



GATESHEAD  
**safeguarding  
children**  
partnership

# Gateshead Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA)

2025

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# Introduction

Welcome to the Gateshead Multi-agency Safeguarding Arrangements for Children and Young People.

The multi-agency safeguarding arrangements were originally developed following the publication of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 which placed a duty on the local authority, the police and health agencies in a local area to work together with joint responsibility for the safeguarding of children.

In 2023, the Executive leads requested a full review of the arrangements in Gateshead, which has informed the revision of how we will fulfil our statutory responsibilities. Partnership policies and procedures were scrutinised and a significant number of stakeholders contributed to the review to help shape recommendations that would strengthen the arrangements. The wider partnership collectively agreed the recommendations which were then mapped against the revised [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) guidance published in December 2023 to ensure compliance and that services in Gateshead are working effectively to safeguard children.

This document sets out how we will work together and with other agencies who have a duty to co-operate with the new arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in Gateshead. The term 'children' used throughout the document refers to both children and young people – anyone who has not reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. We are committed to the aspirations and content set out in these arrangements and will engage widely to ensure its success. We are also committed to the need to respond flexibly and creatively to new challenges as they arise.

Our safeguarding arrangements are designed to offer us the chance to work more effectively and with joint purpose to protect children and young people and support those who most need our help into adulthood. We agree and state our intention to ensure these plans help us continue to promote and improve the safety, welfare and health of children and families in Gateshead.

# Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) for children and young people

The statutory guidance, [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#) (WT23), sets out expectations about how safeguarding children partnerships across the country should provide help, support and protection for children and their families. It applies to all agencies and organisations that come into contact with children, from senior leaders to those in direct practice with families. It also gives practitioners clarity about what is required of them individually and how they need to work in partnership with each other to deliver effective services. The Police, Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the local authority in each partnership area must agree and lead local arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. This is defined under WT23 as:

- providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes in line with the outcomes set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework

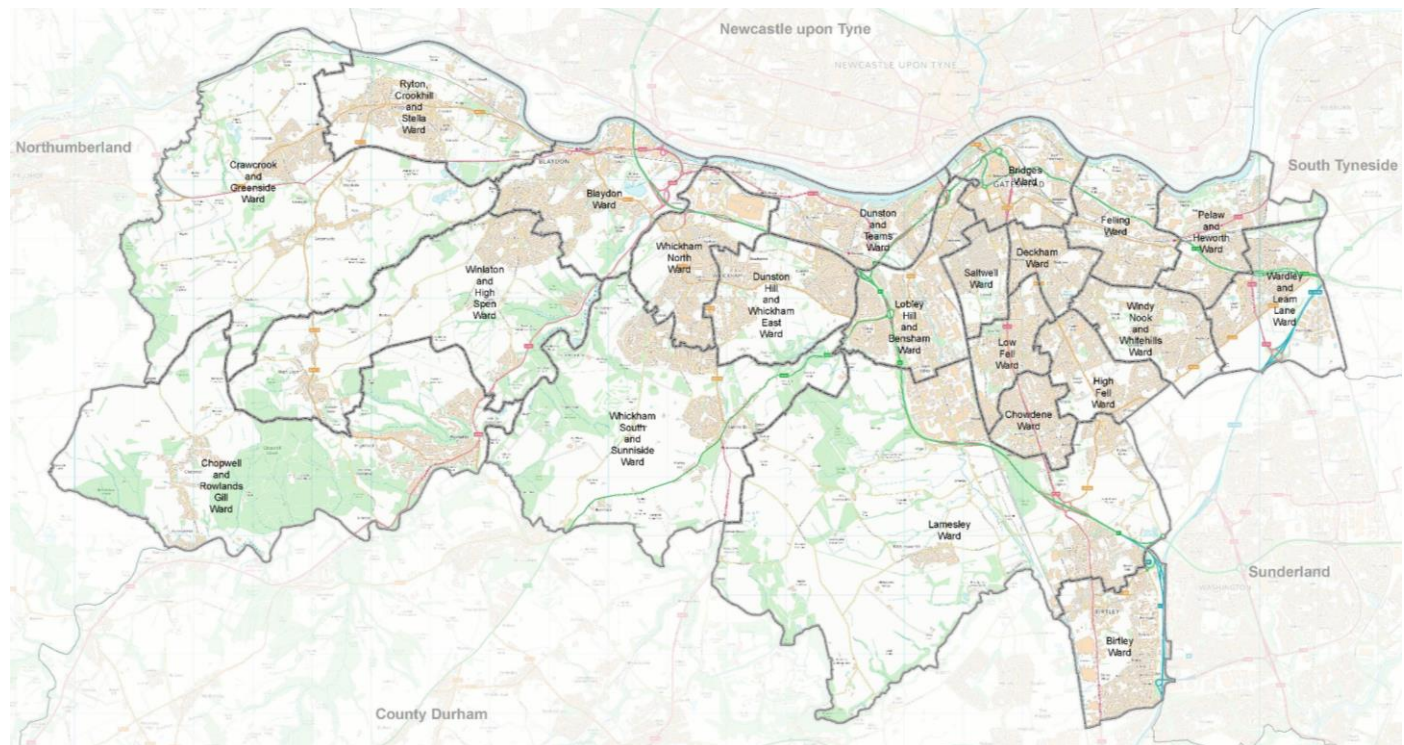
Responsibility for this joined up approach locally rests with three Safeguarding Partners who have a shared and equal duty to have in place robust arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Gateshead.

Agencies working with children and families across the borough recognise that by working in partnership and harnessing our wide-ranging expertise, we can best safeguard and promote the wellbeing of our children. The Gateshead Multi-agency Safeguarding Arrangements for Children and Young People sets out how the Safeguarding Partners will work together, and with other agencies, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in Gateshead.

# Geographical area

The boundaries for the Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership will be those of Gateshead Council – as illustrated on the map below. However, work will continue across the Northumbria region via Tyne, Wear & Northumberland Safeguarding Partnership Board (TWNSPB) and the Business Managers network.

The region covers the 6 local authority areas of North and South of Tyne: Northumberland, North Tyneside, Newcastle, Gateshead, South Tyneside, and Sunderland; the Integrated Care Board for those areas; and Northumbria Police.



# What children tell us is important to them

The voice of the child is at the heart of our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Our partnership includes services and organisations who work directly with children and young people in Gateshead. We make use of their existing systems to gather the views of children and families and we are reviewing our engagement processes, policies to make sure that all children and young people can be heard.

Nationally children are clear about what they need from an effective safeguarding system:

- **Vigilance** – to have adults notice when things are troubling them
  - **Understanding and action** – to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon
  - **Stability** – to be able to develop an ongoing stable relationship of trust with those helping them
  - **Respect** – to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not
  - **Information and Engagement** – to be informed about, and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans
  - **Explanation** – to be informed of the outcome of assessments, and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response
  - **Support** – to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family
  - **Advocacy** – to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views
  - **Protection** – to be protected against all forms of abuse, exploitation and discrimination, and the right to special protection and help if a refugee
- (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023)*

In Gateshead, young people work with senior leaders and support the delivery of Children's Social Care Strategic Children's Service plan and the young people's version which they helped to write so this can be well understood by all children and young people.

There are a wide variety of ways in which the Partnership works directly with children and young people to gain their views and work with them to improve services. This includes the One Voice Youth Network for children and young people in care; the Gateshead Youth Assembly, and the unique 'Care Experienced Young Ambassadors'. Three care leavers undertake this role, employed by the council on a 6-hour a week basis. This is a pivotal role and all three young people work with services to ensure that children and young people's voices and experiences are listened to. Their in-depth and honest feedback in how the new arrangements should be shaped was crucial in the review of the GSCP arrangements. Previous young ambassadors have used their experience to go on to have successful careers.

We have considered the national feedback, together with what our children in Gateshead have told us and we use this to inform our practice.

# Effective partnership with families

Working Together 2023 outlines that effective partnership working with parents and carers happens when practitioners build strong, trusting and cooperative relationships and empowers families to participate in service design and values their contributions and feedback.

Successful outcomes for children depend on strong partnership working between parents/carers and the practitioners working with them. Practitioners should take a child centred approach to meeting the needs of the whole family. As set out in the [Children's Social Care National Framework](#) and Working Together 2023 the following principles apply:

- children's welfare is paramount
- children's wishes and feelings are sought, heard, and responded to
- children's social care works in partnership with whole families
- children are raised by their families, with their family networks or in family environments wherever possible
- local authorities work with other agencies to effectively identify and meet the needs of children, young people, and families
- local authorities consider the economic and social circumstances impacting children, young people, and families

There is a strong focus on how we work with children and their families using our restorative and relational practice model. This is a whole system, whole city approach promoting relational working, which places children at the centre of everything we do. Gateshead's systemic and strengths-based approach recognises the interconnectedness of trauma-informed practice and narrative writing. There is a commitment to empower children and families, enabling them to thrive within their communities. Collaboration between partners is fundamental for a meaningful positive impact. Our practitioners take a child-centred approach which prioritises the voices of children and young people.

# Our shared vision and approach

Our shared vision is that through our collaborative approach we:

Ensure that children and young people in Gateshead:

- Are protected from harm
- Experience improved outcomes across all levels of need and types of harm
- Receive a prompt, appropriate and effective response if they are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, ensuring that they are protected and supported

As a partnership we will do this by:

- Promoting and embedding a learning culture that support our services to become more reflective and implement change to practice
- Having a good knowledge and understanding about the quality of practice and the impact of children and families
- Challenging the effectiveness of our arrangements, organisations and agencies appropriately and hold each other to account
- Listening to and acting upon information provided to us by children and families in relation to their lived experience and use this to shape practice
- Using practitioner knowledge and insights from performance information to provide a greater understanding of the areas of strength and/or improvements needed within arrangements and/or practice
- Seeking information, analysing, sharing and breaking down protected characteristics to facilitate more accurate and timely decision making for children and families, and understand outcomes for different communities of children
- Collating, sharing and analysing performance information to enable early identification of new safeguarding risks, issues, emerging threats and co-ordinate a joined-up approach across relevant agencies



# The statutory safeguarding partners (LSPs)

A safeguarding partner in relation to a local authority area in England is defined under the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) as:

The **Local Authority**

The **Integrated Care Board** for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area

The **Police Force** for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area

Strong, joined-up leadership and clear accountability is critical to effective multiagency safeguarding, bringing together the various organisations and agencies. The head of each statutory safeguarding partner agency plays an active role in these arrangements and are known as the 'Lead Safeguarding Partner' or 'LSP'. In Gateshead, the LSPs are:

- The Chief Executive of Gateshead Council
- The Chief Executive of North-East and North Cumbria ICB
- Chief Constable of Northumbria Police

The LSP for North-East and North Cumbria ICB performs this function in 14 local partnership areas.

The LSP for Northumbria Police performs this function in 6 local partnership areas.



# Functions of the Lead Safeguarding Partners

Working Together 2023 outlines the joint functions of the LSPs as to:

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

# Strategic leadership and accountability

Each of our LSPs are responsible for discharging their own statutory and legislative duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. As leaders of their organisations and the statutory safeguarding partners, it is for LSPs to assure themselves that the arrangements are effective and keep children safe and this includes systems of assurance and accountability within each of their organisations.

LSPs have responsibility for setting the strategic direction and vision for our partnership and are accountable for the effectiveness and outcomes of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements within Gateshead. Appropriate arrangements are required to ensure that LSPs meet to jointly discharge their responsibilities under Working Together 2023.

In order to do so, the LSPs will hold an annual assurance and development meeting across the Northumbria Police footprint (in recognition of the wider geographic footprint of the Police and the ICB). This meeting will be supported by the Tyne, Wear & Northumberland Safeguarding Partnership Board (TWNSPB) and will be attended by the Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs), Independent Scrutineers and Business Managers for each local partnership area as well as named safeguarding leads within the Police and ICB and a lead from Probation. This will ensure strong links within the leadership structure and provide an opportunity to escalate risks and issues as required.

LSP's will also engage with individual Safeguarding Partnerships as required during the course of the year. Exceptional matters should be escalated to the LSP's by the chair of the Safeguarding Partnership or by agreement of DSP's. However, such action would only be undertaken after matters had been fully discussed with all or relevant DSPs and a resolution had not been agreed. In such circumstances all involved DSPs may brief their respective LSPs on any relevant issues, and any such escalation would only be undertaken with the full knowledge of all or relevant DSPs.

At all stages of escalation pathway the LSPs and their delegates can consider making use of key stakeholders in Gateshead who may assist on developing a resolution (this can include Police and Crime Commissioners, Mayors, Lead Members or independent persons). If the matter remains unresolved between the three safeguarding partners and their local networks, if deemed relevant, they can consider the next stage of escalation to the Secretary of State.

# Lead Safeguarding Partner objectives

The LSPs annual assurance and development meeting will enable delivery of the following objectives:

- To ensure that the voice of children is heard and considered as part of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- To set strategic direction, vision, and culture of the local safeguarding arrangements, including agreeing and reviewing shared priorities and the resource required to deliver services effectively.
- To agree shared priorities, ensuring strong governance, accountability and reporting mechanisms to hold their delegates to account for the delivery of agency commitments.
- To review and sign off key partnership documents, published multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including plans for independent scrutiny, shared annual budget, yearly report and local threshold document.
- To provide shared oversight of learning from independent scrutiny, serious incidents, local safeguarding practice reviews, and national reviews, ensuring recommendations are implemented and have a demonstrable impact on practice.
- To ensure multi-agency arrangements have the necessary level of business support, including intelligence and analytical functions, such as an agreed data set, providing oversight and a robust understanding of practice.
- To ensure all relevant agencies, including education settings are clear on their role and contribution to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- To consider the areas in which a collaborative response to safeguarding priorities is desirable and to agree appropriate resourcing to support this work.

# Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs)

In accordance with Working Together 2023, each LSP should appoint a Delegated Safeguarding Partner, (DSP,) for its agency. DSPs should be of sufficient seniority to be able to speak with authority, take decisions on behalf of the LSP and hold their sectors to account on a day-to-day basis. The DSPs should have the authority to carry out these functions, while ultimate accountability remains with the LSP as the individual responsible for the delivery of the statutory duties of the safeguarding partners.

In Gateshead, the DSPs are:

- Chief Superintendent Area Commander for Gateshead, Northumbria Police
- Strategic Director Children's Services and Lifelong Learning, Gateshead Council
- Director of Nursing (North), North-East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board

Working Together 2023 outlines the joint functions of the DSP to include:

Delivery and monitoring of multi-agency priorities and procedures to protect and safeguard children in local area.

- Close partnership working and engagement with education (strategic/operation) and other relevant agencies.
- The implementation of effective information sharing arrangements, including data sharing and joint analysis
- Delivery of high quality and timely rapid reviews and LSCPRs, with impact from local and national reviews and scrutiny clearly evidenced in annual reports.
- Provision of multi-agency safeguarding training and development
- Seeking of and responding to children and families about experiences of services and co-designing with different communities and groups

the LSPs and DSPs have regular interaction and communication to ensure that the LSPs have sufficient oversight and detail on key topics and issues to maintain their statutory responsibilities.

# Working with schools and education settings

Working Together 2023 identifies the pivotal role that schools, colleges, early years, childcare settings and other educational providers (including alternative provision) have to play in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. Within Gateshead the safeguarding partners recognise that their insight and cooperation are vital to the successful delivery of these arrangements. We know that our schools offer a universal service and are therefore well placed to spot any early indicators of safeguarding concerns alongside supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of children, helping them achieve their potential and potentially being the first trusted adult to whom children or families may share worried or concerns.

The complexities of engaging with the 93 schools in Gateshead as well as other childcare and educational settings are acknowledged and we have strengthened our arrangements to address this.

At strategic level, the Director for Education, Schools and Inclusion at Gateshead Council is a member of the Executive Group. The wider safeguarding partnership comprises representatives from schools, the college, and early years provision as well as officers from the Education department.

In 2023, the GSCP Education sub-group was re-established within the partnership arrangements bringing together representatives from across the education and childcare sector with other key partners. This group has been reviewed and refreshed in line with Working Together 2023 guidance and members of this group represent their school cluster, rather than acting as a voice for their own setting. The aim of the group is to enhance collaboration between partners to keep children safe in education, in line with the scope of the partnership. This includes developing mechanisms to ensure the engagement of all education providers; developing a cohesive approach to sharing information to ensure a triangulation of support to children and young people and improve practice across Gateshead; and providing a forum to discuss performance, new legislation, and policy to understand the impact of, and ability to shape, policies, practice and guidance.

In addition to requirements in line with Working Together 2023, the statutory guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) and [Early Years Foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#) both set out additional safeguarding duties and expectations on schools, colleges and other education providers and should be read alongside Working Together 2023 and this document.

# Working with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE)

Gateshead has a vibrant and active voluntary, community and social enterprise sector providing services to children and young people and their families. These agencies along with and private sector organisations (including sports clubs and activity clubs) play an important role in safeguarding children through the services they deliver. The staff, students and volunteers in these settings play an important role in building relationships, identifying concerns and providing direct support for children, families and communities.

Many of these organisations are also actively represented across the partnership subgroup structure and are seen as a vital partner in the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in Gateshead. In addition, dedicated training for those people who work within the voluntary and community sector in Gateshead is delivered on a minimum quarterly basis and the Partnership Business Unit has close working relationship with the locality co-ordinators in Gateshead Council to ensure that all organisations across the VCSE sector are fully engaged with the work of the GSCP.

In addition to requirements in line with Working Together 2023, [Keeping Children Safe in Out of School Settings](#) sets out the safeguarding arrangements that these providers should have in place, including expectations on how to manage safeguarding concerns and the importance of familiarising themselves with local arrangements and referral routes.

# Relevant Agencies

The strength of local partnership working relies on the safeguarding partners working collaboratively with relevant agencies. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 defines relevant agencies as those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider may be required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. A list of organisations that meet the criteria to be included as a relevant agency is set out in [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency \(England\) Regulations 2018](#).

When identified as a relevant agency, an organisation must act in accordance with local safeguarding arrangements. As part of this, the organisation should:

- have a clear understanding of its responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children locally, and how it will discharge them
- co-operate with safeguarding partners to improve, implement, and monitor effectiveness of the local safeguarding arrangements
- share information and data about safeguarding issues and concerns affecting the children involved in their organisation to contribute to local priorities
- ensure local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are fully understood, and rigorously applied within their organisation

In Gateshead our relevant agency organisation and services are represented within our governance arrangements and the work of the subgroups.

Appendix One contains a list of organisations that are identified within the regulations as a relevant agency and outlines the organisations and services that have been identified as requiring to work with the statutory safeguarding partners in Gateshead.



# Youth custody and residential homes

There are no **prisons or youth offending institutes** within Gateshead, it is however important to recognise the duty and ensure the duty is applied in respect of any Gateshead children who may be placed in custody in other local authority areas. The Gateshead Youth Offending Service are therefore one of the relevant agencies for the GSCP and actively participate in the work of the GSCP subgroups. We also work closely with the Youth Justice Board in relation to cross cutting aspects of responsibility.

For each **children's residential home** in Gateshead, it is the Registered Person's duty to prepare and implement a safeguarding policy. Where children's homes are owned and run by Gateshead Council, it is expected that the local authority is able to provide assurance on this to the GSCP. Where children's homes are from an independent provider (named as a relevant agency) we will continue to develop robust arrangements and seek assurance through commissioning, procurement and contract management processes. These arrangements and appropriate assurance will apply equally to supported living accommodation within Gateshead, which also need to be registered. Gateshead Council commissioning and procurement services department hold an up to date list of children's residential services that operate in within Gateshead and they are deemed as relevant agencies to the local safeguarding arrangements.

# Delivering Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

Together, the DSPs make our **Executive Group**. In line with Working Together 2023, the Chair must be one of the safeguarding partners. The role of Partnership Chair will be rotated on an annual cycle between the three statutory safeguarding partners. In 2025, this role will be undertaken by the Strategic Director Children's Services and Lifelong Learning. The Deputy Chair for the first period will be the Chief Superintendent, Area Commander for Gateshead.

The Executive Group meets regularly, and as a *minimum* of four times a year, in order to fulfil statutory responsibilities. Additional meetings can be diarised to deal with emerging issues and/or concerns or at the request of an LSP or DSP to deal with an extraordinary matter. These will be agreed by the Partnership Chair in conjunction with DSPs.

The Executive meeting is important as the DSPs have oversight of the quality and compliance of the delivery of the agreed shared priorities and have processes in place to provide assurance that multi-agency practice is reviewed and operating well and in line with these arrangements. In situations that require a clear, single point of leadership all three DSPs will decide who leads on specific arrangements or issues.

In recognising the strategic role Education should have in the arrangements, the Director of Education for Gateshead is now also a member of the Executive and sits in all meetings with the DSPs, alongside the Independent Scrutineer and Business Manager of GSCP.

The DSPs will also ensure that there is close partnership working with other relevant agencies to allow better identification and response to harm, there are effective information and data sharing arrangements between agencies, that rapid reviews local child safeguarding practice reviews are completed in a timely manner and to a high standard, that appropriate multi-agency safeguarding training is provided and that feedback from children and families is being sought and responded to so children from different communities and groups can access the help and protection they need.

# Functions of Partnership Chair role

Working Together 2023 identifies the functions of the Partnership Chair role as:

- To develop strategic links, support and hold to account all LSPs in fulfilling their safeguarding duties for children.
- Ensure that local arrangements are designed to work collaboratively and effectively by encouraging and supporting the development of partnership working between the LSPs, DSPs, independent scrutiny role and MASA subgroups.
- Chair the meetings of the DSPs, including any additional meetings convened as a response to specific and exceptional circumstances, with the help of the business manager and independent scrutiny role.
- Offer appropriate challenge to ensure that the partners are accountable, and that the local arrangements operate effectively.

In order to support the Partnership Chair there will be regular communication between the Partnership Chair, the Independent Scrutineer and Business Manager with regular meetings set up and coordinated by the Business Manager.

# Independent Scrutiny

In line with Working Together 2023, the safeguarding partnership is required to have an independent scrutineer function that is separate and distinct from the functions of the Partnership Chair to provide assurance and challenge to the statutory safeguarding partners through a range of scrutiny methods. The decision on how best to implement a robust system of independent scrutiny has been made locally with the aim that the system we have put in place leads to objective and rigorous analysis of our arrangements.

In Gateshead an independent scrutineer has been appointed to provide safeguarding partners and relevant agencies with rigorous, effective support and challenge at both strategic and operational level (as outlined in Working Together 2023):

- Provide safeguarding partners and relevant agencies with independent, rigorous, and effective support and challenge at both a strategic and operational level.
- Provide assurance to the whole system in judging the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements through a range of scrutiny methods.
- Ensure that statutory duties are being fulfilled, quality assurance mechanisms are in place, and that local child safeguarding practice reviews and national reviews are analysed, with key learning areas identified and effectively implemented across the safeguarding system.
- Ensure that the voice of children and families is considered as part of scrutiny and that this is at the heart of arrangements through direct feedback, informing policy and practice.
- Be regarded as a 'critical friend' and provide opportunities for two-way discussion and reflection between frontline practitioners and leaders. This will encourage and enable strong, clear, strategic leadership.
- Provide independent advice when there are disagreements between agencies and safeguarding partners and facilitate escalation procedures.
- Evaluate and contribute to multi-agency safeguarding published arrangements and the annual report, alongside feeding into the wider accountability systems such as inspections.

# Further Scrutiny Arrangements

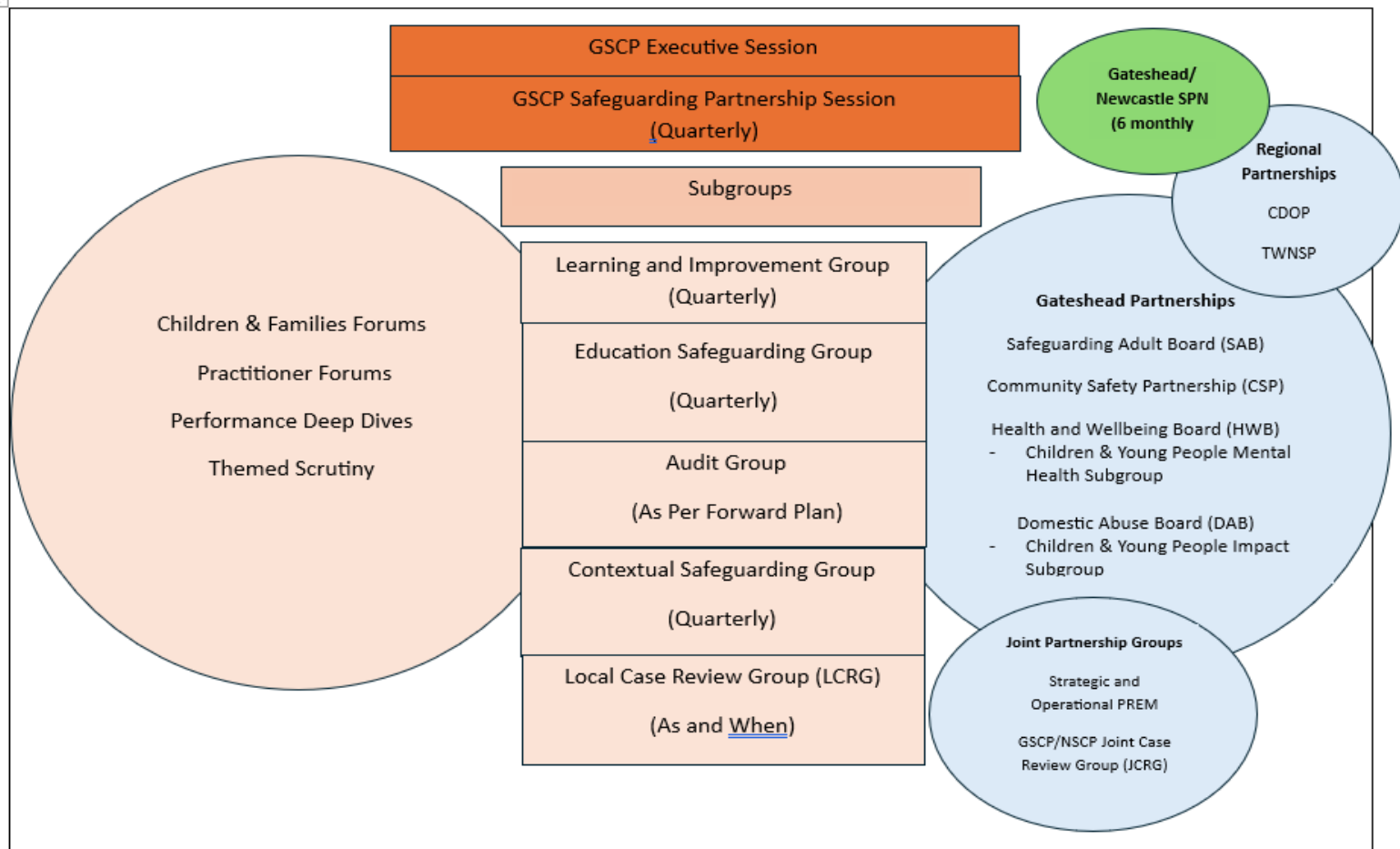
In addition to the Independent Scrutineer, other scrutiny arrangements in Gateshead are as follows:

- Section 11 related audits (education only S175 Audit) in accordance with regional arrangements.
- Use of local authority and ICB scrutiny and health and wellbeing committees.
- Peer challenge – including regional collaboration via Tyne, Wear & Northumberland Safeguarding Partnership Board (TWNSPB), Association Directors of Children's Services (ACDS) and Business Managers Network.
- Engagement of children and young people – via partnership agencies (including LA, ICB, Police).
- Independent inspectorate's single assessment of the individual safeguarding partners and the Joint Targeted Area Inspection
- Quarterly performance data
- Partnership and single agency evidence of impact of improvements made following learning reviews
- Multi agency and single agency audit outcomes

In addition, future assurance activity will reflect feedback from children, young people and their families

# GSCP Governance

The diagram below sets out the structure of the partnership groups that will oversee and support the delivery of a multi-agency delivery plan which outlines how we are going to keep children safe from harm and deliver the work in relation to our priorities. This will be reviewed regularly and progress through our partnership arrangements.



# How we work together

Our Executive Group of DSPs oversees the work of the partnership which is delivered through the **Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership (GSCP)**. This partnership meeting involves police, ICB and local authority leads meeting with wider partner leads from other services and organisations in Gateshead to ensure that all organisations and staff in Gateshead are focused on keeping children and young people safe and well. We agree and report on priority work, identify areas where we work well and where we need to improve, we also look at things that might impact on children and young people in Gateshead or increases risk. The meeting brings organisations together at both a strategic and operational level to:

- deliver a focused, co-ordinated response
- innovate system change
- deliver efficiencies
- support effective multi-agency practice

The Partnership uses subgroups, comprising of statutory partners plus relevant agency partners, to undertake specific work. They act on behalf of the statutory leads to assist them to fulfil their responsibilities under the under the [Children Act 2004](#), [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#) and the statutory guidance [Working Together 2023](#).

The Safeguarding Partners have sub-group chairs who support the work of the groups and report on plans and progress achieved. This model makes sure that we work collectively on our priority work and develop and improve practice

# How we work together (sub-groups)

**Learning and Improvement Group (LIG)** - chaired by the Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children. Its main purpose is to identify multi-agency training and learning priorities for safeguarding children; consider the implications from new policy, legislation, research, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and themed multi-agency audits; and develop and review policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

**Education and CSC Safeguarding Group** - chaired by Local Authority's Strategic Lead for Education Services. The group meets termly to align with the school year. Each school cluster group is represented along with specialist provision, Gateshead College and nurseries alongside colleagues from the ICB, Police, Children's Social Care and the education team in the local authority to engage with the work of the Safeguarding Partners to enhance collaboration between partners to keep children safe in education

**Joint Strategic Exploitation Group (JSEG)** - a sub-group of both the GSCP and Gateshead Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB). The Police chair undertakes this role across the Northumbria Police Force footprint (6 LA areas) which promotes sharing of learning and best practice and connectivity across the region in identifying emerging trends or concerns. The remit of the group is to lead on the development of strategic work in relation to all aspects of exploitation, including but not limited to: Sexual Exploitation; Criminal Exploitation; Modern Slavery and Trafficking and Missing.

**Contextual Safeguarding Group** - chaired by the JSEG deputy chair and collectively informs and influences updates to the JSEG. It focuses on 4 key strands of work: Safeguarding of individual young people; Development of safeguarding places and spaces; Response to child protection; Transitional safeguarding with a theme of Serious Youth Violence running throughout.

**Partnership Reduction of Exploitation and Missing (PREM)** – a multi-agency problem solving meeting to work together to reduce risk, tackle perpetrators and disrupt hot spot locations. The PREM meeting will be chaired by a Detective Inspector from the Prevention Department, Northumbria Police to ensure a corporate and consistent approach across all six local authority areas in the force footprint. Themes from this meeting is shared with the JSEG and Contextual Safeguarding Group.



# How we work together (sub-groups) cont....

**Local Case Review Group (LCRG)** – A key function of the Partnership is to reflect on systems and practice following a serious child safeguarding incident. A Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) is undertaken when a child dies, or the child has been seriously harmed. The purpose of a practice review is for agencies and individuals to learn lessons to improve the way in which they work individually and collectively, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people, and ultimately to deliver improved outcomes for them. Our LCRG meets on an “as required” basis and has named representatives from the statutory safeguarding partner agencies.

**GSCP (Gateshead) and NSCP (Newcastle) Joint Case Review Group** – this group is a joint Gateshead and Newcastle arrangement and is responsible for sharing and reviewing information from local reviews to identify learning applicable to Gateshead and Newcastle Safeguarding Children Partnerships. This group also coordinates strategic responses across the partnership’s geographic boundaries where it is agreed that there might be multi-agency learning which could be applied to future practice.

**Audit Group** - regular audit is built into process as part of assurance route. Themes focus on priorities agreed by the GSCP and inspection frameworks (where these differ) and membership of this group depends on the focus of the audit. Multi-agency audits are undertaken by the partnership to review practice in relation to multi-agency decision making, specifically around risks to children, how information is shared and how partners work together to support planning. The aim of the audit was to identify the strengths and areas for development which will support learning and improvement and outcomes are reported to the LIG.

The sub-group chairs report on plans and progress achieved to the Executive.

# Links with other Strategic Partnerships

There are clear benefits to children, young people, families and vulnerable adults from the coordination of cross partnership business. The GSCP does not operate in isolation, and there are a range of other multi agency partnerships which contribute significantly to the children and adults safeguarding agenda and priorities, for example through the commissioning of services. These include:

**Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB)** - This Board is made up of members that represent the organisations responsible for improving health and wellbeing in Gateshead. The health and wellbeing strategy sets out how the council and its local partners plan to address the health and wellbeing needs of its population and as such, is a key document that is jointly owned and one that promotes collective action to meet those needs. Further information can be found [here](#)

**Gateshead Community Safety Partnership (CSP)** – The overall aim of this partnership is to help improve the safety and well-being of Gateshead’s residents. The Partnership work includes addressing the harm caused by domestic violence and abuse, minimising the impact of alcohol and drugs on our communities and promoting community togetherness and cut antisocial behaviour. Further information can be found [here](#)

**Gateshead Safeguarding Adults Board (GSAB)** - This board brings together representatives from various agencies and organisations in Gateshead to work in partnership to protect vulnerable adults. By sharing best practice and expertise the board works to ensure that vulnerable adults have access to the right support and services they need. Further Information can be found [here](#)

**Domestic Abuse Board (DAB)** – Chaired by the Chief Executive of the LA, this board comprises key partners with an interest in tackling domestic abuse and supporting victims, including their children. The board’s aim is to deliver strategic and partnership co-ordination of activity designed to prevent and reduce the impact of domestic abuse in Gateshead.

**Youth Justice Board (YJB)** – This board, comprising statutory partners of the LA, Police, Probation and Health, makes sure suitable governance arrangements are in place for the Youth Justice Service. Further Information can be found [here](#)

**Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)** – is a partnership arrangement, chaired by the Police and attended by a range of partner agencies to deal with the highest risk domestic violence cases, where the victim is identified as being at serious risk of harm.

**Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)** - is the process through which the police, probation and prison services work together with other agencies to assess and manage violent and sexual offenders in order to protect the public from harm.

# Thresholds of need

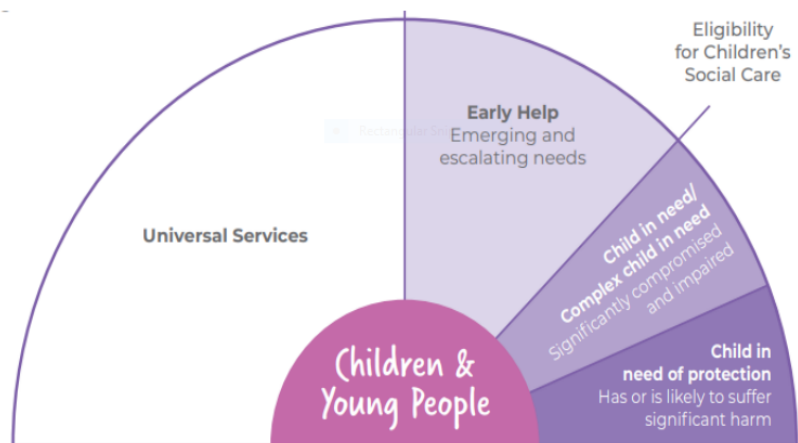
Working Together to Safeguard Children sets out a clear expectation that local agencies will work together and collaborate to identify children with additional needs and provide support as soon as a problem emerges.

Providing **early help** is far more effective in promoting the welfare of children – and keeping them safe – than reacting later, when any problems may have become more entrenched. In Gateshead, the Early Help service provides a number of options to help families get back on track. The full offer is detailed [here](#)

The importance of using a child-centred approach in following the child's journey is also emphasised. All services which are provided must be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of the individual child in their family and community context.

The [Thresholds of Need](#) document supports professionals working with children, when faced with a decision about their safety and wellbeing. This has been developed by partners within the GSCP. It is a collaborative document and drives our shared ambition of offering children, young people, their families and carers the right help at the right time.

Spectrum of need / risk



The needs of children and families change, which means that children can move from one level to another, sometimes very quickly. Universal and early help services (level 1 and 2) aim to support a child early in order to prevent them from requiring complex or statutory involvement (level 3)

# Information sharing

Partners within the GSCP shall keep confidential any information obtained as a result of inter-agency co-operation unless disclosure of the information is necessary to discharge the functions of the Safeguarding Partners as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) and the local safeguarding arrangements.

National and local learning reviews have shown that missed opportunities to record, understand the significance of, and share information in a timely manner can have severe consequences for children.

Safeguarding partners may require any person, organisation or agency to provide them, any relevant agency, reviewer or another person or organisation or agency, with specified information. This must be information which enables and assists the Safeguarding Partners to perform their functions to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Gateshead, including local and national child safeguarding practice reviews. Proactive information sharing should be as early as possible to help identify, assess and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children. This may be when problems are first emerging or where a child is already known to statutory safeguarding partners (Police, ICB or Local Authority). Sharing information about any adult with whom that child has contact, which may impact on the child's safety or welfare is also critical.

The person or organisation to whom a request is made must comply with such a request and if they do not do so, the Safeguarding Partners may take legal action against them. As public authorities, Safeguarding Partners must be aware of their own responsibilities under the relevant information law and have regard to guidance provided by the Information Commissioner's Office when issuing and responding to requests for information.

The GSCP's [Information Sharing Protocol](#) has been developed to address information sharing both at strategic level and operational level within the arenas of Safeguarding Children and Adult Safeguarding. The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) supports the sharing of relevant information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

This protocol is underpinned by *service specific operational agreements* that are designed to meet the specific data sharing needs of that service.

# Use of data and intelligence

The GSCP will receive information from a number of work streams. This includes:

- Performance data and intelligence
- Single and Multiagency Audits and case file audits
- Independent Scrutiny
- Voice of practitioners
- Voice of children and their families

The GSCP will use this data and intelligence for a number of purposes:

- To identify strengths and areas for development in the system
- To help set priorities for the system to respond to
- To identify the need for changes to policy, service design and practice within the remit of the
- three key statutory partners which will then be discussed and implemented

To enable the early identification of new safeguarding risks and issues, and to ensure a joined-up responses across Gateshead, where appropriate, a new collation and analysis of partnership data function will be created. This function will include the development of a Gateshead wide 'dashboard' of indicators, in response to joint areas of risk and GSCP safeguarding priorities.

# Multi-agency training

As part of the GSCP Review, a full evaluation of the existing multi-agency training provision and offer was undertaken, following which the training offer now includes a tiered approach of multi-agency training opportunities which provides practitioners and volunteers access to different types of learning and development activities relating to their area of work.

Dedicated safeguarding training is now delivered by the GSCP and SAB Business Managers to the voluntary and community sector within community settings on a regular basis.

A dedicated Learning and Development post for the GSCP and SAB has also been agreed and will be recruited to in early 2025. This post dedicated to safeguarding will ensure that there is good co-ordination and support to the Business Managers and wider partners and allow the development of greater cross partnership working and development of resources and innovative training methods.

The GSCP funds an online training program with Me Learning providing access to 11 different courses to ensure that as many people as possible in Gateshead who wish to, have access to key safeguarding training, and complements our wider offer to safeguarding partners. This training can be accessed [here](#).

# Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR)

The purpose of a serious child safeguarding case review, at local and national level, is to identify improvements that can be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Learning is relevant locally but has wider importance for all practitioners working with children and families and for the government and policymakers. Understanding whether there are systemic issues, and whether and how policy and practice need to change, is critical to the system being dynamic and self-improving.

A review is undertaken to seek to prevent or reduce the risk of reoccurrence of similar incidents. They are not conducted to hold individuals, organisations, or agencies to account as there are other processes for that purpose, including employment law and disciplinary procedures, professional regulation and in exceptional circumstances, criminal proceedings.

During 2024 Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership worked with our colleagues in Newcastle Safeguarding Children Partnership area to produce a joint [GSCP and NSCP Learning and Improvement Reviewing Pathway](#). The learning review activity is overseen by a Joint Case Review Group (JCRG) which is accountable to Gateshead and Newcastle Executive groups. In addition to overseeing the learning review activity the group is also responsible for tracking action plans and delivery of learning communication to wider partners and where relevant publication on respective websites.

## Deaths of Care Leavers

Working Together 2023 states, “the local authority should notify the Secretary of State for Education and Ofsted of the death of a care leaver up to and including the age of 24. This should be notified via the Child Safeguarding Online Notification System.

Should any of our young care leavers sadly die, the GSCP partnership area our GSCP and NSCP Learning and Improvement Reviewing Pathway is the agreed process to support the identification and relevant management of the deaths of these young people.

# Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

The death of a child is a devastating loss which profoundly affects all those involved. The purpose of a child death review is to help prevent further such child deaths and improve the experience of bereaved families, and professionals involved in caring for children.

The Children Act 2004 requires Child Death Review (CDR) Partners to ensure arrangements are in place to carry out child death reviews, including the establishment of a CDOP. The reviews are conducted in accordance with [Chapter 6 of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2025](#) alongside [Statutory and Operational Guidance](#)

In order to comply with the statutory guidance – that Child Death Overview Panels should cover a geographical footprint that enables it to typically review at least 60 child deaths per year. In our CDOP footprint this includes 6 Local Authorities of which Gateshead is one, plus the Northeast and North Cumbria ICB.

This CDOP, known as the North and South of Tyne CDOP, will review deaths to better enable thematic learning in order to identify potential safeguarding or local health issues that could be modified in order to protect children from harm and, ultimately, save lives.

The CDOP will carry out its functions mindful of the potential impact upon the bereaved family and in accordance with the [CDR Statutory Guidance](#). The CDOP is the final assurance point once all multi-agency information has been collected, collated and analysed at a local level via the Child Death Review Meeting and professionals who have known the child and family, including the key worker. CDOP use eCDOP to support them in the collation of information and learning.

Whilst the CDOP work is undertaken on a wider regional footprint (that includes the Gateshead area), our GSCP arrangements include reporting mechanisms and information sharing between the CDOP Panel and our DSP and Subgroups. The CDOP Annual Report can be accessed here: [CDOP annual report 2023-24](#).



# Dispute resolution and whistleblowing

## Dispute resolution

Where there is a dispute or unresolved matter relating to a particular child or family which requires escalation GSCP has a published Escalation Policy and Dissent Policy available to all. This sets out clearly the stages through which the case can be escalated and will be resolved.

The Safeguarding Partners and all Relevant Agencies will be expected to adhere to the policies.

- [escalation-policy.docx](#) The purpose of this Protocol is to ensure a prompt, sensitive and professional response to the management of escalating issues and constructively challenging agencies regarding their practice in respect of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in Gateshead.
- [cpc-dissent-policy.docx](#) This dissent policy is separate to the above and is for professionals on occasions where an agency representative has concerns about the outcome of a Child Protection Conference. This is therefore appropriate to raise through the dissent process.

## Whistleblowing procedures

These provide an additional important route for staff to raise concerns in a safe process that protects their position. Safeguarding Partners and the wider partnership will adhere to their own whistleblowing procedures

# Funding and reporting

## Funding

Contributions from the statutory safeguarding partners should be equitable and agreed by the LSPs. They will be reviewed by the LSPs every year with agreement on the level of funding needed to deliver our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

This includes consideration of the required business and analytical support, independent scrutiny, infrastructure, and core functions including local children safeguarding practice reviews, multi-agency training and learning events. It is the responsibility of the LSP to ensure that adequate funding is allocated and spent in line with agreed priorities.

The GSCP budget is monitored throughout the year by the DSPs in their Executive meeting. Expenditure decisions will be made in accordance with local agreements and schemes of delegation. Gateshead Council provides legal, communications and media advice to the Safeguarding Partners and the GSCP, however, individual organisations reserve the right to seek advice provided by their organisation. As the local authority hosts the business support team activity it ensures the partnership's fiscal compliance and governance.

## The Yearly Report

WT23 requires partnerships to undertake a review of the effectiveness of its arrangements and track its business plan delivery progress. This will inform a retrospective yearly report (April to March in line with business year cycle) which will be published on the partnership's website by the end of September of each year. The report will also set out Lead Partner contributions to the partnerships' budgets and a summary of expenditure. The latest report can be found [here](#).

# Appendix 1: Relevant Agencies

Working Together 2023 defines relevant agencies as those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider may be required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. These partners include, but are not limited to:

## Education and childcare

- All Primary Education Settings (maintained, academies, independent)
- All Secondary Education Settings (maintained, academies, independent)
- All Special Schools
- All Pupil Referral Units and Alternative Provision Providers
- All Further and Higher Education Settings
- All Early Years Settings (including maintained nursery schools)
- Education Gateshead

## Health

- North East and North Cumbria (NENC) Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Primary Care (General Practitioners, Pharmacy, Opticians)
- Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (0-19 Services)
- Gateshead Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Cumbria, Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation (CAMHS)
- Gateshead Council Public Health Service
- South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust
- North East Ambulance Service (NEAS)\*
- NHS England\*
- The registered provider of an adoption support agency / fostering agency
- The registered provider of children's homes / residential family centres / residential holiday schemes for disabled children
- \*The NENC ICB will continue to represent NEAS and NHS England as part of their formal role, through a memorandum of understanding).

## Local Government

- Gateshead Council

Where a Relevant Agency has a national remit, such as the British Transport Police and Cafcass, memorandums of understanding will set out how they will contribute to the local arrangements.

# Appendix 1: Relevant Agencies (Cont....)

## Criminal Justice

- Gateshead Council Youth Justice Service
- Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass)
- Probation Service

## Public Services

- Northumbria Police
- Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service
- Police and Crime Commissioner
- UK Border Agency
- British Transport Police
- Nexus (transport for Tyne and Wear)

## Voluntary Sector

- Healthwatch
- Connected Voice
- NSPCC
- The Children's Society
- Edge NE
- Other voluntary sector groups by discussion and representation
- The Jewish Community Council of Gateshead

## Wider Partnership

- Gateshead Council Lead Member for Children and Young People
- Community Safety Board
- Health & Wellbeing Board
- Faith Groups
- Lay Members