by agencies
Audited multi-agency practice around children with disabilities, MSET Framework and the work of the MSET Operational Group, and neglect etc.	Assurance provided in respect of some areas of multi-agency practice and identified actions required in other areas

**Learning and Workforce Development Programme Board (L&WDPB)** – responsible for leading, co-ordinating and evaluating workforce competence and multi-agency workforce development and improvement, needs analysis and learning activity in line with the SSCB priorities.

Work Task	Outcome
Contributed to the development of a safeguarding children procedure manual covering the North and South of Tyne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assurance provided that partnership members who cover the North and South of Tyne, practice within one shared safeguarding procedure manual</li> <li>Children and their families will be subject to the same guidance and procedures across the six areas</li> </ul>
Oversaw the implementation of the new regional Missing, Slavery, Exploitation and Trafficking (MSET) Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Framework localised, implemented and embedded across the workforce</li> <li>Face to face training delivered with positive feedback received from multi-agency partners on the quality and impact of the training</li> <li>The new model has led to a significant reduction in the number of cases referred to the MSET Operational Group which appears appropriate</li> <li>The MSET Operational Group is focussing on those young people who are at most risk and in most need</li> </ul>

Work Task	Outcome
Oversaw learning reviews into referred cases	Learning identified from practice that was added to training courses and disseminated through 7-minute briefings
Practical sessions held for partners to raise the awareness of the online safeguarding procedure manual	Staff are aware of how to access the online safeguarding procedure manual

## **Learning from practice, serious case reviews, child safeguarding practice reviews and audits**

The SSCP has undertaken four rapid review meetings following serious child safeguarding incident notifications being made by the local authority. These rapid reviews led to decisions to convene two learning reviews and two Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel has agreed with each of the SSCP's decisions.

The Learning Reviews have led to the development of a 7-minute briefing and quick guide on safeguarding babies and the MSET Framework. The findings of audits have led to a planned review of the regional MSET Framework in 2020, changes needed to recording the outcome of school's support to children through Operation Encompass to better understand the outcome of the activity for the child, deliver further Operation Encompass briefings for schools and undertake assurance work that children's records are being appropriately read coded by their GP. There has been a delay in progressing some of these actions due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown. Work that can be progressed has been moved on during the lockdown.

The SSCP collates the findings from learning and improvement activity into a Learning and Improvement Matrix to ensure an overarching record and response to the findings. Repeat learning/findings are monitored to ensure that if one approach to addressing findings is not successful an alternative approach can be made. This allows for a streamlined model for learning activity and measuring impact and ensures that improvements can be appropriately collated and evidenced.

Further evidence of the outcomes of Learning and Improvement activity can be found [here](#).

## **Workforce Development and Training**

The SSCP has delivered a number of safeguarding children courses during 2019–20. These courses are all evaluated, and the recorded impact of some of these courses is outlined overleaf.

## Training courses - evaluation and impact

MSET	Thresholds	Sandstories	Vulnerable Babies
I will use this training to help me identify victims of MSET	Identifying how children are vulnerable	A greater awareness of what Disguised Compliance is and looks like	I will have more understanding of the roles other agencies involved dealing with difficult situations involving at risk children
Educate our young people on risk and how to keep them safe from harm	What to do should you discover bruising on a child	Remain focused on the child always	During assessment with families and if an infant presents with a bruise/mark.
I can use this daily as we look after vulnerable young people	Identify key areas on body of where children are most likely to be abused	Work with families on strengths then staff families will work with staff	Interaction and practical exercises worked well Group work was good
I will be more aware what to look out for surrounding MSET, I can also feedback to colleagues on the process of the new framework	I will be more vigilant when recording all aspects of the young people's care and anything which could build up a picture of any issues which could be happening in their lives. I would then report any patterns that I see to my manager and to the social worker who would ultimately make any decisions	Useful when in Supervision and using reflective practice	Identifying marks on infants The different areas of the body when may be common for injury, accidental and non-accidental. Development of infants



# Data and performance in Sunderland

During 2019–20 the SSCP, through the Performance and Quality Assurance Programme Board (PQAPB), has overseen the review and reporting of the local performance framework (69 measures) and contributed to the development of a regional Performance Scorecard to be used in 2020–21. Whilst the SSCP dataset is comprehensive, the PQAPB reports to the Partnership Board on a by-exception basis to ensure a focussed approach to identifying where improvement is required. Key areas of focus during 2019–20 can be seen in the tables below and the accompanying mitigation/narrative.

Locally our data is provided from Together for Children (including Education and Youth Drug and Alcohol Services), Northumbria Police, Safe Lives, health agencies and the council (Public Health and Housing). Local data and performance has been used to influence the SSCP audit activity, for example, reviewing and supporting a refresh of our MSET arrangements.

During 2019–20 the “front door” for children’s services has undergone transformation with social workers, nurses, police, early help, education and domestic abuse staff working collaboratively as the Initial Contact and Referral Team (ICRT) – our children’s multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). This has led to improved communication, recording, reporting and timelier, more appropriate responses to children and their families. Better recording has resulted in almost 10,000 more contacts this year and reduced rates of re-referrals.

Whilst rates of children requiring statutory intervention in Sunderland remain high, they have reduced during 2019–20 with rates of Children in Need now being lower than the north-east and statistical neighbour averages for 2018–19; this is as a result of families being better supported by Early Help practitioners.

Measure	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	NE	Stat N/bours	National
No. of contacts received CSC	22,522	27,856	25,965	35,619	N/Ava	N/Ava	N/Ava
Total No. of referrals received to CSC	4,228	4,665	4,480	3,612	34,680	2,892	650,930
Rate of Child In Need (CIN) (per 10k)	536.1	532.5	463	412.6	445.10	436.55	334.2
Rate of Children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) (per 10k)	78.3	90.9	85.0	67.8	63.1	56.22	43.7
Rate of children looked after (per 10k)	98.3	106.4	109.8	108.1	95.0	99.8	64.0

The PQAPB has received regular updates from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Transformation Board due to local performance indicating that Sunderland children and young people were waiting longer for mental health support than previously. To support children and young people with their emotional and mental wellbeing, the KOOTH digital platform has been commissioned which enables them to receive confidential mental health support and advice.

In early Spring, Covid-19 hit Sunderland. As well as the physical impact of the virus, it is widely reported that lockdown has affected the mental health and wellbeing of many people, including children and young people. Lockdown also brought out the best in partners: services adapted very rapidly to the new challenges, communications were fast and efficient, and partnership working flourished. It is anticipated that as children and young people return to school in September there will be a surge in demand for mental health support and the enthusiasm partners found during lockdown must be harnessed to develop new ways of working to meet any increased demand. Going forward, the SSCP will analyse how Covid-19 impacted on children and young people's mental

health and how services responded to this. These findings will feed into the planned re-design of services in 2021.

Measure	16–17	17–18	18–19	19–20
Number of children receiving CYPS	3,194	2,468	4,043	3,922
Average waiting time for CYPS service (days)	71	118	105	137

# Engagement with children and young people

The SSCP now holds annual safeguarding conferences to improve and strengthen our engagement with our children and young people. The purpose of these conferences is two-fold: firstly to seek their views to inform our future work; and secondly to provide workshops on issues they have previously identified as being the key safeguarding issues that concern them.

A Children's Safeguarding Conference was held in June 2019 and a Young Person Safeguarding Conference in January 2020. We engaged with 96 children and 72 young people during these two events, some of whom had additional needs.

Working with local partners, including statutory and voluntary groups and charities, we delivered workshops on mental health, community safety and online safety. The purpose of these workshops was to raise awareness and provide training in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our children and young people. The workshops were developed based on feedback from our children and young people about what the key safeguarding issues were for them, which demonstrates that we are listening and supporting them to strengthen their resilience.

Facilitators also shared relevant information with them e.g. community police arrangements, trading standards concerns around counterfeit equipment.

Feedback from the children and young people indicates that the sessions were useful, enjoyable and supported children and young people to safeguard themselves.

## Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Agencies

Evaluation of Section 11 and Section 175 Audit Tools identify clear methods of engagement with children, young people and their families. This includes seeking their views and feedback on safeguarding issues as highlighted above, but also to develop services and improve practice.

## Schools and Education providers

Young people have also participated in:

- School Councils
- Students representatives meeting with Headteachers
- Student voice surveys
- Termly Parents Forum meeting
- Social media to share messages and request feedback
- Active School Council with elected members.







# Strategic Priorities 2020–2021

Figure 4: SSCP Priorities for 2020–21









