



Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report

April 2025 - March 2026



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Introduction from the Chair

It has been a privilege to serve as Chair of the Safeguarding Children Partnership since my appointment in December 2024. Over the past year, I have worked with committed partners to strengthen effective arrangements to safeguard children and young people across the borough.

This year has been one of development and transition. Building on Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, we have embedded our partnership arrangements while preparing for and responding to developments reflected within Working Together 2026. These changes continue to emphasise strong multi-agency leadership, clear accountability and a focus on impact.

Our Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) arrangements and Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) arrangements are now well established and continue to provide strong strategic leadership and oversight across the partnership. The DSP group plays a critical role in maintaining oversight of safeguarding activity, driving improvement, and ensuring accountability between statutory safeguarding partners. I would like to recognise and thank senior leaders from West Mercia Police, Telford & Wrekin Council, and NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICB for their ongoing commitment.

Our Independent Scrutineer continues to provide valuable challenge and assurance, strengthening the effectiveness of our work. As with all effective partnerships, there are naturally occasions where challenge arises; however, the way in which we engage professionally and work through these challenges reflects the strength and maturity of our partnership.

In July 2025, the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) recognised Telford and Wrekin as a mature partnership, highlighting our openness, collaboration and commitment to learning. This reflects the progress we have made while reinforcing our focus on continuous improvement.

During the year we have seen positive impact from our priority work. The Family Safeguarding model, alongside our work on neglect, has supported improvements in practice and outcomes for children and families. We have also strengthened governance arrangements through the development of dedicated Child Sexual Abuse and Domestic Abuse groups to ensure greater focus on children as victims in their own right.

We continue to strengthen professional practice through evolving and rebranding our threshold guidance to the “Pathway to Support” framework replacing a traditional threshold approach with a more child-centred framework focused on early, proportionate intervention. This is supported by a comprehensive programme of audit, quality assurance and workforce development activity.

National reforms continue to shape our local approach. The Families First Programme, development of Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPT), and wider reforms arising from the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill Act 2026 are significant opportunities to improve how agencies work together to support children and families. We are well placed to respond to these reforms, building on strong multi-agency foundations, Family Hubs, and co-production with children and families.

Children’s emotional health and wellbeing remains a growing concern locally and nationally, placing increased pressure on services. We recognise this is a complex, long-term challenge that will take sustained effort to address. We remain committed to ensuring children receive timely and appropriate support that improves outcomes and promotes resilience.

While challenges remain, including increasing demand and system pressures, we are proud to be a mature, open and constructive partnership committed to continuous improvement and accountability.

As we conclude the reporting year in April 2026, we remain focused on our core aim: keeping children safe and supporting families. We will continue to strengthen our arrangements and keep children and families at the centre of everything we do.

Finally, I would like to thank all professionals, volunteers, and partners across Telford and Wrekin for their continued dedication to safeguarding children and young people.



Jo Britton

Jo Britton

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

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

Working Together 2023 (WTG23, now superseded by 2026) requires Telford & Wrekin Council, West Mercia Police, and Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS) to establish and maintain multi-agency safeguarding arrangements to protect and safeguard vulnerable children.

The responsibility to maintain multi-agency safeguarding arrangements to protect vulnerable children is overseen by the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Partnership, jointly and equally funded by the three statutory partners. The Partnership is composed of three core groups responsible for ensuring that the children in the borough are protected and safeguarded.

- **Lead Safeguarding Partner (LSP)** meeting operating across the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin footprint. Comprising of Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire Councils' Chief Executives, the Chief Constable of West Mercia Police and the Chief Executive of Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin ICB).
- **Safeguarding Children Board Executive – composed of the statutory Delegated Safeguarding Partner (DSP)** roles structure specific to the Telford & Wrekin local authority area and consisting of the Executive Director Children Services and Public Health (holding the statutory Director of Children Services function), Telford & Wrekin Council, Chief Nursing Officer Integrated Care Board NHS Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin ICB and Detective Superintendent West Mercia Police. Together with the Independent Scrutineer and a local headteacher representing the education sector, they meet as the Safeguarding Children Board Executive. Held between Safeguarding Children Board sessions, they provide a dedicated forum for senior leaders to monitor progress and respond to emerging priorities.
- **Safeguarding Children Board** – the Board plays a central role in driving the safeguarding agenda across Telford and Wrekin. Membership is drawn from a broad range of statutory and strategic partners, ensuring diverse representation and robust oversight. Membership of the Board includes:
 - Independent Scrutineer;
 - Telford & Wrekin Council – Children's Services;
 - NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS);
 - West Mercia Police;
 - Telford & Wrekin Council – Education and Skills;
 - Voice of the Child Representative, Project Manager, and School Improvement Adviser/ITT Lead;
 - Telford & Wrekin Council – Head of Policy, Insight, Partnership & Elections, Telford & Wrekin Council;
 - Legal Advisor –Interim Head of Service Registrars, Legal and Democracy, Telford & Wrekin Council;
 - West Mercia Youth Offending Team;
 - Safeguarding Children Board Manager – Telford and Wrekin Partnership; and
 - Education Representative – Local Head Teacher.

Through 2025/26, the Partnership has continued to strengthen its governance and accountability structures:

- **Enhancing multi-agency safeguarding arrangements:** Reflecting shared responsibility and increased accountability across all statutory partners—Telford & Wrekin Council, West Mercia Police, and Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICS. Since December 2024, Jo Britton, Executive Director Children's Services, has chaired both the Safeguarding Children Board and the Executive DSP. The chairing arrangements are subject to annual review and may rotate by mutual agreement where this is deemed to be in the best interests of the Partnership.
- **Independent Scrutineer Role:** providing objective oversight and challenge to ensure transparency and effectiveness.
- **Recognition of a Strong and Mature Partnership:** The Partnership continues to demonstrate resilience, collaboration, and a commitment to continuous improvement, as recognised by the 2025 JTAI.
- **Regional Collaboration:** Engagement with Lead Safeguarding Partner meetings across the West Mercia footprint ensures alignment with broader regional safeguarding priorities.

The core strategic focus of the Partnership is:

- **Child-centred Practice:** Ensuring the voice and experience of the child is central to all safeguarding activity.
- **Accountability:** Holding partners to account for their role in keeping children safe.
- **Data-driven Insight:** Collecting and sharing intelligence to evaluate effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.
- **Workforce Development:** Ensuring staff and volunteers are equipped with the training and confidence to safeguard effectively.

- **Continuous Improvement:** Reviewing policies and guidance to maintain high standards of practice.
- **Public Awareness:** Promoting understanding of safeguarding issues and how to respond.

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

- **Empowerment** – people being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and give informed consent.
- **Prevention** – it's better to take action before harm occurs.
- **Proportionality** – the least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- **Protection** – support and representation for those in greatest need.
- **Partnership** – working with communities who have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting abuse and neglect.
- **Accountability** – accountability and transparency in safeguarding practice.

Telford and Wrekin – the place

Telford and Wrekin is a borough characterised by significant diversity in its geography, population and levels of need.

Place and Population

The borough includes the New Town of Telford, established in 1968, alongside established communities such as Wellington, Oakengates, Dawley and Madeley. It also includes Ironbridge, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Over two-thirds of the area is rural, creating a mixed urban and rural profile.

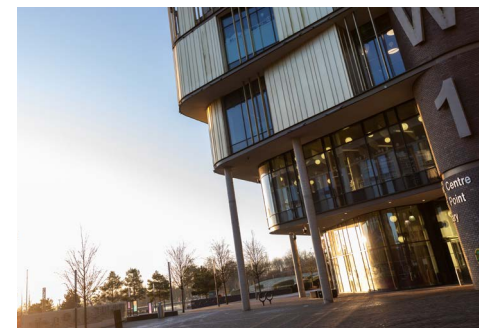
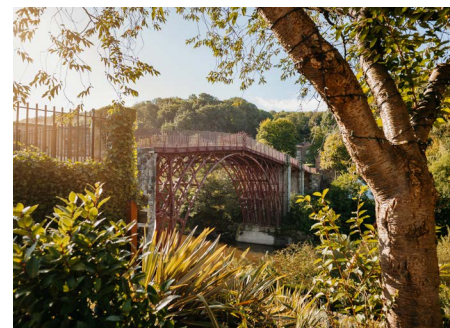
The population was estimated at 195,952 in 2024. Between 2014 and 2024, the population increased by 14.9%, making Telford and Wrekin the fastest-growing upper-tier authority in the West Midlands and the ninth fastest in England.

Population growth is accompanied by demographic change. The number of residents aged 65+ increased by 27.6% over this period. The under-18 population also grew by 13.7%, from 38,923 to 44,248.

The borough is increasingly diverse. The proportion of residents from non-White British backgrounds rose from 10.5% in 2011 to 17.0% in 2021. Among children and young people, this figure is higher at 23.5%.

Economy

The borough has a strong and diverse economy, with approximately 7,000 businesses across sectors including advanced manufacturing, engineering, defence, digital and data services, construction, and tourism. Unemployment remains below regional and national averages, and GVA per head is among the highest in the West Midlands.



Deprivation and Inequality

There are marked inequalities across the borough. While 10.2% of residents live in the 20% least deprived areas nationally, 24.1% (approximately 46,000 people) live in the 20% most deprived areas.

Child poverty is a key safeguarding pressure. In 2024/25, 24.8% of children under 16 (around 9,700) were living in relative low-income families, significantly higher than the England average of 19.8%.

- 6.77% increase in pupils receiving SEN Support in the last year.
- 12.09% increase in pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan in the last year.

Figures taken from 2025 and 2026 school censuses

To better understand referral and escalation levels within the safeguarding system, the following figures were submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) as part of the statutory returns for the 2025/2026 reporting year.

	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/26
Number of safeguarding contacts received	9,975	6,683	6,665
Number of CIN Plan open in year	1,224	1,003	1,123
Number of CP plan open in year	442	373	469
Number of episodes of CLA open in year	778	795	543



Voice of the child

The partnership places the voice of the child at the centre of its work, primarily through the activity of the 56 Children’s Safeguarding Boards across schools in the area. These Boards engage with children and young people from Early Years through to Key Stage 5 to promote their understanding of the right to feel safe, how to report concerns, and how to access timely and appropriate support.

During the final quarter of 2025–2026, the Independent Scrutineer, John Clements, visited a number of local schools to meet with groups of young people. These visits provided opportunities for children and young people to discuss their understanding of safeguarding, share their lived experiences, and explain what they consider to be most important in keeping themselves safe and how they believe support should be provided.

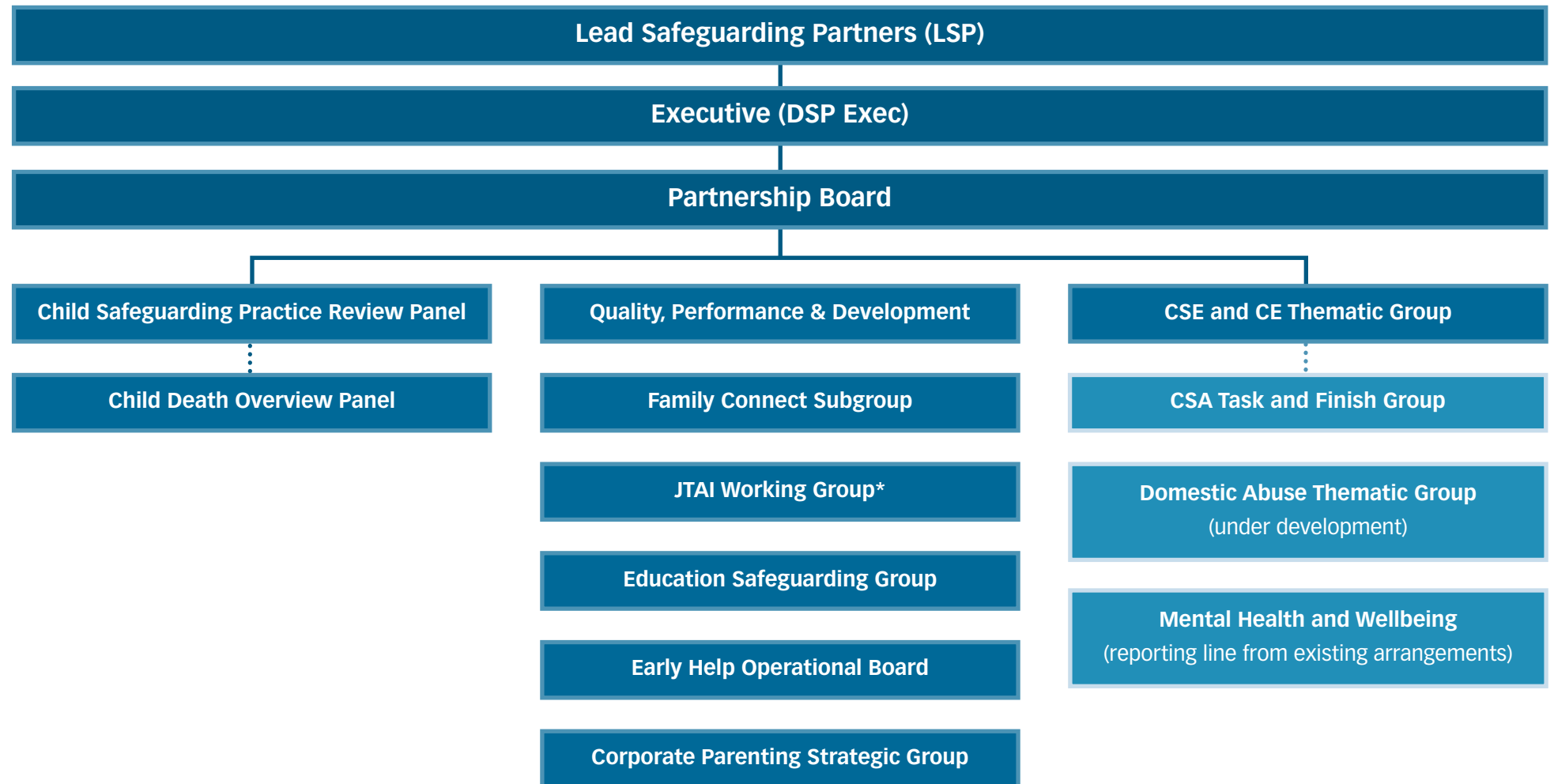
The Telford and Wrekin Children and Young People Partnership Board also maintain access to a range of “voice” and consultation groups through the local authority’s children’s social care services. Children in care, care leavers, and other groups of young people are actively consulted on the development of new policies and service offers. Feedback from these consultations is used to adapt wording and presentation to ensure information is young-person friendly and designed to drive meaningful change.

In addition, the local authority employs a number of care-experienced apprentices who play a key role in reviewing policies, evaluating service offers, and supporting consultation with children and young people. The partnership recognises that young people often respond differently to apprentices with lived experience than they do to social care professionals, leading to more open, honest, and valuable feedback. This insight is used to help improve services and outcomes for all children and young people in Telford and Wrekin.



Structure

The structure of the Safeguarding Children Partnership is as follows with further details of the different meetings are presented further within the report.



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

Current priorities, focus and impact

Partnership Priorities 2025–2026

Following a review of Partnership Board priorities, children and young people were actively consulted through the 56 Children’s Safeguarding Boards to help shape the future direction of the Partnership. Their views have directly informed the agreed priorities and areas of focus for 2025-2026, which are outlined below, alongside a summary of progress to date.

- **Child Exploitation (including Child Sexual Exploitation)**

The Child Exploitation Thematic Subgroup remains a key priority area for the Partnership. Telford & Wrekin Council previously commissioned an independent inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation, led by Tom Crowther KC. As reported in 2023-2024, the Chair revisited Telford and recognised the significant progress made:

“People will not forget Telford’s history of child sexual exploitation – and nor should they. But in my view Telford’s approach – the Council’s approach – to the Recommendations, to engagement with its key partners and most of all with those young people it let down as children, now stands as a model.”
(Tom Crowther KC, July 2024)

The Partnership remains committed to continuing this work, building on the learning from the inquiry and ongoing engagement with stakeholders to further strengthen the local response to all forms of exploitation and continuously improve outcomes for children.

- **Early Help and Prevention**

In response to both local need and the views of young people, Early Help has been established as a formal Partnership subgroup. There is a shared recognition across the system that providing support at the earliest opportunity leads to better outcomes for children and families. The

subgroup is leading work to further develop and strengthen the local early help offer, ensuring timely, coordinated, and accessible support.

- **Emotional Health and Wellbeing**

Reflecting national concerns regarding children’s mental health, and local intelligence gathered through Quality, Performance and Development (QPD) analysis, emotional wellbeing has been identified as a key priority. Young people have highlighted this as a particular area of concern. In response, the Independent Scrutineer is leading a comprehensive review to:

- identify gaps across the full continuum of care;
- provide additional scrutiny of newly commissioned services; and
- challenge performance, including waiting times.

This work aims to strengthen oversight and ensure that services are responsive, accessible, and effective.

- **Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)**

In line with the national focus on Child Sexual Abuse, the Partnership Board has undertaken a review of its CSA response, led by the Independent Scrutineer. This has been supported by a Multi-Agency Case File Audit (MACFA) to identify strengths and areas for development. To ensure continued alignment with national priorities and emerging learning, a dedicated CSA working group has been established for 2025-2026 to drive forward improvements and provide ongoing assurance to the Board.

- **Domestic Abuse and its impact on Children**

Recognising the significant impact of domestic abuse on children and young people, the Partnership Board has initiated targeted activity to strengthen understanding and response in this area. Through the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) working group, it was identified that further review of the local offer would enhance assurance regarding the effectiveness of current arrangements. This work will support the Partnership in ensuring that children affected by domestic abuse receive appropriate, timely, and trauma-informed support.

Overall, these priorities reflect both national safeguarding developments and the lived experiences and views of children and young people locally. The Partnership remains committed to delivering a coordinated, evidence-informed approach to safeguarding, with a strong focus on prevention, early intervention, and continuous improvement.



Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Exploitation Thematic Subgroup

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Criminal Exploitation (CE) remain key priorities for the Safeguarding Children Board. Over the past 12 months, significant progress has been made to strengthen and expand the local response to child exploitation. Notable developments have been seen within the Partnership's National Referral Mechanism (NRM) offer.

Reporting directly to the Safeguarding Children Board, an NRM Coordinator was appointed to provide a dedicated focus on trafficking. This role delivers a “whole life” approach, designed to remove transition points between services and ensure continuity of support. It has also supported the regional NRM decision-making panel, which the Partnership successfully secured, resulting in more timely, locally informed decisions and improved outcomes for young people. This includes quicker NRM determinations and increased recognition of children as victims, particularly within court proceedings.

During the third and fourth quarters of the year, a reduction in CSE and CE referrals was observed. The focused work of the subgroup, underpinned by robust data, has contributed to this trend. However, the subgroup recognises that a reduction in referrals does not necessarily indicate a reduction in exploitation. In response, it has strengthened training, awareness, and communications to enhance professional understanding and maintain vigilance supporting an upturn in referral numbers.

Linked to the Families First Partnership, the CSE and CE Subgroup has broadened its membership to include a local organisation with lived experience, the Holly Project. This has significantly strengthened the group's work, supporting the review of its Terms of Reference, pathways to support, and key tools, including the jointly developed “Explore More” resource, to help professionals identify and respond to indicators of exploitation. This level of engagement is invaluable in ensuring that practice remains relevant, informed, and responsive to the needs of children and young people.

Learning from child exploitation activity has also led to direct service developments. The Partnership Board identified an opportunity to strengthen the support offer for professionals working with children at risk of exploitation. As a result, the Child at Risk Through Exploitation (CATE) team has appointed a Senior CATE Practitioner with a specific focus on this cohort. While this role is still relatively new and further assurance regarding its impact is awaited, it demonstrates the Partnership's proactive and constructive approach to identifying and responding to areas for development.

Early Help

Over the past 12 months, the Early Help Sub-Group has continued to strengthen the local early help system, supporting earlier intervention, improving multi-agency working, and contributing to positive outcomes for children and families.

Key Achievements

Supported the continued expansion and development of the Family Hubs model, enhancing access to parenting support, early communication interventions, school readiness programmes, and wider family support services.

Contributed to the development, implementation and embedding of the Partnership Threshold Guidance/Pathway to Support practitioner guide, on how to support children, their families and support networks at the earliest opportunity.

Strengthened the use of performance and partnership data, including enhanced Early Help dashboards, enabling improved oversight of demand, outcomes and emerging need trends.

Supported delivery of the Family First Partnership Programme (FFPP) principles across the partnership, ensuring early help services are aligned with national reform and focused on whole-family approaches.

Promoted the voice of children, young people and families through co-production activity, ensuring lived experience informs service design, practice development and partnership priorities.

Enhanced workforce development through multi-agency learning opportunities, including systemic practice and motivational interviewing training, supporting strengths-based practice with families

Delivered significant preventative support through Family Hubs and Early Years services, including:

- 107 practitioners trained in Early Talk Boost;
- 1,631 children supported through targeted speech and language interventions;
- 3,000 home learning bags distributed to families;
- continued focus on reducing inequalities and improving school readiness; and
- increased collaboration across safeguarding partnerships, ensuring early help remains central to reducing escalation into statutory services and managing safeguarding demand.

Impact

The Sub-Group has played a significant role in strengthening Telford & Wrekin's preventative offer, improving multi-agency partnership working, embedding Family First principles, and ensuring families can access the right support at the earliest opportunity. Evidence suggests that increased early help activity is contributing to improved outcomes for children and may be helping to reduce demand for more intensive interventions.

Family Connect Sub Group

The Family Connect Sub-Group has continued to provide effective multi-agency oversight of the front door to children's services, using performance information, partnership challenge, and quality assurance activity to improve outcomes for children and families.

Key achievements over the last 12 months include:

Family Connect Sub Group played a central role in coordinating and leading multi-agency activity before, during and following the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) inspection of the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk in Telford and Wrekin.

The inspection identified numerous strengths across partnership safeguarding arrangements, highlighting effective multi-agency working and providing assurance regarding the effectiveness of the front door and wider safeguarding system. The Family Connect Sub-Group has maintained oversight and progression of the JTAI partnership action plan that is being progressed.

Successfully leading partnership activity to improve the recording of basic demographics within Family Connect referrals, resulting in significantly improved data quality through collaborative work with education and partner agencies.

Supporting the development, launch and implementation of the revised Partnership Threshold Guidance – Pathway to Support, a significant partnership achievement arising from JTAI recommendations, providing greater clarity and consistency for practitioners across agencies on how to support families at the earliest opportunity.

Family Connect



Enhancing the use of Family Connect performance data and dashboards to identify trends, challenge practice, and support informed partnership decision-making.

Undertaking scrutiny of safeguarding trends, including child exploitation and domestic abuse referral patterns, ensuring emerging trends are understood and appropriate partnership responses are developed.

Providing robust multi-agency challenge and oversight regarding changes to the regional Vulnerability Hub/Harm Assessment Unit to minimise any impact on safeguarding arrangements and referral pathways.

Supporting delivery of the Family First Partnership Programme by reviewing pathways, processes, and partnership arrangements to ensure readiness for national reforms.

Continuing to strengthen partnership understanding on how best to support families through ongoing multi-agency workshops and learning events, receiving positive feedback from practitioners that have attended across the safeguarding partnership.

Impact

The Family Connect Sub-Group has played a pivotal role in strengthening the effectiveness of the multi-agency front door, improving the quality of partnership data, supporting Family First reforms and ensuring child protection concerns are identified and responded to at the earliest opportunity. Through effective challenge and oversight, the group continues to promote a consistent, child-centred approach to decision-making across the safeguarding partnership.



Quality Performance and Development

Data Analysis and Audit Activity

In line with *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023* (superseded by WTG 2026), the Partnership Board has strengthened its focus on the use of quantitative data to inform safeguarding practice and strategic oversight.

Chaired by a Detective Chief Inspector, The Quality, Performance and Development (QPD) Subgroup plays a central role in this work, collating and analysing safeguarding data from across partner agencies. This multi-agency intelligence provides a robust evidence base to inform strategic decision-making and is reported regularly to the Safeguarding Children Partnership Board.

Within the reporting year, following the commissioning of the Telford and Wrekin Insight Team, a new multi-agency dashboard has been developed and implemented. This dashboard enables partners to more effectively analyse trends, identify emerging risks, and triangulate performance across the system. The introduction of this tool represents a significant step forward in strengthening the Partnership's data maturity, supporting a more joined-up and intelligence-led approach to safeguarding, and enhancing the Board's ability to provide effective scrutiny and challenge.

Multi-Agency Case File Audit (MACFA) Activity

Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Partnership has delivered a comprehensive programme of Multi-Agency Case File Audits (MACFAs) to strengthen joint working and improve outcomes for children and young people. These audits are a critical component of the Partnership's quality assurance framework, enabling the identification of effective practice, capturing the lived experiences of children and families, and highlighting areas for system-wide improvement.

All audits were conducted collaboratively with key statutory and partner agencies, including Children's Services, Education, Police, Health providers, and General Practice. This multi-agency approach ensures a robust, transparent, and reflective review of safeguarding practice across the system.

During the reporting period, a series of thematic audits were completed, focusing on:

- criminal violence and exploitation;
- emotional health and wellbeing;
- Intra-Familial Child Sexual Abuse;
- Right Care, Right Person (RCRP);
- A single-case audit in response to a formal complaint; and
- JTAI Multi Agency Case File Audit.

Across these audits, consistent themes have emerged. The Partnership demonstrated strong multi-agency engagement and a clear commitment to safeguarding children, particularly in complex and high-risk cases. Strengths identified include effective information sharing in many instances, recognition of the impact of trauma, and a shared drive to improve outcomes.

However, the audits have also highlighted key areas for development:

- strengthening multi-agency challenge and effective use of escalation processes;
- improving clarity and understanding of roles and responsibilities across partner agencies;
- ensuring a stronger focus on the voice of the child and family, including fathers and paternal networks;
- enhancing knowledge and application of relevant legislation and statutory frameworks, particularly in relation to mental health and safeguarding;
- addressing gaps in early identification, information sharing, and coordinated multi-agency planning;
- strengthening responses to child sexual abuse, including timely access to medical and therapeutic support; and
- Embedding trauma-informed and inclusive practice, with greater awareness of bias and equality considerations.

The audits have also reinforced the complexity of children lived experiences, particularly the cumulative impact of trauma, exploitation, mental health needs, and family adversity. These findings emphasise the importance of early help, consistent intervention, and a whole-system approach to safeguarding.

All recommendations have been incorporated into a combined multi-agency action plan, which is actively monitored through the Partnership's governance arrangements, including the Quality Performance and Development (QPD) Subgroup and the Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Panel. Progress is routinely reported to the Safeguarding Children Partnership Board to ensure accountability and drive continuous improvement.

Overall, the MACFA programme provides strong assurance that the Partnership remains committed to learning, reflection, and continuous

improvement, taking proactive steps to strengthen safeguarding practice and outcomes for children and families.

Audit Planning and Responsiveness

The Partnership adopts a blended and responsive approach to audit planning. Each thematic subgroup submits annual recommendations to the Board, informed by performance data, learning from reviews, and emerging safeguarding trends. In the last quarter, three audits were completed, alongside two escalations initiated in response to emerging concerns.

This approach ensures an appropriate balance between long-term strategic priorities and the flexibility to respond to dynamic and evolving safeguarding risks. The next annual audit plan will be presented to the Board in September 2026. Subgroups will continue to analyse emerging themes and provide recommendations in Quarter 2, with audit activity supporting the evaluation of local practice against national priorities, such as Child Sexual Abuse, and testing the effectiveness of learning from Rapid Reviews, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, and training programmes.

Governance and Oversight

All audit findings are formally reported to the Safeguarding Children Partnership Board, with delivery of actions overseen by the QPD Subgroup. In response to the findings of the Child Sexual Abuse audit, the Board has approved the establishment of a dedicated Task and Finish Group to drive improvement in this area.

This governance structure ensures robust oversight, clear accountability, and a sustained focus on embedding learning and improving outcomes for children and young people across the partnership.

Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Panel is a multi-agency group with delegated responsibility from the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership to oversee the identification, commissioning, and review of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, and to respond to serious incidents of harm in accordance with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023, superseded now by 2026). The Panel promotes a culture of continuous learning and improvement across all partner organisations, driving improvements in safeguarding practice, and administers all activity in relation to Section 16C(1) of the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017).

During the reporting period, three Rapid Review referrals were received, each progressing to a full Rapid Review, with findings reported to the National Panel. The National Panel agreed with the conclusions reached, confirming that appropriate learning had been identified. This was supported by the development of action plans, and the commissioning of an additional single-agency review was commissioned and conducted to strengthen local system learning and drive improvement which was concluded within this reporting period.

Notifications were received in August, November and December 2025, with key themes identified across these cases including sexual assault, neglect, and issues relating to the termination of pregnancy process overseen by the Department of Health and Social Care, within the context of the Abortion Act 1967.

CSPRs, Rapid Reviews and associated action plans have progressed appropriately, with publication taking place where required. CSPR 17 was published in April 2025 following the death of a young person, with a focus on child sexual abuse (CSA) and mental health support. In addition, CSPR 25 was published in November 2025 in relation to the death of an international student.

Within the reporting period, changes have been made to the Panel's chairing arrangements, terms of reference, and structure to strengthen senior leadership involvement and increase accountability.

The CSPR Panel works closely with the Quality, Performance and Development (QPD) Subgroup to review and develop policies, produce and disseminate briefings, and undertake audit activity. This provides assurance to the Safeguarding Children Board that learning is being effectively implemented. The Panel also maintains and reviews a thematic document that clearly sets out identified safeguarding priorities and aligns these with the Board's evolving training offer.

The Child Death Overview Panel works closely with the CSPR Panel and contributes to the identification of cases that may meet the criteria for a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review. In the next reporting period, the Child Death Overview Panel will report directly to the Safeguarding Children Board, strengthening oversight and the overall reporting structure.

Young People Living with Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse affects every aspect of a young person's life, often distorting their understanding of care, relationships, and safety. As a Partnership, we remain committed to ensuring that children and young people growing up in such environments receive timely and effective support, underpinned by a clear understanding of their lived experiences and the long-term impact on their wellbeing.

In early 2025, in collaboration with the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership, our Independent Scrutineer completed a scoping exercise to strengthen the local response to child victims of domestic abuse. This included engagement with Public Health to assess current service provision. The findings confirmed that an effective range of support is available locally and that there are no waiting lists for specialist support at the present time.

Within the reporting period, a dedicated multi-agency working group has been established, chaired by the Telford & Wrekin Council Director of Public Health. The group provides assurance to the Board that appropriate structures, support systems, and partnership understanding are in place for children and young people affected by domestic abuse.

The group has developed a clear strategic narrative focused on increasing awareness of domestic abuse and its impact on children. This includes a child-centred campaign using digital platforms, QR codes, and targeted media to improve accessibility and engagement for young people.

Importantly, the Partnership recognises and promotes understanding across the full spectrum of domestic abuse. This includes children who witness abuse within the home, those directly impacted within familial contexts, and young people experiencing abuse within their own relationships. This work aligns with

the wider **Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy**, while also recognising abuse within same-sex relationships and ensuring an inclusive approach.

This area of work is closely linked to the wider Domestic Abuse Strategy and is supported by delivery within education settings, in line with statutory guidance such as the **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** and **Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)** requirements. Schools play a key role in raising awareness, supporting early identification, and ensuring children understand healthy relationships.

The working group will continue to review current support and processes, identifying clear and measurable areas for improvement. This programme of work is expected to conclude in Autumn 2026, with findings reported back to the Board to inform future strategic development.

Child Sexual Abuse Subgroup

In response to the national focus on Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Partnership established a dedicated CSA Subgroup to strengthen local arrangements and provide assurance to the Board regarding the effectiveness of the current offer.

The subgroup is chaired by the Principal Social Worker of Telford & Wrekin Council, with independent oversight and scrutiny provided by the Partnership's Independent Scrutineer, John Clements. This governance structure ensures both strategic leadership and appropriate challenge.

During the reporting period, the subgroup has played a key role in supporting multi-agency audit activity relating to CSA, including reviews of both victim support pathways and the management of those who pose a risk of harm. A key recommendation arising from this work, which has been endorsed by the Board, is to strengthen the involvement of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) within all relevant strategy discussions. This is intended to ensure that medical and therapeutic support is consistently considered and made available at the earliest opportunity for all affected children.

The subgroup has also identified the need to increase practitioner confidence and understanding of CSA across the partnership. In response, two dedicated training packages have been commissioned through the CSA Centre. These include:

- a specialist training programme for children's social care staff and managers; and
- a 'train the trainer' package to support wider multi-agency workforce development.

These programmes aim to build capability, improve practice, and ensure a consistent and informed response to CSA across all partner agencies.



Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) of Telford and Wrekin Partnership

A Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to the identification of initial need and risk in Telford & Wrekin was undertaken between 14 and 18 July 2025. The inspection was conducted by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

Summary of Findings

Inspectors found that leaders across the local safeguarding partnership are committed and ambitious for children and young people in Telford & Wrekin. A clear and shared vision is in place, supported by a strong track record of continuous improvement.

For the majority of children, the identification of need and the initial safeguarding response are effective. However, inspectors identified that, in a small number of cases, information-sharing across partner agencies is not sufficiently consistent or effective. This can affect the quality of coordination and the collective understanding of children's needs.

Leaders have made significant investment in early help services, which remain a priority across the partnership. The strength of the early help offer, alongside plans for further development, was recognised as a key area of practice. This enables many children and families to receive timely support at the earliest opportunity. The development of family hubs was also highlighted as a positive feature, with these services being well regarded by local communities.

The inspection recognised the safeguarding partnership as "mature", with well-established governance arrangements and structures in place. Boards and subgroups provide robust oversight of frontline practice, and governance arrangements have been refreshed to align with emerging national reforms.

Partners demonstrate a strong culture of constructive challenge and appropriate escalation of concerns to improve services. This was evident in the partnership's response to the development of the police-led Harm Assessment Unit, a centralised contact function across four counties. Through effective scrutiny and challenge via the safeguarding board, partners have worked collaboratively to shape the approach and establish joint mechanisms to monitor and review its impact.

The role of the independent scrutineer was also highlighted as effective, providing balanced evaluation and constructive challenge. Their involvement across partnership subgroups has further strengthened oversight and accountability.

Immediately following the JTAI inspection, a Partnership Improvement Action Plan was developed, with independent oversight from the Independent Scrutineer. The Independent Scrutineer continues to provide ongoing assurance of progress and reports regularly to the Designated Safeguarding Executive at each meeting.

<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80570>

Independent Scrutiny – What the Scrutineer says about the Partnership?

Annual Report 2025-26. Independent Scrutineer Overview

This overview is provided in four sections:

- 1** Compliance with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023/2026 and the ongoing development of child safeguarding;
- 2** The day-to-day effectiveness of the partnership;
- 3** The outcomes being achieved for children; and
- 4** Issues for the partnership to consider.

1 Compliance with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023/2026 (WT 2023/2026) and the ongoing development of child safeguarding.

2025-2026 has been an unparalleled period of change in relation to child safeguarding. The Government has driven improvements across children's social care, local health provision and policing, as well as the whole partnership approach to child safeguarding. This has put a considerable amount of pressure on all partner agencies to develop new ways of working as well as maintaining the quality of day-to-day child safeguarding activities. From my independent position I have observed the development of the Families First Partnership Programme plus other aspects of social care reform and consider the changes have been effective and impressive. The way in which family group decision making has been developed within in Telford and Wrekin has been a standout example of dynamic decision making resulting in improved support for children and families. The projects within Telford and Wrekin are

being managed well, subject of effective governance and responding speedily to change.

The Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) conducted during June and July 2025 provided the partnership with the best possible examination of how well it was operating. It was an exciting opportunity, and one I welcomed to support my role in understanding our effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement. Although some areas for improvement were identified, the partnership was recognised as strong with numerous strong features. I was delighted it validated many of my findings and observations.

Since the inspection the partnership has continued to develop, with an improved learning offer, developments across focused areas of activity, e.g. the response to child sexual abuse and responding to child victims of domestic abuse and taking on board the changes within WT2026.

2 The day-to-day effectiveness of the partnership.

The safeguarding children partnership has been put under considerable pressure over the past twelve months, with the changes referenced above, and increased demand in both volume and complexity. Staffing in some partner organisations has been reduced, and key members of the partnership have had to work differently, with the consequence of not being able to support the partnership as they did before. Others have changed roles or have left, leading to new leaders or members of subgroups.

Despite these challenges the partnership has continued to flourish. The structure and constituent parts of the partnership have allowed it to maintain its shape and purpose. The safeguarding partnership work has continued with good continuity. Recognition must go to key members of the partnership's leadership and management teams for the hard work and commitment supporting this.

Positive relationships are important for any successful partnership and my observation is that there are good relationships at all levels. These have led to improvements, e.g. Families First Partnership Programme and the responses to the JTAI recommendations. The strength of these relationships has enabled mature and appropriate challenge. I feel this is essential for the partnership to be truly effective and examples of challenges regarding the Police Vulnerability Hub and rapid reviews, show the partnership to be in a healthy position.

The Learning Culture of the partnership is positive, with a commitment to review and learn from relevant cases. A number of learning reviews have been conducted, some of which I have observed. The staff have been candid, shown curiosity, have not been defensive, and there has been a focus upon turning findings into improved practice.

The JTAI included a review of the partnership's functionality, and the inspection validated its effectiveness in this regard. This provides further assurance.

3 The outcomes being achieved for children.

- For 2024/25 I reported evidence of graduated responses within safeguarding work with children and their families. I am pleased to report there is ample evidence of this routinely occurring within Telford and Wrekin. This was observed within the multi-agency case file audits the partnership completed as part of its annual quality assurance activity, and during the JTAI practice audits.

- Case auditing has revealed good performance across all partner agencies, for example a review on how agencies manage those who present a threat of sexual harm to children revealed robust and regular management of sex offenders and good communication across different agencies. Case auditing has looked at a range of safeguarding topics, e.g. child sexual abuse, child exploitation, children's emotional wellbeing. Children are kept safe and are at the centre of case work.
- The focus on early help has grown and there is evidence of such work taking place routinely. A particular strength is the amount of good quality early help work being led in local educational settings. The Family Hubs are a key part of the local safeguarding offer and increasingly used as a community resource. The decision to locate targeted early help staff within the Family Hubs has underpinned the evolving Family Help offer.
- The Family Safeguarding Team is observed to be a strength with case audits demonstrating sustained change for children and families. The appointment of domestic abuse practitioners within the Family Hubs has enabled this style of work to extend into non-statutory areas of work.
- Family Connect continues to offer a single point of contact for all levels of need and acts as a conduit into multiple services and offer of support.
- Repeat referrals have remained low, below national and regional averages. The proportion of children on repeat child protection plans, is low and again below regional and national averages. These are positive indicators over the quality of partnership child safeguarding efforts.
- The JTAI findings were in line with the partnership's assessment over the quality of its case work.

4 Issues for the partnership to consider.

These issues are well known to the leadership of the partnership and have been discussed:

- a to ensure senior leaders from the local health providing organisations become active members of the Partnership Board; and
- b to ensure all senior leaders provide the partnership with assurance of the progress made in respect of recommendations from single-agency inspections.



John Clements
Independent Scrutineer
2 July 2026

Families First Partnership Programme and Summit event

Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership is working with the local authority, education, police and the health sector to deliver the Families First Partnership Programme (FFPP) a national Department for Education reform programme focused on shifting children's services from reactive intervention to proactive, relational and family led support.

The partnership summit held in early April 2026 explored how services across the Borough will deliver the programme by building on the strengths of existing provision, working more closely together, reducing duplication and ensuring children are supported to remain within their families wherever it is safe to do so. For families, this means earlier access to the right help, improved information sharing between services and stronger, more consistent relationships with practitioners.

The programme is supported by £1.4 million in government funding, which will be used collectively across the partnership in Telford and Wrekin. The funding is supporting new and strengthened approaches to family help, including practical, relationship based support around parenting, school attendance, emotional wellbeing and family pressures. It is also enabling the expansion of Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) and preparation for new multi agency child protection arrangements that bring key partners together to improve decision making.

The Families First Partnership Programme (FFPP) operates within the wider Partnership but is supported by a distinct governance structure. It is chaired by the Executive Director of Children's Services in the position of Safeguarding Children Board Chair.

The FFPP Strategic Board includes representation from all statutory Designated Safeguarding Leads, alongside the Safeguarding Children Board Manager. The Board reports directly to the Department for Education on progress and outcomes.

To support alignment and long-term embedding of the programme's principles, FFPP is a standing agenda item across all Safeguarding Children Partnership forums, including the Local Safeguarding Partnership (LSP), the Development and Safeguarding Partnership (DSP), and relevant subgroups.



Additional conferences, training and development

Telford & Wrekin Education Safeguarding Leadership Conference

Telford & Wrekin Education Safeguarding Leadership Conference, held on Thursday 12 February 2026 at the Mercure Hotel, Telford, was an exciting new event that brought together education and safeguarding professionals to strengthen practice and shared understanding across schools and settings. Just over 150 delegates attended the conference, with external agency professionals engaging across the day. A key feature was the marketplace, supported by 38 agencies, which showcased a broad range of services and resources available to support children, families, schools and communities. The programme was enhanced by keynote contributions from Dan Owen (Ofsted SHMI), Karma Nirvana, and Carolyn Eyre, providing valuable insight and reflection. Collectively, the conference strengthened local partnership working, improved awareness of safeguarding pathways and services, and reinforced a shared commitment to early help and effective response, helping to ensure that children and families in Telford and Wrekin are better supported, protected and able to thrive.

Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership Child Exploitation Awareness Event

The Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership held a Child Exploitation Awareness Event on 17 March 2026, attracting strong attendance from a wide range of multi-agency partners and reinforcing a shared commitment to tackling child exploitation. Alongside a Marketplace of services and resources available across the borough, the event showcased collaborative practice. Education representatives delivered an insightful overview of the consultation process alongside the 'Explore More' tool, designed to support practitioners

in recognising indicators of exploitation. West Mercia Police provided a compelling input on the critical role of intelligence in safeguarding, while The Holly Project highlighted the vital support they offer to survivors and their families. A particularly powerful element of the event was the presentation of two impactful videos co-produced with young people who have previously worked with CATE, ensuring that the voice and lived experience of children remained at the heart of the learning and left a lasting impression on all in attendance.

Workforce Development and Training

During the reporting period, the Partnership has continued to strengthen its multi-agency workforce development offer, ensuring practitioners are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to safeguard children effectively.

A key development has been the launch of the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership Training Brochure, now available via the Partnership website and regularly updated. This provides a central, accessible hub for safeguarding training across the multi-agency workforce, including direct links to the education safeguarding training programme.

Significant progress has also been made in developing targeted training opportunities to respond to identified priorities and emerging risks. These include:

- Domestic Abuse Training, including the development of a network of Domestic Abuse Ambassadors across Telford and Wrekin;
- Delivery of the Family First Programme, incorporating:
 - Kinship Care training;

- Motivational Interviewing;
- Introduction to Systemic Practice;
- Circle of Support;
- raising awareness of private fostering arrangements;
- development of SARC training, with online and face-to-face sessions planned for 2026/27; and
- development of AXIS training across three levels, focused on sexual abuse and sexual violence, with rollout planned for 2026/27, including extension to foster carers.

Core safeguarding knowledge has been strengthened through the ‘Back to Basics’ training programme, covering:

- the child protection system, processes, and activity;
- child protection conferences and planning; and
- strategy discussions and meetings (to be embedded within OLLIE and the Family First Programme).

Ongoing training includes:

- threshold guidance and pathway training;
- LADO training;
- exploitation and vulnerability awareness sessions;
- continued use and review of the Brook Traffic Light Tool, overseen by the CSA Subgroup.

The Partnership has also delivered training on Raising Critical Consciousness and Strengthening Culturally Aware Practice, supporting more inclusive and reflective practice.

Planned developments for 2026/27 include:

- Modern Slavery and NRM awareness sessions; and
- Child’s Devolved NRM Panel awareness sessions.

A programme of ‘Lunch and Learn’ sessions has also supported practitioner development on key topics such as:

- having difficult conversations;
- roles and responsibilities;
- planning for mental health crises; and
- responding to children who go missing.

Benefits and Impact

This comprehensive training offer has delivered a number of key benefits across the Partnership:

- improved practitioner confidence and competence, supporting more consistent and effective safeguarding practice;
- stronger multi-agency collaboration, with increased understanding of roles, responsibilities, and shared accountability;
- enhanced early identification and intervention, particularly in relation to exploitation, domestic abuse, and mental health needs;
- greater focus on the voice of the child, ensuring practice remains child-centred and responsive to lived experience;
- increased use of trauma-informed approaches, improving engagement with children and families;
- improved accessibility to learning, through centralised resources and a blended approach to delivery;
- strengthened strategic alignment, ensuring training supports local priorities, national guidance, and learning from audits and reviews.

Overall, the Partnership’s investment in workforce development continues to support a more skilled, confident, and responsive system, leading to improved safeguarding outcomes for children and young people.

Challenges and our Future Focus

Challenges

The Partnership Board continues to operate within a complex and evolving landscape, with a number of factors placing sustained pressure on service delivery and partnership effectiveness:

- rising levels of poverty are increasing demand across the system, reinforcing the importance of early help and the role of Family Hubs in providing accessible, preventative support;
- financial pressures across all partner agencies, including local authorities, health, and policing are reducing capacity and impacting service sustainability. These challenges are compounded by increasing legislative and policy changes at a national level, requiring adaptation at pace within a context of constrained local resources;
- within health, the Integrated Care Board (ICB) is managing reduced resources alongside increased demand across larger cluster arrangements. This is creating additional complexity in commissioning, decision-making and operational delivery at a local level;
- diverging organisational priorities, including the balance between pan-West Mercia approaches and local delivery models, continue to present challenges in achieving consistent alignment across the Partnership; and
- there has been a national increase in Elective Home Education (EHE), which can reduce routine oversight of children by services. This shift presents challenges for partners in maintaining visibility of children's experiences and welfare, contributing to a perceived increase in safeguarding risk and reinforcing the need for effective information-sharing and multi-agency oversight.

Future Focus

Looking ahead, the Partnership is committed to strengthening collaboration, improving outcomes for children, and responding effectively to a changing system landscape through the following priorities:

- **System Adaptation and Representation:** The Partnership will remain responsive and adaptable in its governance arrangements. This includes taking a creative and dynamic approach to Board representation in anticipation of two of the three statutory safeguarding partners potentially operating across wider geographical footprints;
- **Implementation of National Reform:** Partners will continue to drive the full implementation of the *Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPT)* model and embed all *Families First* principles, ensuring practice is consistently aligned with national reform expectations;
- **Data Utilisation:** Building on thematic analysis, the Partnership will develop a more comprehensive, single-view dataset to strengthen understanding of children's experiences, inform decision-making, and target resources more effectively;
- **Priority Delivery:** Maintaining a clear focus on delivering against agreed strategic safeguarding priorities, with measurable impact on outcomes for children and families;
- **Mutual Accountability:** Partners will continue to hold each other to account, ensuring that services remain effective, coordinated, and resilient during periods of system change and resource constraint; and
- **Voice of the Child:** The voice of the child is paramount in everything we do. The Partnership will continue to develop its approach and seek increasing opportunities to capture and use the views and lived experiences of children and young people to shape services and design provision that better meets their needs.

Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere thanks to:

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

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

