



# Annual Report 2023-24

# Introduction

- Safeguarding partners are required to publish an annual report. The full report is available on the WSCP website: [Annual Report 2023-24](#), along with an easy read report on-a-page
- The report aims to provide an assessment of multi-agency activity to safeguard children and includes a summary of WSCP activity, including case reviews, auditing, data and the delivery of training across the partnership, as well as progress against priorities
- The report includes an independent scrutiny assessment of the functioning and effectiveness of the WSCP



# Journey of the Child

The report provides a view of Wirral's children profile with the [If Wirral had 100 children](#) graphic. It also presents an illustration of [Disparity for children in Wirral](#), highlighting where the greatest need is.

- [Early Help and Prevention](#) - demand for early help increased significantly during 2023. The early help offer in Wirral remains very strong and was praised by Ofsted. The Cradle to Career project in Birkenhead continues to support local communities and divert families away from social care. The [Family Toolbox](#) also provided one-stop help to many families.
- [Children's Social Care](#) - performance information shows there were over 24,000 contacts in 23/24 with one-third converting to referrals. In March 2024 there were 372 children subject to a child protection plan, 2819 children in need, and 777 children looked after, which has fallen since 2022.

# Systemic Practice

Systemic Practice was launched as the multi-agency partnership model of practice in October 2023. To prepare for the launch training for the workforce has been delivered since September 2022 to over 600 staff.

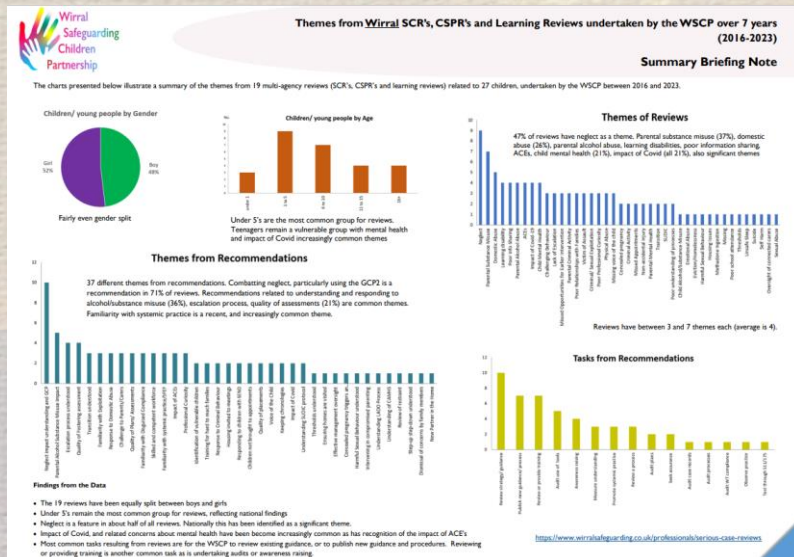
- Systemic Practice is a relationship-based model which emphasises people's relationships as key to understanding their experiences. It also stresses the importance for families to be able to build strong, trusting and purposeful relationships with the practitioners supporting them.
- As well as training the WSCP has also published briefings, resources and guidance on the [virtual systemic practice hub](#) and has delivered a number of skills workshops. A practice lead is also in post in children's services to support practitioners and teams with using the model in practice.
- The WSCP have also partnered with the Centre for Systemic Social Work, and staff are now receiving advanced training in the model.



# Learning from Case Reviews

In 2023 the WSCP published the [Child Noah](#) and [Child Ollie](#) Safeguarding Practice Reviews. Noah tragically died at home, and although his death was not suspicious the case highlighted the complexities of working with families with multiple issues. Ollie died as a result of injuries sustained by co-sleeping. The case highlighted the importance of safe sleep messaging.

Learning reviews were also completed on [Emily and Lily](#) who suffered abuse and neglect, and the [Taylor children](#) who suffered physical abuse. A review was also undertaken on behalf of the LA into a case managed by the SEND service, and a summary of findings from across reviews was published.



Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership

**Child Safeguarding Practice Review**

**Ollie**

April 2023

Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership

**Child Safeguarding Practice Review**

**Noah**

March 2023

**Learning from Case Reviews—Child Noah**

Noah was two years old when he was found in his bed unresponsive. An ambulance was called but tragically Noah had passed away. Prior to his death there had been considerable agency involvement with the family and long-standing issues of neglect, domestic abuse and alcohol abuse. This case reminds all professionals to:

- Be aware of the impact of parental alcohol misuse on children. If in doubt use the expertise of substance misuse services such as Wirral Ways to Recovery
- Be professionally curious - poor home conditions may be an indicator of other or deeper concerns within the family
- Be innovative in the way you form purposeful relationships with families, particularly those who are reluctant to engage with you
- Consider the appropriateness of 'contracts' with parents, particularly those which assume one parent may be able to 'police' another
- Ensure you are familiar with the SUDIC protocol and seek guidance if you are unsure

**Sudden Unexpected Death of an Infant (SUDI) Protocol**

[www.wirralsafeguarding/casereviews](http://www.wirralsafeguarding/casereviews)

Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership

# Learning from Audits

The WSCP undertook a number of multi-agency audits about the number of 0-5 children looked after, impact of parental substance misuse, pre-birth arrangements, quality of case recording and child exploitation. The WSCP also continued to deliver its comprehensive [SI 11/175 programme](#) of safeguarding audits of partner organisations, schools and colleges.

**The WSCP Briefing**  
Audit of the rising number of looked after children aged 0-5  
October 2023

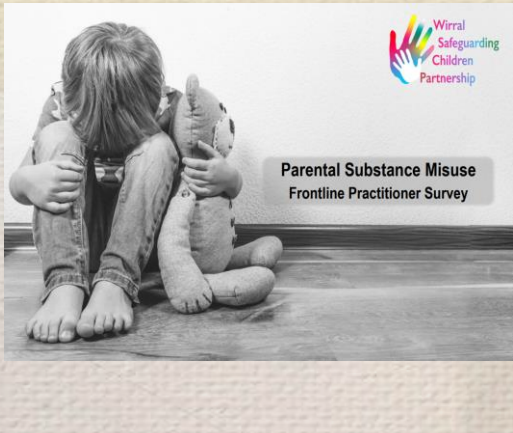
- 1. Introduction**  
WSCP Safeguarding Children Practice (WSCP SC) has undertaken an audit of 65 cases to explore the reasons for the rising number of looked after children aged 0-5 years.
- 2. Data & Methodology**  
LA data confirmed that between April 2022 and April 2023, 188 children became looked after (13 of these were aged between 0-5 years (41%).)
- 3. Overall Findings**  
Overall findings from the audit show that a primary reason for the rise in children looked after aged 0-5 years is neglect and poor parenting.
- 4. Overall Findings**  
The audit found that the overall presenting issues in these cases were domestic abuse, neglect, parental substance misuse, parental mental health issues and home conditions.
- 5. Overall Findings**  
Multi-agency working was identified as a key strength in these cases.
- 6. Recommendations**  
For SLT to consider the findings of the audit and identify what further work is needed to address the issues.
- 7. To access more learning from multi-agency audits, click here.**

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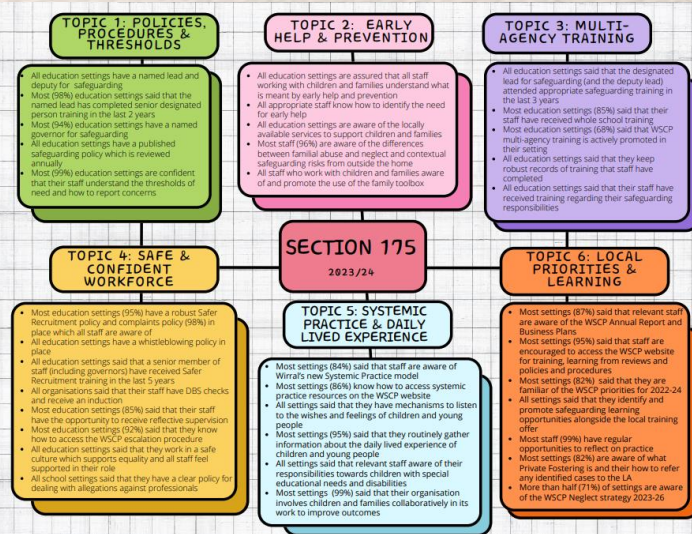
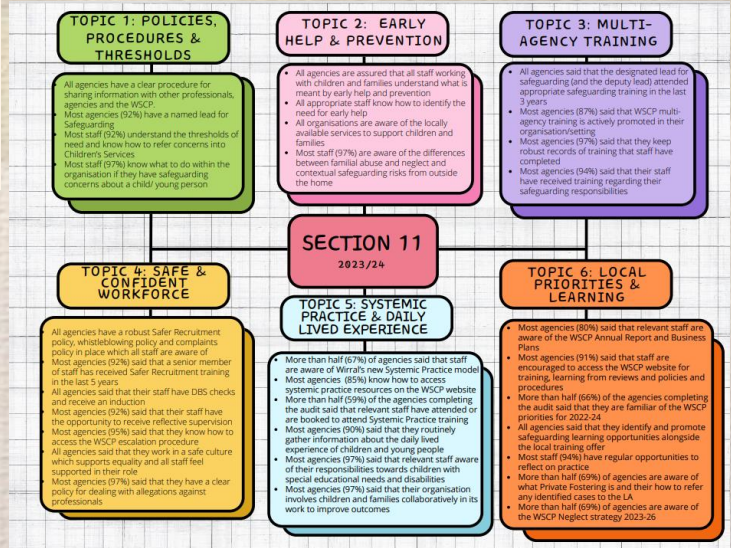
## CASE RECORDING - WHAT DID WE LEARN?

- Records should be individual to the child, without combining sibling entries
- Regular management oversight should be clearly evident in records
- Recording of collaborative working is strong across the partnership
- Records should evidence the use of Systemic practice, including tools and language
- Records should include the voice of the child, ideally in their own words.
- Continuous use and updating of the child's chronology and case summary should be evident in records

Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership



Leasowe Lighthouse 1763



# Multi-Agency Working

To illustrate some of the different ways agencies have worked together to safeguard and improve outcomes for children, young people and families, WSCP has published a series of **Single Agency Reports and Case Studies**, with the hope they provide a glimpse into the work which takes place every day in Wirral to keep our children safe

- A wide range of organisations, such as Merseyside Fire and Rescue, Our Space, Advocacy / Right side of Care, Barnardo's, WEB, RASA, Youth Justice Service, Open Door, The Lighthouse Centre, Blue Skies Ahead, Wirral Community Health, and Cheshire and Wirral Partnership, have this year highlighted examples of good and effective safeguarding practice – all of which can be found here – [multi-agency working](#)

# Examples of Case Studies and Strategies

## Cherish

Wirral's Multi-agency  
Neglect Strategy  
2023-26

Wirral Safeguarding Children  
Partnership  
Wirral Safeguarding Adults  
Partnership Board

Recognising—Responding—Making a Difference

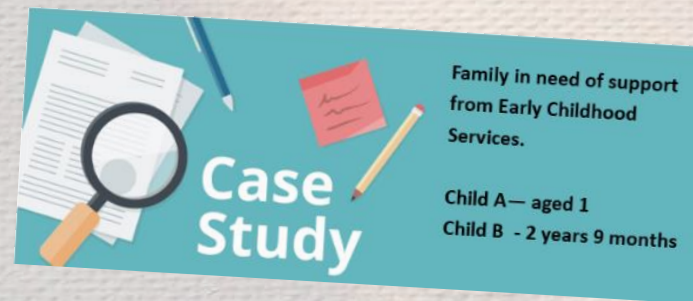
## A sense of belonging

### Wirral's Young Person's Guide to the Sufficiency\* Strategy

\*sufficiency means making sure we  
have enough safe, secure and good  
quality accommodation and support  
for our children in care and care leavers

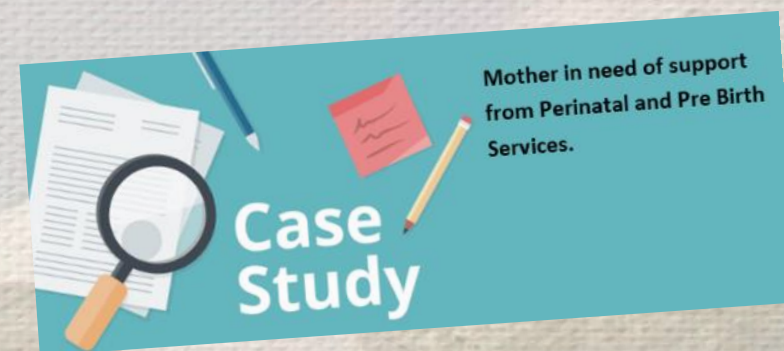


WIRRAL



Family in need of support  
from Early Childhood  
Services.

Child A— aged 1  
Child B - 2 years 9 months



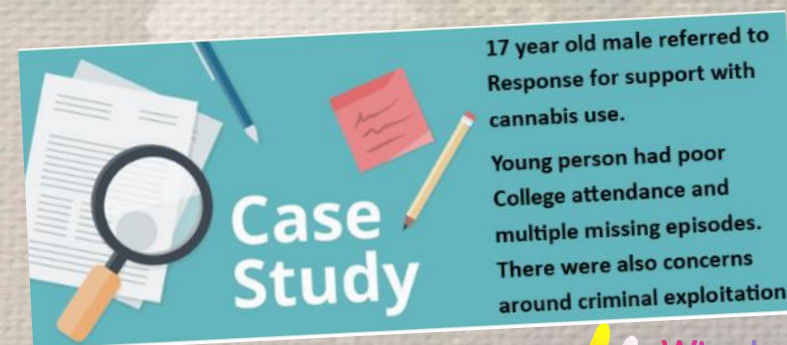
Mother in need of support  
from Perinatal and Pre Birth  
Services.



Blue Skies Ahead have  
provided 3 case studies,  
including detailed impact  
reports and service feedback.



Mother with disabilities in  
need of support from  
pre-birth services and  
community support.



17 year old male referred to  
Response for support with  
cannabis use.

Young person had poor  
College attendance and  
multiple missing episodes.  
There were also concerns  
around criminal exploitation.



# Multi-Agency Training

Throughout 2023-24 the WSCP continued to deliver a comprehensive programme of multi-agency training and training for schools and colleges. During 2023 the WSCP delivered 60 full multi-agency training events to 956 practitioners from across the partnership, and 31 events to 493 staff from education

- Feedback about training remains extremely positive, with professionals providing examples of how the training has helped them make a real difference to children & families.
- WSCP has delivered a programme of shorter spotlight briefings and continues to publish 7-minute briefings and other resources.
- The annual Big Learn safeguarding event in 2023 was attended by over 300 professionals, and included 18 different presentations and briefings, and a market-place of 32 organisations.



# Examples of Briefings and Resources

## The WSCP Briefing Child-on-Child Abuse July 2023

- 1. Introduction:**
  - The nature and prevalence of abuse between children remains of serious concern and preventing and tackling it must continue to be a key priority for schools and colleges. In April 2021, Sirs's 'Everyone's Invited' report (Sirs's 'Everyone's Invited' report) triggered a national campaign to raise awareness of child-on-child abuse and to highlight the importance of tackling online abuse, and other potential forms of online harm, such as cyberbullying and sexting. It has been reported that the pandemic has also led to unprecedented demand for services to support children's mental health services.
- 2. Defining Abuse:**
  - The DfE states that: "All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse), and that it can happen both inside and outside of school or college and also online." Child-on-child abuse is the term chosen by the DfE. Abuse is defined as: "any behaviour, regardless of the age, of stage of development, or apparent abuse, in a narrower category of abuse between peers – in other words, on the same or similar age, on the same or similar stage of development, and during adolescence. Peer-on-peer abuse is a subset of child-on-child abuse, of which practitioners should also be aware of, and know how to respond to various types of abuse."
- 3. Types of abuse:**
  - This form of abuse is when there is any kind of physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse or coercion, sexual harassment between children or young people both on and offline and can take various forms, including (but not limited to):
    - Bullying – including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying. Hate-based abuse, racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, and sexism, which may also include an online element.
    - Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teen relationship abuse') – which may also include an online element. Physical violence and abuse in this context include sexual harassment, abuse or coercion, including harassment, abuse or coercion used in a way of causing a humiliation (used in a way of causing a humiliation) and may also include an online element.
    - Harmful sexual interactions (HSI) including sexual violence and sexual harassment (both online and offline), Child sexual exploitation (CSE) and Child sexual exploitation (CSE).
- 4. Why does it matter?**
  - Different types of abuse rarely take place in isolation and often indicate wider safeguarding concerns.
  - Children's experiences of abuse and/or violence are rarely isolated events, and can often be linked to other things that are happening in their lives, and so any response to concerns or allegations of child-on-child abuse should consider the range of possible types of child-on-child abuse, and to explore the full context of children's experiences.
  - This can be done by each adopting a 'Contextual Safeguarding' approach and schools/colleges responding to alleged child-on-child abuse takes
- 5. How to respond:**
  - To prevent and address child-on-child abuse, schools and colleges should encapsulate a Contextual Safeguarding approach, which means "being aware of that wider social contexts may be having an impact on their lives, and so are embedding a safe culture in the school or college by fostering an environment in which all types of extra-familial harm (including child-on-child abuse) are promptly identified and appropriately responded to."
  - Promoting positive and healthy relationships and attitudes to difference, including gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability.
  - Use of hotspot mapping to identify risk areas in the school or college; training on areas in the school/college assumptions
- 6. How to respond (cont)**
  - Being alert to and monitoring changes in students' behaviour and/or attendance.
  - Contributing to local child protection agendas by challenging poor behaviour in extra-familial settings, but who are relatively safe within their families, as well as referring concerns about contexts to relevant local agencies.
  - Effectively implementing robust policies and procedures that address child-on-child abuse and harmful attitudes.
  - Schools and colleges should adopt a 'zero-tolerance' policy towards all forms of child-on-child abuse, and ensure that no form of any such abuse is ever dismissed as a joke or 'banter'. Schools and colleges should identify and handle cases sensitively, appropriately and promptly.
- 7. For further information:**
  - Addressing Child on Child Abuse
  - Respectful school communities - self review tool
  - @Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership

## Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership

- 1. ZILLO & SENDLO**
  - ZILLO is a website for young people living in Wirral to access with on current events, arts, culture, news and expert health & wellbeing advice and services.
  - Zillo Young Reporters & Journalism project provides young people with experience of writing and creating content for the web. ZILLO Young Reporters is open to all Wirral Young People aged 11-18yrs.
  - SENDLO brings together information about local services and support available across education, health and social care for the web. ZILLO Young Reporters is open to all Wirral Young People aged 11-18yrs.
  - www.zillowirral.co.uk
  - www.sendlowirral.co.uk
- 2. Youth Spaces**
  - Youth Spaces are Universal youth facilities situated within 9 Wirral neighbourhoods 3 evenings per week.
  - They provide a safe space for young people aged 11-19yrs (up to 25 SEND) to be themselves, socialise, participate in positive activities & projects, learn through informal education, have a voice, be inspired and most importantly have fun.
  - Email: youthspaces@wirral.gov.uk
  - www.zillowirral.co.uk/youth-spaces
- 3. Detached Youth Work**
  - Detached Youth Work teams work with young people aged 11-19yrs delivering targeted youth work interventions in specific areas of need 'Hot Spot' locations.
  - Using a mobile resource known as the Kontaktabus, the teams are able to interact effectively with young people across communities. Enabling youth workers to build trusting relationships that help create discussions to identify and respond to the needs of young people.
  - www.zillowirral.co.uk/detached-youth-work
- 4. Health Services in Schools**
  - HSIS Youth Workers provide confidential support to young people within Wirral Secondary Schools, Sixth Form Colleges and Wirral Met College.
  - HSIS Youth Workers offer support on issues such as: building resilience, reducing risks, healthy relationships, sexual health (including issues relating to some school/college), alcohol, emotional health, stress and anxiety.
  - www.zillowirral.co.uk/hsis
- 5. Response**
  - Response is a confidential support service for young people aged 13-19yrs. It consists of two teams of specialist workers that are concerned with their Drug and Alcohol use.
  - Response Drug & Alcohol Team provide support to young people that are concerned with their Drug and Alcohol use.
  - www.zillowirral.co.uk/response
  - Email: response@wirral.gov.uk
- 6. Participation and Engagement**
  - Wirral Youth Voice Group: meet Mondays 5-6pm at Pilgrim St Arts Centre. The group have a voice/say on local, regional and national issues that affect young people, including managing the UK Members of Youth Parliament. There are also many other Youth Voice Groups that focus on key projects and developments such as SEND Youth Voice Group, Wirral GOOL, Youth Environment and LGBTQIA+ to name a few.
  - Email: janelnewakerley@wirral.gov.uk
- 7. Creative Youth Development**
  - CYD provides creative arts for young people promoting independence, positive self-esteem and confidence. CYD offer a broad curriculum of programmes and workshops from Pilgrim Street Arts Centres such as Participation & Engagement, Life-skills, Dance, Drama, Technical Theatre, Music and Visual Arts that enable young people to improve their physical and emotional well-being.
  - www.zillowirral.co.uk/cydarts-2
- 8. The Drop-in**
  - The Drop-in operates Mon-Fri (2-6pm) for young people aged 11-18yrs (up to 25 SEND) to access 1-1 support on issues that may be affecting their emotional health & well-being.
  - Youth Workers offer a comprehensive package of support that assists young people to recognise their goals and aspirations and move forward in their lives.
  - www.zillowirral.co.uk/the-drop-in
- 9. Youth Matters in Wirral 7 Minute Briefing**
  - Email: youthmatters@wirral.gov.uk
  - www.zillowirral.co.uk/www.sendlowirral.co.uk

## STOPCE

THEY'RE JUST BEING A TYPICAL TEENAGER

AREN'T THEY?

THINK TWICE ABOUT ABUSE

EXPLOITATION CAN HAPPEN TO ANY CHILD, ANYWHERE.

Question what you think you know. Question what you see and hear.

## The WSCP Briefing Working Together 2023 Key Features Dec 2023

- 1. What is Working Together?**
  - Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) is the statutory multi-agency guidance which sets out expectations for the safeguarding of the welfare of children.
  - Working Together defines the key processes for organisations to follow to ensure all children are safeguarded and protected from harm.
  - The guidance also sets out the responsibilities of all agencies and professionals have to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children.
  - The guidance applies to all organisations and agencies who have functions relating to children and must be followed.
- 2. Changes from WT18**
  - A new chapter—A Shared Responsibility—emphasises that successful outcomes for children depend on strong multi-agency partnership working across the whole system, including effective work with parents, carers, and families.
  - This section includes principles for working with parents and carers which are based in building positive, trusting and cooperative relationships.
  - Changes to strengthen multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, introducing a partnership duty, clarifying roles and emphasising the role of education.
  - A renewed focus on how organisations provide help, safeguarding and protection for families.
  - Introduces expectation for keeping in touch with care leavers over 21.
- 3. A Shared Responsibility**
  - Introduces four principles for working with parents and carers:
    - Effective partnership working with parents and carers happens when practitioners build positive, trusting and co-operative relationships.
    - Verbal and non-verbal communication should be respectful, non-blaming, clear, inclusive, and adapted to parents and carers needs, and be jargon free.
    - Practitioners empower parents and carers to participate in decision-making.
    - Practitioners involve parents, carers, families and local communities in designing processes that affect them.
    - Expectations for multi-agency working:
      - Organisations collaborate effectively
      - Safeguarding practice is resourced
      - Everyone is accountable for the quality of safeguarding practice
      - Constructive challenge is encouraged
- 4. Multi-agency Safeguarding Arrangements**
  - Arrangements are led by the three statutory partners of the LA, Health (through the Integrated Care Board) and Police.
  - Working Together 23 emphasises the pivotal role of Education in the local safeguarding system.
  - Separation of the strategic, lead safeguarding partners (LSP) from those delegate partners who deliver the arrangements (DSP).
  - A named partnership Chair to be appointed from the DSPs.
  - Defining that MASA annual reports must be published each September for the previous financial year.
  - Defining independent scrutiny functions.
- 5. Early Help**
  - Ambition is to ensure all families are provided with the right support at the right time. Local areas should identify children and families who would benefit from early help.
  - Local Early Help system should be informed by the Early Help System Guide, joined up early help services should be available through Family Hubs.
  - Partners must publish a threshold document.
  - Working with families is underpinned by building strong relationships.
  - Activity should be coordinated by a lead practitioner drawn from across the partnership, and might include social workers.
  - The delivery of services should be as local and accessible as possible.
  - Role and importance of education in Early Help is emphasised.
- 6. Statutory Safeguarding**
  - Local protocols for assessment and support should be published, including Section 17 (Child in Need), who might not always be a social worker—
  - In cases where oversight will be provided by a social work qualified practice supervisor.
  - Local protocols should also reflect the specific needs of certain groups including young carers, unborn children, and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
  - WT23 introduces new national multi-agency child protection standards and a harm from outside the home.
  - Processes for contacts and referrals and action to take when there are concerns about a child remain unchanged.
- 7. Organisational Responsibilities**
  - This section sets out the statutory responsibilities of a range of agencies and organisations. These agency responsibilities are unchanged.
  - Changes to the Prison and Probation system highlights the mutual benefits of exchanging information with local social care.
  - LADO responsibilities and managing allegations processes are unchanged.

Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership December 2023

## Systemic Practice HANDBOOK

Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership

## What Should... Systemic Practice

Look Like in Wirral for Families, Practitioners, Practice Supervisors and Practice Leaders?

# Progress Against Priorities

In 2023 the refreshed Business Plan included four priority areas:

- Priority One – Implementation of a strategy to tackle neglect.
- Priority Two – Introducing a systemic practice approach to working with children, young people and families.
- Priority Three – Evaluating the impact of the Breaking the Cycle programme.
- Priority Four – Safeguarding and Education.

The annual report includes a detailed [summary of progress](#) against the priorities from 2023, including what was achieved and what remains to do.

# Progress Against Priorities - Headlines

|                        | Tackling Neglect:   | Embedding Systemic Practice:  | Evaluating Breaking the Cycle:  | Safeguarding in Education:   |
|------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Progress</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy successfully developed, published and launched. A steering group in place overseeing the implementation of the strategy delivery plan.</li> <li>• Refreshed multi-agency neglect training in place and Graded Care Profile (GCP)2 relaunched.</li> <li>• A Quality Assurance Framework and outcomes measures in place, to report on progress, impact and next steps.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched in October 2023 and multi-agency training in place, to date over 500 professionals trained.</li> <li>• An expansion of training offer and the completion strategic leaders' sessions.</li> <li>• Threshold of need reviewed and an auditing schedule underway.</li> <li>• The Quality Assurance framework is in place to assess the impact of model and to report progress and impact.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Auditing of cases and scrutiny of key performance data and information shows evidence of impact.</li> <li>• Appointment of new training officer to evaluate wider training needs.</li> <li>• Reporting recommendations to support the wider development of trauma informed practice in place.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A well represented safeguarding committee, working on key issues across the Education sector</li> <li>• Education LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) in post and linking strongly with education partners</li> <li>• Chair contributes to the Executive Committee as voice of the sector.</li> </ul> |

# Business Plan 24-25

The WSCP [Business Plan](#) sets out priority areas of work for development. These are in addition to our ‘business as usual’ activities and will typically change every couple of years as they become embedded. WSCP’s three key priorities for 2024-25 are:

- [Embedding Systemic Practice](#) – During 2024, WSCP will begin the embedding phase of [systemic practice](#). This means we will audit and gather feedback from practitioners, services and families to evidence the impact of the model of practice.
- Safeguarding and Education – Building on the establishment of a [safeguarding in education committee](#), the WSCP as part of the Pathfinder programme will, over the next 12 months, test the new roles of lead and delegated safeguarding partners for education.
- Embedding Change – Following the publication of [Working Together to safeguarding children 2023](#), important reforms to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements will take place this year, many through the [Pathfinder programme](#).



# Independent Scrutiny

Headline findings from the 2024 scrutiny report are summarised below:

- **WSCP has committed leaders who demonstrate they have children at the centre. The executive know themselves and have well developed relationships**
- **WSCP's published arrangements including the framework are compliant with Working Together statutory guidance**
- **Committees and work groups are well led and well attended. A wide breadth of performance information is presented and discussed but would benefit from specialist analysis**
- **Partnership understanding of the thresholds of need is strong**
- **Case review function is extensive and well led, but WSCP should consider its commissioning arrangements to ensure it is compliant with guidance**
- **Annual report provides a comprehensive assessment of the strength of safeguarding arrangements, but should include more detail on the voice of the child, and the rationale for the selection of priorities**

# Further Information

- [WSCP Annual Report \(online\)](#)
- [Annual Report on-a-page](#)
- [WSCP Business Plan 2024-26](#)
- [WSCP Progress Against Priorities](#)
- [WSCP Case Reviews](#)
- [WSCP Multi-agency Training](#)
- [WSCP Learning from Audits](#)

