

# Annual Report

April 2022-March 2023



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# Glossary of Terms

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>ABW22</b>         | Anti-Bullying Week 2022  |
| <b>Access NI</b>     | a body within the Department of Justice that checks whether people applying to work with children have a criminal record           |
| <b>ACE/s</b>         | Adverse Childhood Experience/s   |
| <b>App</b>           | Application  |
| <b>ASCERT</b>        | a charity in Northern Ireland offering services that address alcohol, substance use, mental health and other related social issues |
| <b>BMA</b>           | British Medical Association  |
| <b>BSO</b>           | Business Services Organisation   |
| <b>CCGANI</b>        | Children's Court Guardian Agency Northern Ireland  |
| <b>CAMHS</b>         | Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services  |
| <b>CCEA</b>          | Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment  |
| <b>CCMS</b>          | Council for Catholic Maintained Schools  |
| <b>CDOP</b>          | Child Death Overview Panel   |
| <b>CEC</b>           | Clinical Education Centre  |
| <b>CES</b>           | Centre for Effective Services  |
| <b>Child In Need</b> | a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development without the provision of services       |
| <b>ciNI</b>          | Children in Northern Ireland   |
| <b>CJINI</b>         | Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland   |
| <b>CMR/s</b>         | Case Management Review/s   |
| <b>CMRP</b>          | Case Management Review Panel   |
| <b>CPSOG</b>         | Child Protection Senior Officials Group  |

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>CPSS</b>    | Child Protection Support Service  |
| <b>CSE</b>     | Child Sexual Exploitation   |
| <b>CVS</b>     | Community and Voluntary Sector  |
| <b>CYP</b>     | Children and Young People   |
| <b>CYPSP</b>   | Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership                                   |
| <b>DARAC</b>   | Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment for Children   |
| <b>DE</b>      | Department of Education   |
| <b>DfC</b>     | Department for Communities  |
| <b>DfE</b>     | Department for the Economy  |
| <b>DoH</b>     | Department of Health  |
| <b>DoJ</b>     | Department of Justice   |
| <b>DSC</b>     | Delivering Social Change  |
| <b>DSVP</b>    | Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership  |
| <b>DVA</b>     | Domestic Violence and Abuse   |
| <b>EA</b>      | Education Authority   |
| <b>EITP</b>    | Early Intervention Transformation Programme   |
| <b>EOTAS</b>   | Education Other Than at School  |
| <b>EPPOC</b>   | Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime                           |
| <b>EVAWG</b>   | Ending Violence Against Women and Girls   |
| <b>EWG</b>     | Education Working Group   |
| <b>FE</b>      | Further Education   |
| <b>FIT</b>     | Family Intervention Team (Health and Social Care Trusts)                            |
| <b>Gateway</b> | the first point of contact for all new referrals to children's social work services |

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>GP/s</b>    | General Practitioner/s   |
| <b>HSC</b>     | Health and Social Care   |
| <b>HSCB</b>    | Health and Social Care Board (which closed on 31 March 2022 with its functions transferring to the Department of Health)             |
| <b>HSCT/s</b>  | Health and Social Care Trust/s   |
| <b>IAG</b>     | Independent Advisory Group   |
| <b>IAR/s</b>   | Individual Agency Review/s   |
| <b>ICPCC</b>   | Initial Child Protection Case Conference   |
| <b>ISA</b>     | Information Sharing Agreement  |
| <b>LAC</b>     | Looked After Child   |
| <b>LDSF</b>    | Learning and Development Strategy Framework  |
| <b>MARAC</b>   | Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference  |
| <b>MOVA</b>    | Management of Violence and Aggression  |
| <b>NCA</b>     | National Crime Agency  |
| <b>NCB</b>     | National Children's Bureau (in Northern Ireland)   |
| <b>NEXUS</b>   | Organisation offering counselling training and education to people affected by sexual and abusive relationships in Northern Ireland. |
| <b>NI</b>      | Northern Ireland   |
| <b>NIABF</b>   | Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum   |
| <b>NICON</b>   | Northern Ireland Confederation for Health and Social Care  |
| <b>NRC</b>     | Northern Regional College  |
| <b>NSPCC</b>   | National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children   |
| <b>OCN</b>     | Open College Network   |
| <b>PAS</b>     | Parental Alienation Syndrome   |
| <b>P&amp;P</b> | Policies and Procedures  |

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>PHA</b>     | Public Health Agency                                    |
| <b>PPR</b>     | Promoting Positive Relationships                        |
| <b>PPS</b>     | Public Prosecution Service                              |
| <b>PSNI</b>    | Police Service of Northern Ireland                      |
| <b>QUB</b>     | Queen's University Belfast                              |
| <b>RESWS</b>   | Regional Emergency Social Work Services                 |
| <b>SAG</b>     | Stakeholders Assurance Group                            |
| <b>SBNI</b>    | Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland                 |
| <b>SCAID</b>   | Sexual and Child Abuse Investigating Detectives         |
| <b>SEEN</b>    | Sexual Exploitation Ends Now                            |
| <b>SDB</b>     | Strategic Delivery Board                                |
| <b>SIM</b>     | Sequential Intercept Model                              |
| <b>SPPG</b>    | Strategic Planning and Performance Group (DoH)          |
| <b>SSSG</b>    | Safeguarding in Sport Strategic Group                   |
| <b>SUDI</b>    | Sudden Unexpected Death in Infants                      |
| <b>TI</b>      | Trauma Informed   |
| <b>TIP</b>     | Trauma Informed Practice                                |
| <b>ToR</b>     | Terms of Reference                                      |
| <b>UK</b>      | United Kingdom  |
| <b>UKCIS</b>   | United Kingdom Council for Internet Safety              |
| <b>UNOCINI</b> | Understanding the needs of Children in Northern Ireland |
| <b>USD</b>     | Universal Service Delivery                              |
| <b>UU</b>      | Ulster University                                       |
| <b>VOYPIC</b>  | Voice of Young People in Care                           |
| <b>YJA</b>     | Youth Justice Agency                                    |

# Foreword

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## **As the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI), I am delighted to present our tenth annual report.**

The SBNI is a partnership organisation consisting of all of the key statutory bodies, some voluntary agencies and appointed independent persons that manage, operate and resource the safeguarding and child protection system in Northern Ireland. It was set up under the Safeguarding Board Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and is the statutory body responsible for coordinating and ensuring the effectiveness of its 21 member bodies, for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the 436,705 children and young people in Northern Ireland.

Over this last year, we have been focussing on addressing the key SBNI strategic priorities as outlined in the SBNI Strategic Plan 2022-2026:

- Domestic Violence and Abuse
- Mental Health
- Online safety.

This tenth annual report will concentrate on how we have approached each of these issues as well as reporting on progress made against each of our strategic objectives and commitments laid out in our 2022-2023 business plan.

We will also focus on the achievements of each of our statutory committees. The report particularly highlights the work of the five SBNI Safeguarding Panels, which are working locally to ensure a consistent approach to safeguarding across all of Northern Ireland. It also focusses on the Case Management Review Panel, with its particular emphasis on improvements in the child protection system. These improvements are identified as a result of the multi-agency in depth reviews we conduct when things go wrong and also through the identification of examples of good practice.

This annual report will provide a further update on the SBNI work on Trauma Informed Practice detailing progress made in embedding it into member and partner agency policy, procedure and practice.



It will give the reader an indication of the huge amount of work ongoing both individually and collectively within all our member agencies. I should therefore like to pay tribute to the staff in these organisations who, in spite of the challenging environment, work tirelessly to ensure the children of Northern Ireland are safeguarded and protected.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved with the SBNI particularly the children and young people we have engaged with, our staff, our members, the independent panel chairs and other key stakeholders involved in trying to make Northern Ireland a better place for children to grow up in. I look forward to your continued support and co-operation in the year ahead.

**BERNIE MCNALLY OBE**  
**SBNI INDEPENDENT CHAIR**



# Introduction

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**The member organisations that make up the multi-agency partnership that is the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) come from both the statutory and voluntary sectors. They are led by an Independent Chair, who was appointed through the public appointments process, on the basis of experience, expertise and knowledge of the child protection system as well as extensive experience of corporate governance and executive level decision making.**

The membership of the SBNI is made up of representatives from all the Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs), the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG, DoH), the Public Health Agency (PHA), the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI), the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the Education Authority (EA), District Councils, the Youth Justice Agency (YJA), the British Medical Association (BMA) and the Children's Court Guardian Agency (CCAGNI). There is also representation from the voluntary sector from Action for Children, Barnardo's NI, Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI), the Children's Law Centre (CLC), Include Youth and the NSPCC. Additionally, there is representation from the Faith Sector, two lay members and three Panel Chairs on the SBNI Board.

The Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Board is assisted in the task of governance of the partnership through a Governance Committee chaired by one of the SBNI's non-executive lay members. The purpose of the Governance Committee is to oversee the establishment and maintenance of an effective system for governance across the whole of the SBNI's activities and to support the achievement of the SBNI's objectives, minimising the exposure to risk.

Every four years, after a major consultation exercise, the Safeguarding Board members collectively agree the strategic priorities for safeguarding and child protection in Northern Ireland. Through this process they commit to work collaboratively to achieve progress in each area.

[The SBNI Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026](#) outlines the current 3 key strategic priorities of:

- Domestic Violence and Abuse
- Mental Health
- Online safety.

This annual report features the progress made against each of these priorities, as specified in the SBNI Business Plan 2022-2023 (at Annex 1) and details the work of the statutory panels and committees of the Safeguarding Board which oversees the day to day work of the Board.

**Case Management Review Panel (CMRP)** which has the specific remit of reviewing individual cases where the SBNI has agreed that there may be significant learning to be gained across the region. These are cases where it is considered that either there have been exceptional outcomes for the children and young people or they are cases where things have not gone well and lessons need to be learned.

**Five Area Safeguarding Panels** work locally to deliver the key strategic priorities set by the SBNI. The panels are coterminous with each of the five Health and Social Care Trusts and are chaired by people who are independent of any of the member agencies. The panels also identify new and emerging issues from their local areas, thereby ensuring that the SBNI is fully informed of any concerns emerging from local communities, parents, children and other key stakeholders.

In addition, the activity of the following non-statutory committees will also be reported on:

**Policy and Procedures Committee** works to ensure that agencies have policies and procedures in place to assist them in protecting children and young people. The committee is chaired by a Director of Children's Services in the Northern HSCT.

**Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Committee** was established to develop an understanding of CSE in Northern Ireland as experienced by young people. This committee is chaired by a Detective Chief Superintendent from the PSNI.

**Child Protection Committee** was set up to provide a mechanism for the statutory member agencies of the SBNI to focus on their statutory responsibilities concerning improved protection of children and young people. The committee is chaired by the Director of Children's Services and Executive Director of Social Work in the Western HSCT.

**Interfaith Committee** which facilitates co-operation between various faith groups and SBNI members to encourage effective communication and engagement in key safeguarding initiatives. This committee is chaired by the Head of Safeguarding for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

All of the work of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland is underpinned by a trauma informed approach. The SBNI has been leading the way in relation to Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) which will be evident throughout this annual report. It has also established a TIP Committee.

# Safeguarding Snapshot

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# Statistics Snapshot 2022-2023

## 1,910,543

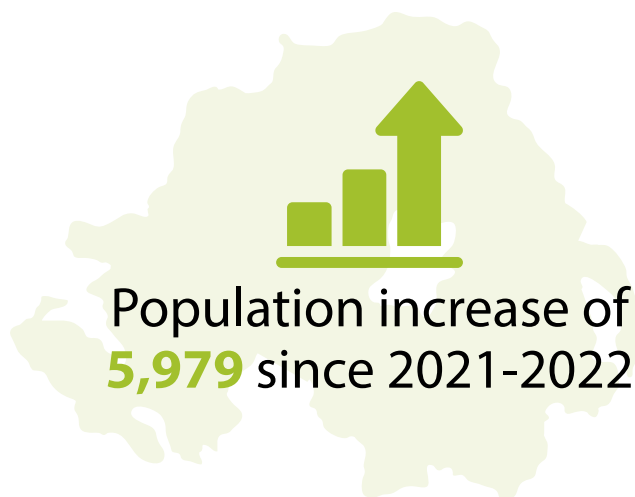
PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND



970,596  
(50.8%) female



939,947  
(49.2%) male



## 436,705

22.9%  
of total  
population

CHILDREN UNDER 18



## 60,979

CHILDREN UNDER 18 WHO WILL  
HAVE EXPERIENCED FOUR OR  
MORE ADVERSE CHILDHOOD  
EXPERIENCES (ACES)

12.7%  
of all children  
under 18

COMPARED WITH PEOPLE WITH NO ACES THOSE WITH 4 OR MORE ACES ARE

2 times more likely to be have a chronic disease



6 times more likely to smoke tobacco or E-cigs



3 times more likely to have respiratory disease



11 times more likely to have smoked cannabis



3 times more likely to develop coronary heart disease



16 times more likely to have used crack cocaine or heroin



4 times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes



20 times more likely to have been incarcerated in their life



4 times more likely to be a high risk drinker

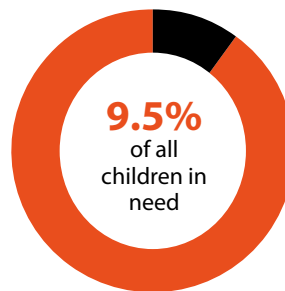


# Statistics Snapshot 2022-2023

**2,171**

**CHILDREN ON THE CHILD PROTECTION REGISTER**

(decrease of **175** from 2021-2022)



neglect only category



physical abuse only category



sexual abuse only category



emotional abuse only category



neglect, physical abuse & sexual abuse category



neglect & physical abuse category



neglect & sexual abuse category



physical & sexual abuse category



**83**

**CHILDREN ON THE CPR WITH A DISABILITY**

**3,111**

**CHILD PROTECTION INVESTIGATIONS CARRIED OUT**

2,244

by social workers

48

by police

756

by joint protocol

63

protocol not appropriate



(a decrease of **97** from 2021-2022)

**1,369**

**CHILD PROTECTION ASSESSMENTS COMPLETED AT GATEWAY**

**1,951**

**COMPLETED FAMILY SUPPORT INITIAL ASSESSMENTS TRANSFERRED TO FIT**

**806**

**COMPLETED INITIAL ASSESSMENTS TRANSFERRED TO FIT**

**4,690**

**CHILDREN KNOWN TO SOCIAL SERVICES WITH A DISABILITY**

**1,777**

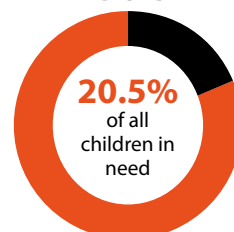
**CHILD PROTECTION ASSESSMENTS RECEIVED AND REQUIRING A UNOCINI ASSESSMENT**

**8,064**

**FAMILY SUPPORT REFERRALS REQUIRING A UNOCINI**

**511**

**CHILD PROTECTION ASSESSMENTS CLOSED BY GATEWAY**

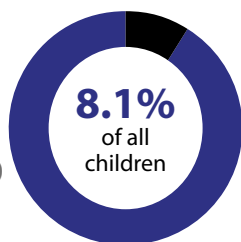


# Statistics Snapshot 2022-2023

**35,503**

**CHILDREN  
WERE REFERRED TO  
SOCIAL SERVICES  
FOR ASSESSMENT  
OF NEED**

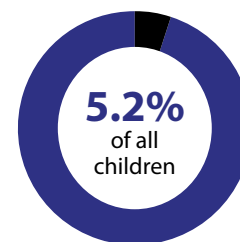
(INCREASE OF 534 FROM 2021-2022)



**22,875**

**CHILDREN  
KNOWN TO  
SOCIAL SERVICES  
AS A CHILD IN  
NEED**

(AN DECREASE OF 1,670)



**1,384**

**CHILD PROTECTION  
REFERRALS**

(DECREASE OF 168 FROM 2021-2022)

**3,801**

**CHILDREN IN CARE  
OF HSC TRUSTS (LAC)**

(INCREASE OF 94 ON PREVIOUS YEAR)



**1,360**

**KINSHIP  
FOSTER CARERS**



**1,722**

**CHILDREN IN  
KINSHIP CARE**



**244**

**CHILDREN IN  
RESIDENTIAL CARE**

(STATUTORY/VOLUNTARY/SECURE)



**267**

**CHILDREN  
PLACED AT HOME  
WITH PARENTS**



**49**

**LAC CHILDREN  
PLACED WITH  
ADOPTIVE PARENTS**



**485**

**CHILDREN IN CARE  
RECORDED AS  
HAVING A DISABILITY**



**167**

**LOOKED AFTER  
CHILDREN ON CHILD  
PROTECTION REGISTER**



**748**

**CHILDREN DISCHARGED  
FROM CARE DURING THE YEAR**

(A DECREASE OF 29 FROM 2021-2022)



**36**

**ADMISSIONS TO SECURE CARE: HISTORY OF ABSCONDING  
AND/OR LIKELY TO SUFFER SIGNIFICANT HARM AND/OR  
LIKELY TO INJURE HER/HIMSELF OF OTHER PERSONS**

(19 OF THESE WERE REPEAT SUBMISSIONS)

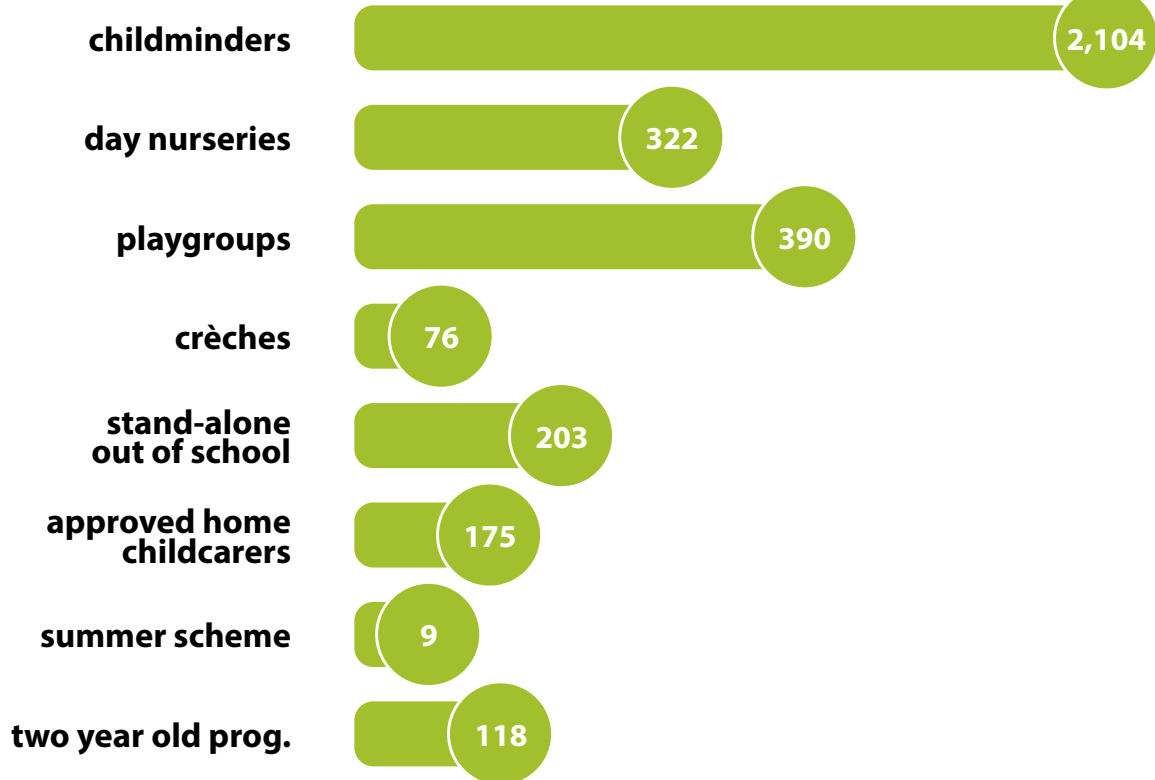


# Statistics Snapshot 2022-2023

## 3,397

### PEOPLE OR FACILITIES REGISTERED FOR THE PROVISION OF DAY CARE FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 12

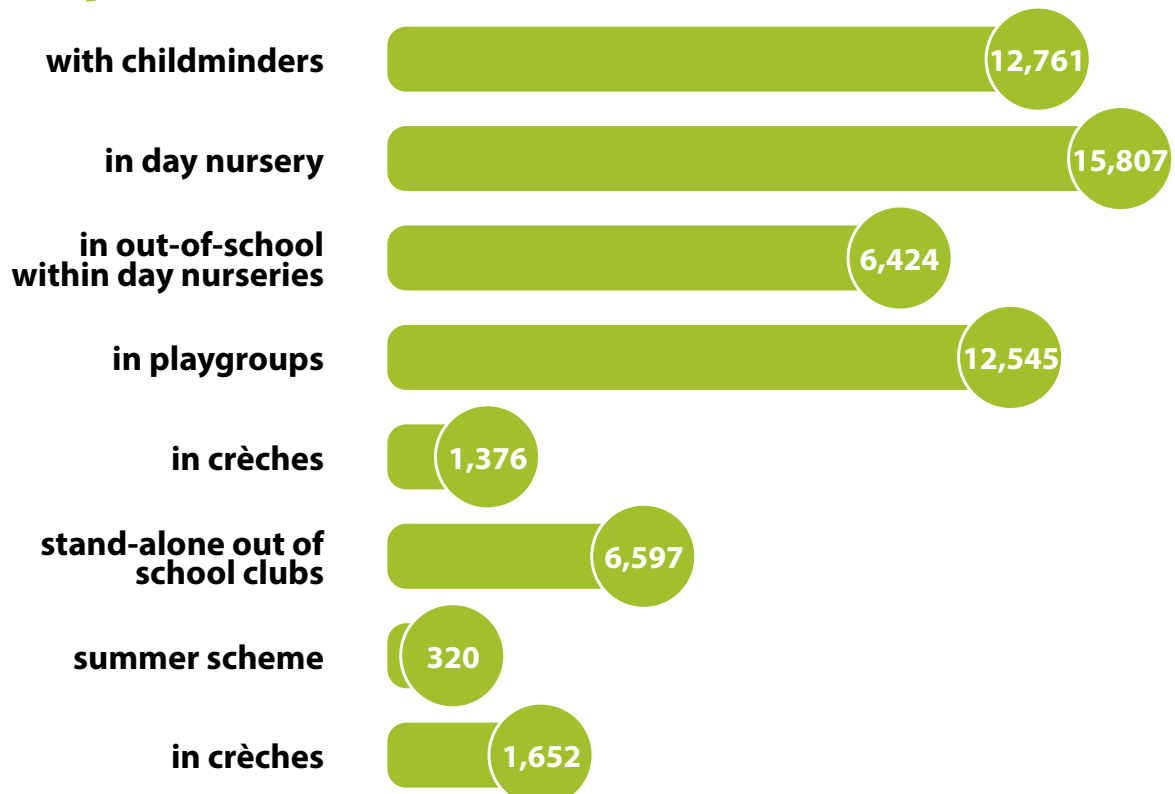
(a decrease of 209 on the previous year)



## 57,482

### PLACES PROVIDED

(a decrease of 1,731 on the previous year)



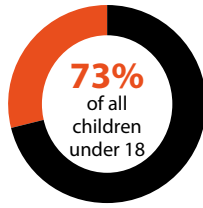


# Statistics Snapshot 2022-2023

**349,026**

**PUPILS IN SCHOOLS  
IN NORTHERN  
IRELAND**

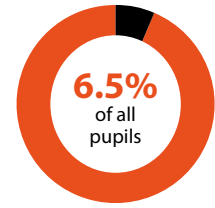
(PRIMARY, POST-PRIMARY & FUNDED PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION)  
(SLIGHT INCREASE OF **1,861** SINCE 2021-2022)



**22,715**

**PUPILS IN FUNDED  
PRE-SCHOOLS**

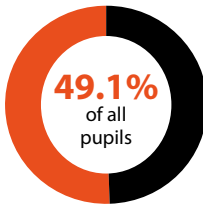
(SLIGHT DECREASE OF **220**  
SINCE 2021-2022)



**171,199**

**PUPILS IN PRIMARY  
SCHOOLS**

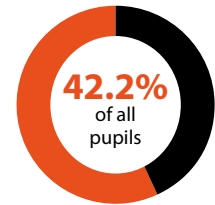
(DECREASE OF **1,100** SINCE 2021-2022)



**154,312**

**PUPILS IN POST  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

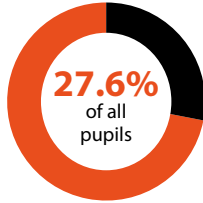
(INCREASE OF **2,400** SINCE 2021-2022)



**96,300**

**ARE ENTITLED  
TO FREE SCHOOL  
MEALS**

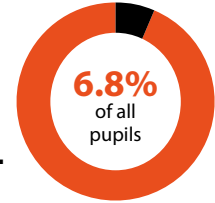
(DECREASE OF **2,500** SINCE 2021-2022)



**24,300**

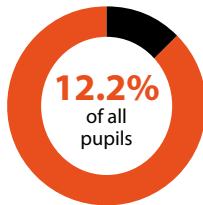
**PUPILS WITH A  
STATEMENT OF SPECIAL  
EDUCATIONAL NEED**

(INCREASE OF **2,300** SINCE 2021-2022)



**42,100**

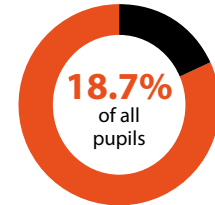
**PUPILS WITH SPECIAL  
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS  
BUT NOT A STATEMENT**



**66,400**

**PUPILS WITH SOME  
FORM OF SPECIAL  
EDUCATIONAL NEED**

(INCREASE OF **1,900** SINCE 2021-2022)



**6,900** PUPILS ENROLLED  
IN 39 DEDICATED  
SPECIAL SCHOOLS

**3,200** PUPILS EDUCATED  
IN MAINSTREAM  
LEARNING  
SUPPORT CENTRES

|                           |         |                           |       |
|---------------------------|---------|---------------------------|-------|
| white pupils              | 333,415 | mixed ethnic group pupils | 6,540 |
| other ethnic group pupils | 5,722   | black pupils              | 3,518 |
| Indian/ Sri Lankan pupils | 2,824   | Chinese pupils            | 1,503 |
| Irish Traveller pupils    | 1,086   | Pakistani pupils          | 569   |

Protestant pupils  
(2,463 less than  
2021-2022)

107,018

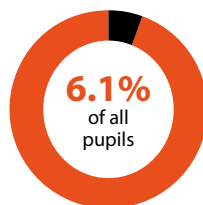
Catholic pupils  
(454 less than  
2021-2022)

177,401

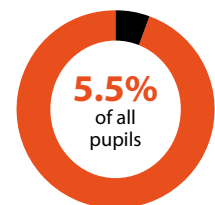
Other Christian/Non Christian/  
no religion/ not recorded pupils  
(5,228 less than 2021-2022)

70,737

**21,800**  
**PUPILS RECORDED  
AS NON-WHITE**



**19,471**  
**NEWCOMER PUPILS**  
(increase of **1,071** FROM 2021-2022)

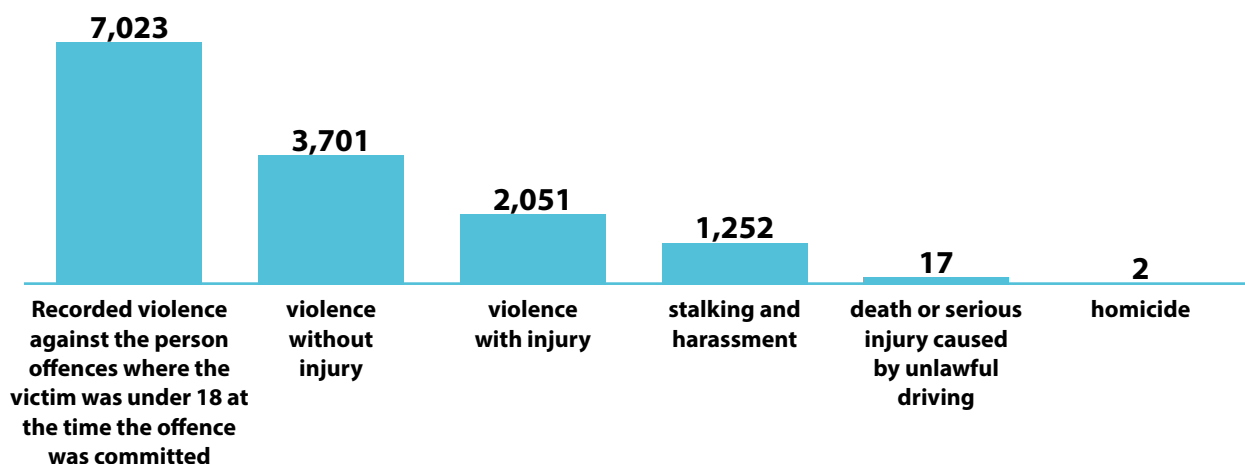
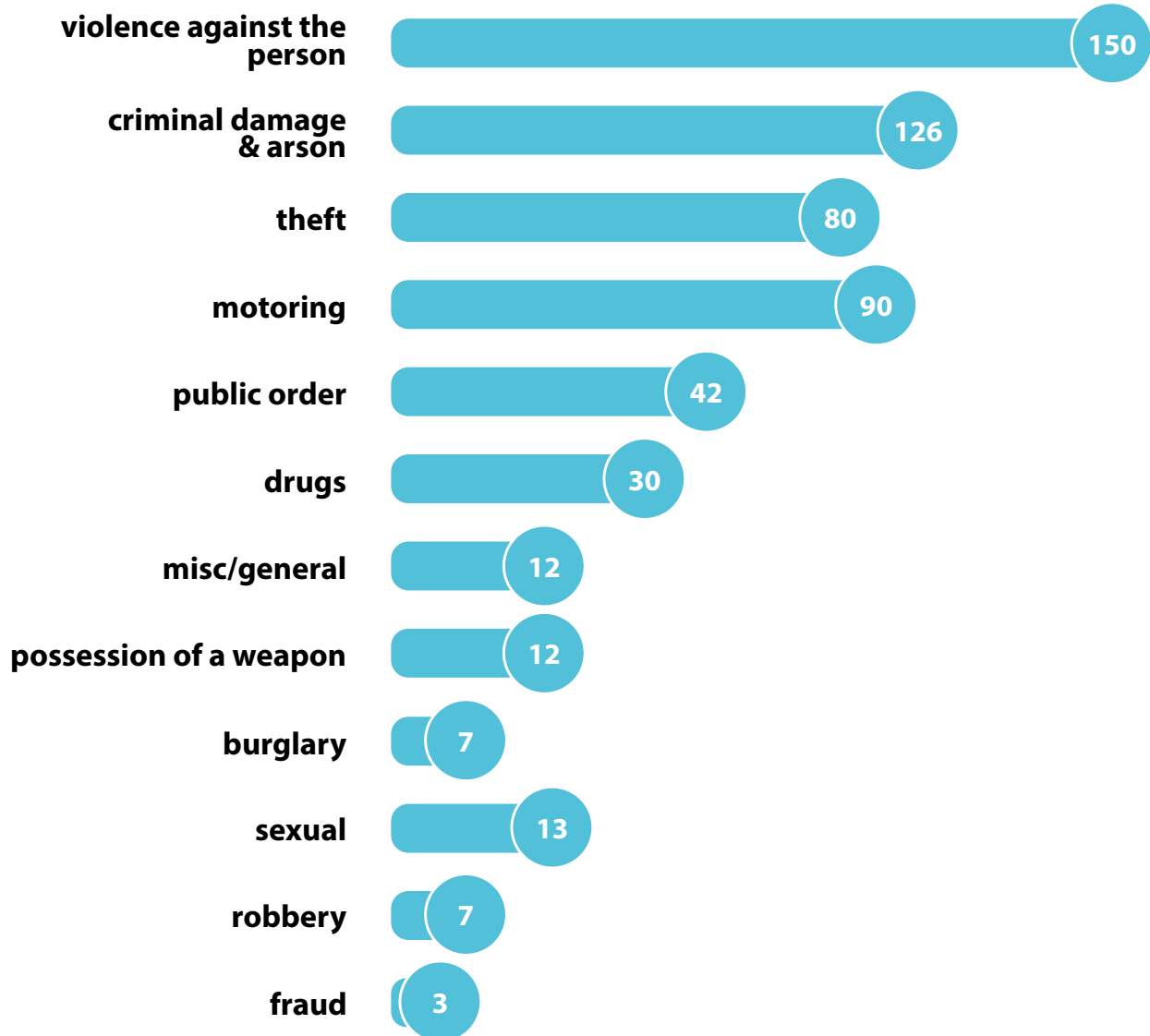


# Statistics Snapshot 2022-2023

**224** NUMBER OF ADMISSIONS TO JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTRE

**1,361** REFERRALS TO YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICES

**572** convictions at courts for defendants aged under 18 by offence category



# Meet the Board Members

---



**Bernie McNally**  
SBNi Independent  
Chair



**Amanda Stewart**  
Chief Executive  
Probation Board for  
Northern Ireland



**Tom Cassidy**  
Director of Children's  
and Women's Services  
and Social Work  
Western Health and  
Social Care Trust



**Kerry Lee Weatherall**  
Interim Director of  
Children's Community  
Services  
Belfast Health and Social  
Care Trust



**Lyn Preece**  
Director of Children's  
Services & Executive  
Director of Social Work  
South Eastern Health  
and Social Care Trust



**Maura Dargan**  
Divisional Director of Women,  
Children and Families Division  
Executive Director of Social Work  
Northern Health and Social Care Trust



**Rodney Morton**  
Director of Nursing  
and Allied Health  
Professional  
PHA



**Emily Roberts**  
Safeguarding Nurse  
Consultant  
PHA



**Brendan Whittle**  
Director of Social Care  
and Children, SPPG



**Una Turbitt**  
Director  
Education Authority



**Colm McCafferty**  
Director of Children  
and Young People's  
Services SHSCT



**Anthony McNally**  
D/Chief Superintendent,  
PSNI



**Dawn Shaw**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Children's Court  
Guardian Agency for  
Northern Ireland



**Heather Moore**  
Director of Environmental  
Services, Lisburn &  
Castlereagh Borough  
Council



**Jacqui Montgomery Devlin**  
Head of Safeguarding  
Presbyterian Church in  
Ireland and Chair of the  
SBNi Interfaith Sub-Group



**Bronagh Muldoon**  
National Head of Service  
for Northern Ireland  
NSPCC



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**Dr Naoimh White**  
GP representative

# Responding to Domestic Violence and Abuse

## **Strategic Priority 2:**

**To hear and respond to the voices of children and young people affected by domestic violence and abuse.**

### **SBNI Business Objectives 2022-2023:**

- 2.1: To work with government departments and their agencies to prevent domestic violence and abuse (DVA) from occurring**
- 2.2: To work with member and partner agencies engaged in the DVA arena to raise awareness among parents/carers and professionals of the impact of DVA on children and young people**
- 2.3: To work with member and partner agencies to provide training resources and expertise in how to improve the recognition, assessment, and responses to children, young people and families experiencing domestic violence and abuse.**

### **Domestic Violence continues as a Strategic Priority**

As reported in the Annual Report 2021-2022 the SBNI conducted an extensive consultation in that period with children and young people, parents and carers and the SBNI member bodies and partner organisations, to seek their views on what the SBNI should prioritise as their strategic priorities over the next four years. The SBNI Strategy for Engaging with Children and Young People was used as a framework for this consultation - [SBNI Strategy for Engaging with Children and Young](#). The consultation responses supported the importance of maintaining domestic violence and abuse as a strategic priority over the period of the Strategic Plan 2022-2026. At the Board Development Day in May 2022, members discussed the progress of the SBNI's work on domestic violence and abuse (DVA) over the last four years. It reviewed its vital role working with government departments and agencies, to recognise the impact of domestic violence and abuse for children and young people and the importance of informing policy and strategy, as well as implementing multi-agency partnerships that will improve outcomes for children and young people.

The SBNI responded to issues associated with DVA through its DVA Committee and Safeguarding Panels, with all of its work underpinned by a trauma informed approach.

Both the committee and the panels worked to deliver on the objectives arising from the SBNI's strategic commitment, "to provide a voice to children and young people affected by domestic violence and abuse"<sup>1</sup>, with the panels promoting communication with children and young people as per their duties contained within Regulation 31<sup>2</sup>.

The DVA Committee is chaired by the NSPCC's Head of Services Northern Ireland, with membership comprising senior representatives from the five HSCTs, PSNI, PBNI, PHA, YJA, Include Youth, Barnardo's NI, Women's Aid Federation NI (WAFNI), NSPCC, EA and NEXUS.

### **Stakeholders Assurance Group (SAG)**

The SBNI is a member of the cross departmental Stakeholders Assurance Group (SAG). Other members include government departments and their agencies. The SAG provides advice and assurance to the Strategic Development Board (SDB) which is the governance forum for the delivery of the Departments of Health and Justice's 'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland - Seven Year Strategy (2016)'.

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1 <https://www.safeguardingni.org/resources/strategic-plan-2022-2026>

2 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2012/324/regulation/31>



### **Draft Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2023-2030**

In this reporting year the SAG has focused on the development of a Draft Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2023 – 2030. The SBNI DVA Committee has played an active role in both the calls for views and contributing to workshops co-chaired by the Departments of Health and Justice to inform strategy development.

The committee established a task and finish group to prepare a response on the draft strategy for presentation and approval by the SBNI Board. The response highlighted the need for particular attention to understanding the needs of children and young people affected by domestic and sexual abuse. This included seeking clarity on expected commitments and outcomes which would demonstrate clear understanding of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) through a trauma informed perspective. The committee highlighted the need to raise awareness of the harmful impact of domestic and sexual abuse on the physical and emotional well-being of children and young people, thus promoting a trauma informed environment throughout all services. The SBNI is committed to ensuring that the impact of domestic and sexual abuse on children and young people, including those children with increased vulnerability factors, such as learning and physical disability, LGBTQIA+ and children with complex needs, is fully understood.

To ensure that all members and partners represented on the local area safeguarding panels were able to avail of new research, practice developments and multi-agency training, the panels held information sharing sessions in relation to:

- the IRIS (Identification & Referral to Improve Safety) enterprise, a partnership between Women's Aid and the Belfast HSCT, which aims to provide training support and referral for women who present with domestic abuse particularly those who present to general practice
- coercive control training, available through Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid.
- a new training resource for staff in the Northern HSCT to increase awareness of DVA among Level 1 training recipients as per the SBNI's Learning and Development Strategy and Framework 2020-2023
- the 'Right to be Safe' project which is a series of practical information sessions aimed at increasing safety for victims of domestic and sexual violence across the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Area. The programme focused on supporting female participants to have an improved understanding of Coercive Control and of the legal remedies available to them. It was provided by Women's Aid in conjunction with the Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) in Fermanagh/Omagh
- the importance of hope when working with survivors of domestic violence and abuse as promoted at the Western HSCT and Western Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership's 'Holding onto Hope' conference.

## 'Equally Safeguarded' Next Steps Workshop


Throughout the reporting period the DVA Committee continued to work with member and partner agencies to provide training resources and expertise in how to improve the recognition, assessment, and responses to children, young people and families experiencing domestic violence and abuse. This work centred on findings from the SBNI's 2020 report [Equally Safeguarded 2020](#), in relation to gaps in available training, specifically concerning recognition, assessment and reporting of the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people.

**Equally Safeguarded**  
The next steps...

**Developing the framework...**

**3 Groups, 3 Levels**

1. Audience?
2. Subject areas to be addressed? What do people need to know?
3. Delivery methods, duration and frequency?
4. What is currently available?
5. Where are the gaps?
6. Who can deliver this?
7. Best practice in other areas you are aware of?
8. What else that needs to be considered?



Building on the findings of the training needs analysis conducted by the committee in 2021 and detailed in the SBNI Annual Report 2021-2022, the committee's Education and Training task and finish group hosted a 'next steps' workshop in September 2022. This was facilitated by the Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland. The workshop focused specifically on a training needs analysis and recommendations in the 'Equally Safeguarded' report.

The workshop was attended by 22 strategic leads and training experts from the SBNI member and partner agencies. They were tasked with considering the extent, availability and gaps in current training provision and to begin the process of developing a standardised framework for training and development. The framework also needed to recognise different levels of training required at varying points of support intervention, using the [SBNI Learning and Development Strategy and Framework 2020 - 2023](#) as a guide.



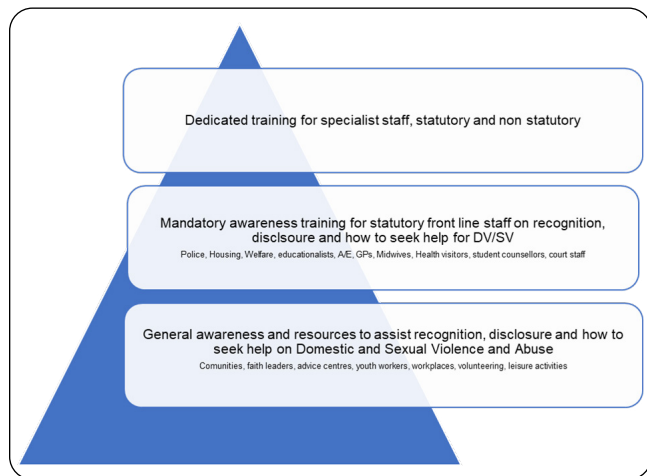
**DVA Education and Training task and finish group**

Delegates were asked to consider the three-tiered model of Awareness, Training and Expertise<sup>3</sup> as identified in the 'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland - Seven Year Strategy (2016)', as illustrated below:

3 [Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland - Seven Year Strategy \(2016\)](#) page 48



The workshop identified strategic gaps in availability and accessibility of training and awareness in relation to understanding of the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people. This included an appreciation of the impact of trauma on developmental processes. It was agreed that the SBNI's DVA Committee's Education and Training task and finish group, chaired by the NEXUS representative on the committee, would develop a training and awareness framework that would:



- reflect the voices and needs of children and young people who are affected by domestic abuse
- seek to increase knowledge/understanding and improve skills and competence of staff and volunteers
- build upon available best practice training which is quality assured
- set out minimum learning outcomes which should be achieved by staff and volunteers who access training
- provide a sound and robust baseline for training providers and commissioners, ensuring quality assurance and standardisation of training provision
- be informed and influenced by relevant strategic drivers such as the legal and policy context, recommendations from case management reviews, new and emerging trends and needs and the ongoing Training Needs Analysis
- build upon training currently available but also address gaps identified in SBNI's Equally Safeguarded report 2020
- be based upon the premise that everyone can do something to prevent and address domestic violence and abuse
- be based upon a continuum of levels which differentiates between skills and knowledge required in different remits and contexts.

The committee's Education and Training task and finish group has met seven times this year. It has been supported by the SBNI Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) team, to progress the development of the framework and ensure that trauma informed practice is infused within the framework. It has a three-level model mirroring that of the, Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland - Seven Year Strategy (2016). It is intended that a fourth level will be developed to complement the new draft Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2023-2030.

The finalised document 'Recognising the Impact of Domestic Abuse on Children and

Young People: A Training Framework', will be launched following a final review and consultation with children and young people in 2023 and reported on in the next annual report.

### **Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment for Children (DARAC)**

During the reporting period the committee was keen to support the provision of training resources to member and partner agencies in order to improve the recognition, assessment, and responses to children, young people and families experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

Members were cognisant that specialist training, multiagency collaboration, information sharing and effective referral pathways are critical in enhancing and improving responses to children and young people at risk of domestic abuse. Within Northern Ireland the Barnardo's Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment for Children (DARAC), is accepted as an effective assessment tool for identifying risk and needs of children and their families.

With this in mind the committee decided to support two training days, facilitated by Barnardo's NI, to explore the DARAC tool. The aim was to increase knowledge, confidence and skills in recognising the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people, and to highlight effective reporting pathways.

The courses were attended by 22 practitioners from a variety of statutory, community and voluntary agencies and delegates reported being appreciative of the opportunity to explore this safeguarding concern further. Detailed below are some of their comments with respect to enhancing their practice with children and families:

*"I have more awareness and knowledge of Domestic Violence and how to look at the impact on individuals"*

*"DARAC offers a clear and specific tool for assessing and commenting on Domestic Abuse risk and future needs"*

*"Excellent study day, will make me properly risk assess and consider all three individuals; perpetrator, mother, and child/ren. Will use with staff to help facilitate and progress any referrals to Gateway that may be unallocated/rejected"*

*"DARAC will help me to risk assess DV in families and support staff in supervision"*

*"I can support those staff trained with further discussion of the tool to ensure full*

*utilisation.”*

### **Listening to and reflecting the voices and needs of children and young people who are affected by domestic abuse**

An integral part of the SBNI's work with member and partner agencies engaged in the DVA arena is to raise awareness among parents/carers and professionals of the impact of DVA on children and young people. To do this the committee needs to ensure that it proactively listens to and reflects the voices and needs of children and young people who are affected by domestic abuse. As such the committee and the Southern Area Safeguarding Panel collaborated with Women's Aid Armagh and Down and the Southern HSCT, to release four videos, created and written by children and young people who had experienced the impact of domestic abuse within their lives. These videos were released during the 16 Days of Action Against Gender Based Violence in November 2022.

A fifth video is to be used as part of the SBNI's, 'Recognising the Impact of Domestic Abuse on Children and Young People: A Training Framework'. This video was developed using the insight from a young person who also contributed to the development of the framework. The video will assist professionals, support workers and carers to better understand their roles and responsibilities in providing safe spaces and early intervention for children experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

The SBNI is also seeking wider consultation with children and young people to fully understand from their perspective what they feel would make a difference to their lives. This consultation work will be carried forward and reported on in the following business year.

To ensure the voices of children and young people are included in the policies and procedures that may impact their lives, the SBNI welcomed the opportunity to respond and engage with justice organisations and legal representatives working in the field of child safeguarding and protection on two specific items:

1. response to the public consultation by the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (PPS) on its updated policy for prosecuting cases of domestic abuse, in February 2023. The response was developed by the committee and approved by the Board. The response highlighted the need to recognise the statutory responsibility of agencies to ensure children and young people are safeguarded and protected and that statutory agencies identify ways to enhance the early intervention, prevention, investigation and prosecution of cases involving domestic abuse

2. meeting with a representative from the Bar of Northern Ireland to discuss the impact of continuing usage of outdated terms such as 'Parental Alienation', in cases involving family courts. 'Parental Alienation' is a discredited and unscientific pseudo-concept which can be used in family court proceedings. The United Nations Special Rapporteur submitted a report in April 2023 to the Human Rights Council, with 19 recommendations (<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/23813311-un-report-on-alienation-5-2023>)

One of these was:

Training be provided on a mandatory basis for all family justice professionals on the relationship between allegations of parental alienation and domestic violence and sexual abuse; such training should also be provided to combat gender stereotyping and ensure understanding of the legal standards on violence against women and children in this regard.

The meeting with the Bar representative also provided an opportunity to further explore future educative opportunities with the judiciary.

# Responding to Mental Health

## **Strategic Priority 4:**

**To provide a voice for children and young people affected by mental health issues.**

### **SBNI Business Objectives 2022-2023:**

- 4.1: To work with government departments and agencies to help reduce the incidence of children and young people affected by mental health issues**
- 4.2: To work with member and partner agencies to raise awareness among parents, carers and professionals of the impact of poor mental health and any associated stigma, on children and young people**
- 4.3: To work with member and partner agencies to promote awareness for children and young people, their parents and carers in how to recognise, respond and seek help in relation to mental health**
- 4.4: To work with partners to promote training in how to improve the recognition, assessment, and responses to children, young people and families experiencing the impact of mental health issues.**

## **The SBNI worked to deliver its strategic objectives associated with mental health through its Mental Health Committee and Safeguarding and Case Management Review (CMR) Panels, with all of its work underpinned by a trauma informed approach.**

Both the committee and the panels worked to deliver on the objectives arising from the SBNI's strategic commitment, "to provide a voice to children and young people affected by mental health issues"<sup>4</sup>, with the panels raising awareness of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children as per their duties contained within Regulation 31<sup>5</sup>.

The Mental Health Committee exists as a vehicle to provide a voice for children and young people affected by mental health issues, into the statutory arenas of policy and procedure, to inform practice, raise awareness and destigmatise mental ill health. The committee is chaired by an Assistant Director from the Department of Health's SPPG and membership is drawn from PSNI, EA, PHA, Action for Children, Pure Mental NI, CYPSP, CCGANI, YJA, NSPCC, the chair of the SBNI Interfaith Committee, as well as representatives of the five HSCTs.

A significant proportion of children and young people in Northern Ireland experience mental health problems, including diagnosable mental health conditions. The SBNI recognises mental ill health for children and young people in Northern Ireland is of increasing concern, as evidenced in the [Youth Wellbeing Prevalence Survey 2020](#).

The SBNI is focussed on working with partners to promote training and awareness in how to improve the recognition, assessment, and responses to children, young people and families experiencing the impact of mental health issues.

Parental mental health problems can have a major impact on children and studies indicate that they increase the risk of children developing behavioural, social, emotional and educational problems. The stress of parenting can also impact on adult mental health. The SBNI recognises that the importance of early intervention, along with appropriate support for parents and their families, is crucial to ensuring children are raised in environments that will help them to flourish.

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4 <https://www.safeguardingni.org/resources/strategic-plan-2022-2026>

5 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2012/324/regulation/31>

### Case Management Review (CMR) Authors and CMR Panel Members Workshop

The committee established a task and finish group to bring the aforementioned research into practice and to support the delivery of the Department of Health's Mental Health Strategy 2021 – 2031, specifically:

- theme 1 - Promoting mental wellbeing, resilience and good mental health across society
- theme 3 - New ways of working.

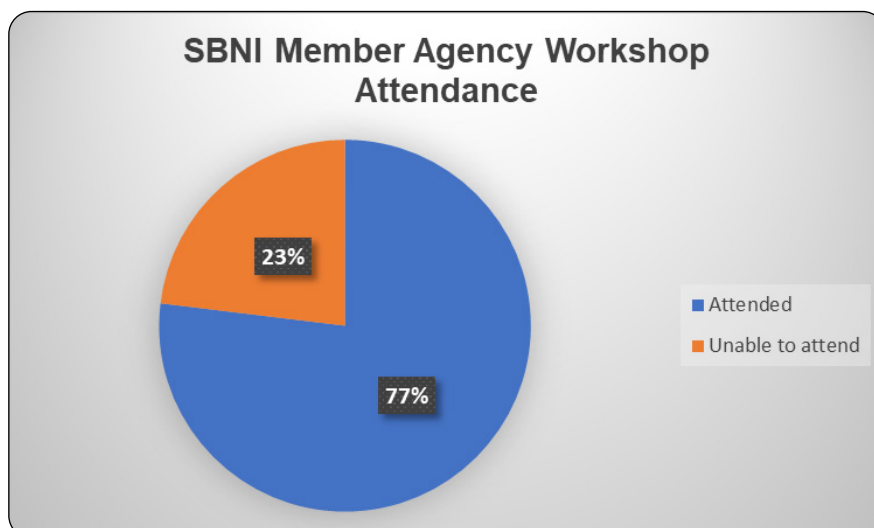
The task and finish group examined learning outcomes from case management review reports. It also identified opportunities for collaborative working with CMR authors and panel members, with the vision of promoting awareness of mental health issues impacting children and their families through the application of an ACE Aware/Trauma Informed lens.

In February 2023, the committee's task and finish group hosted a workshop for CMR panel members and CMR authors in collaboration with the independent chair for CMRs.

The purpose of the workshop was to:

- provide data analysis of research in relation to mental health, which could be accounted when considering recommendations for CMR reports
- reflect early intervention opportunities
- provide a review of current practice models in relation to improving mental health outcomes for children and their families.

The workshop was attended by over 40 delegates associated with; writing, reviewing and involvement in the decision-making process in relation to CMRs with 77% of SBNI member agencies supporting the event through attendance or speaker participation.



Speakers included:

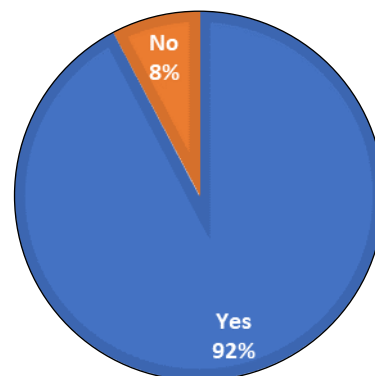
- **Professor Lisa Bunting from Queen's University Belfast**, who presented the findings from the Youth Prevalence Study 2020
- **Orla Connolly**, the SBNi's Trauma Informed Practice Implementation Manager, who highlighted the importance of applying a trauma informed lens to CMR report writing.
- **Dr Julie Anderson, Consultant Psychiatrist**, who presented on the importance of effective specialist perinatal mental health services
- **Caroline Rea and Emer Murtagh, senior social work practitioners** from the Northern and South Eastern HSCT's, who focused on the relevance of the 'Think Family Model' as a tool to use in the training of mental health staff across the service to improve outcomes for mentally ill parents and their children.

The workshop provided an important networking opportunity, as well as enabling knowledge, skills and expertise in relation to improving mental health outcomes for children and their families to be shared. A sample of the evaluations is detailed below.

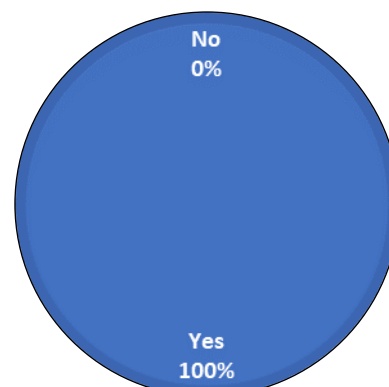
Delegates were asked if they had an improved level of awareness and understanding of children's emotional health following the workshop:

- emphasises the large range of emotional issues and the impact of family issues for children and young people
- yes, helpful and timely
- reflective and thought-provoking session
- enjoyed presentations and discussions promoted the need to refocus on these issues
- always useful to revisit and build on existing knowledge base clear lineages across the different strategic frameworks around emotional health and wellbeing.

Delegates were also asked if the knowledge gained will influence their practice and/or policy development:



**Participants whose awareness of child emotional health was raised**



**Impact of knowledge gained on role**



*"It opens my eyes to the issues of mental health within families and the supports for them or not which will support my CMR Reports"*

*"Learning events enables me to consider documents referred to that may in turn impact upon my practice as a CMR Author"*

*"Will support ongoing work to reinvigorate Think Family"*

*"Yes, better questioning and research before developing policy or practice"*

*"Yes, will help with reviews"*

*"Yes, emphasises the need for trauma informed practice, good robust interdisciplinary working, listening and service development."*

As a result of feedback from the evaluations another workshop is planned for the early 2024. This workshop will focus specifically on the application and implementation of the Think Family Model, allowing delegates time to reflect on the model and its application in practice for CMR report writing. The workshop will be reported on in next year's annual report.



**CMR Authors and CMR Panel Members Workshop**



**Bernie McNally, SBNI Independent Chair & Ciara McKillop, SBNI Mental Health Committee Chair**



**CMR Authors and CMR Panel Members Workshop**

In addition to a focus on the Think Family model in the CMR Authors and CMR Panel Members Workshop, the Safeguarding Panels took the opportunity provided by the relaunch of the Think Family Model across the HSCT areas to consider the importance of making the link between child and adult mental health services.

Further to this, the Southern Area Safeguarding Panel received a very useful input from the Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership on services and resources available for those young people experiencing emotional and mental ill health. This was part of the SBNI's work to 'promote awareness for children and young people, their parents and carers in how to recognise, respond and seek help in relation to mental health'. Similarly, within the South Eastern Area Safeguarding Panel, information was shared regarding Barnardo's NI Early Intervention Service and its ABC Pip Service, the latter being a partnership with South Eastern HSCT and Tiny Life. The Western Area Safeguarding Panel heard how the CAMHS service has made progress in re-establishing a tri-monthly engagement forum, post COVID-19 pandemic, with young people who have experienced emotional and mental health issues. In addition, Barnardo's NI informed Northern Area Safeguarding Panel members of counselling support available to pupils in schools in the Southern, Northern, Belfast and South Eastern Panel areas. This is provided to support the improvement of the emotional health and well-being of pupils and to increase learning potential. Specific therapeutic support is also provided to those children bereaved through suicide or trauma.

### **INVICTUS**

INVICTUS is a play available to post primary schools created by Alter Ego Solutions Limited funded by the SBNI. The SBNI has worked alongside the Education Authority to ensure the production is made available to all post primary schools for the last 2 years. INVICTUS was first developed in 2020, to raise awareness of the differing forms of childhood adversity. The play builds on the concept of inspiring hope and resilience amongst young people that may be experiencing adversity in their lives, and highlights where young people can go to for help and advice. This was done in line with the Department of Health/Department of Education 'Children & Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework'<sup>6</sup> to support those working in educational settings to help them promote emotional wellbeing and strengthen self-esteem and resilience in our children and young people<sup>6</sup>. The play is designed to help promote wellbeing at a universal level, through a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach, INVICTUS collectively addresses the potentially traumatic period that some young people have been through, and acknowledges different experiences. In line with the SBNI's strategic priority, the play gives a voice to young people's stories. It uses those stories to help promote healing, resilience and the ability to cope with change by recognising, naming and advocating the skills and behaviours that can help young people to overcome a whole host of adversities and critical life moments.

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6 [Children & Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework](#)

The Mental Health Committee was keen to hear from young people who had watched the production. The SBNI commissioned Action for Children to facilitate focus groups in five schools. Overall, young people felt that the play should be shown in all post primary schools across all year groups. The young people also said the production was:

*"eye opening"*

*"motivated to help people"*

*"it's good for young people to watch and learn"*

*"engaging, useful, interesting, and helpful"*

*"it was informative for young people because it can show other people's perspectives in their lives"*

*"i think it helps us realise how hard people's lives really are"*

*"important to have people to talk to"*

*"all stories are important."*

The young people reported that they believed the play would encourage people to talk more openly and speak out if they were feeling down or worried. One participant said the INVICTUS would be effective in helping to spread awareness of the range of issues people experience and that talking about it can help. With this in mind the committee was keen to support further availability of the new INVICTUS for all post-primary schools. Following meetings with the EA, it was agreed that the screening of the plays would be coordinated through the C2K network for schools, with letters to schools and parents coordinated by the EA's Child Protection Support Service (CPSS), which would also provide signposting and support information for schools in case any concerns arise

following screening of the play. Pre and post questionnaires would be distributed by the EA to schools, to enable young people to express their views on the production following the screening. Further evaluation on the play will be available in the next annual report.



### **Mental Health Minimum Standards Framework**

The SBNI has committed to work with partners to promote training in how to improve the recognition, assessment and responses to children young people and families experiencing the impact of mental health issues. It is clear from post pandemic studies that children's experience during the pandemic varied considerably. Mental health, however, was a common concern. An online survey of over 2,000 10 to 11 year-olds primary school children and over 2,000 16 year-olds in Northern Ireland, conducted between October 2020 and February 2021, reported that 41% of 10-11-year olds and 52% per cent of 16-year olds felt their mental and emotional health had worsened during the pandemic (Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People 2021).

In 2021 the National Children's Bureau (NCB) in NI published a report that considered the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Northern Ireland. The report highlighted:

- increased social isolation and loneliness
- reduced support for parents and carers
- anxiety and stress
- forced separation of families due to various lockdowns and restrictions on travel
- reduced access to respite services.

In this reporting year the committee focussed on designing a mental health learning and development framework to support improvement in recognition and support for children, young people and their families affected by mental health issues. A task and finish group made up of members from EA, PSNI, NSPCC, YJA, HSCTs and Action for Children was established to take this forward. Key components of the framework will include safety and risk, viewed through a child protection and safeguarding lens, which takes account of single and multi-agency training. The SBNI Trauma Informed Practice team is working with the task and finish group to ensure that the framework is embedded with the principles of trauma informed practice. This work will continue into the next business year and will be reported on in 2023-2024.

The ambition for the framework is to:

- identify opportunities for developing and enhancing multi-disciplinary/multi-agency mental health education and training strategies across all sectors
- improve the competence of staff and volunteers involved in working with children and their families
- provide minimum learning outcomes which should be achieved by staff/volunteers in any learning and development activity
- identify different levels of training commensurate with the level and nature of contact with children and young people, which take account of 'uni' and multi-agency planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation
- inform commissioners, policy makers and those developing and providing education and training programmes, plus organisations and individuals to ensure that relevant, consistent and quality assured programmes are in place, accessible and delivered at the right level.

The framework is intended for use by all SBNI member agencies, as well as any agencies providing services to a member agency under a contractual/service level agreement. It will be relevant to all organisations and individuals who come into contact with children and young people and their families where there is a concern about mental health. It will also be relevant for those professionals who work with parents.

# Responding to Online Safety

## **Strategic Priority 3:**

**To support children and young people in exercising their rights to enjoy the benefits of the online world free from harm, fear and abuse.**

### **SBNI Business Objectives 2022-2023:**

- 3.1: To work with government departments and their agencies to develop an online infrastructure and associated standards to prevent children and young people from experiencing harm and abuse online**
- 3.2: To work with member and partner agencies to educate children and young people, their parents and carers and those who work with them to navigate the online world safely and confidently and support them to stay safe and well online**
- 3.3: To ensure the views of children and young people inform and influence online policy and practice development.**



## **The SBNI worked to deliver these objectives through its Online Safety Committee, Online Safety Steering Group and the Safeguarding Panels.**

The Online Safety Committee is chaired by a Detective Chief Inspector from the PSNI, and membership comprises representatives from: Barnardo's NI, Council for the Curriculum Examinations (CCEA), EA, Include Youth, National Children's Bureau in Northern Ireland (NCB), National Crime Agency (NCA), Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP), Belfast HSCT, NEXUS, Northern Digital Steering Group, Parenting NI, the South Eastern HSCT, SPPG, Western HSCT, Western Digital Steering Group and Youth Work Alliance. It is supported by the SBNI's Online Safety Coordinator who works across all aspects of online safety delivery for the Board.

Separate to the work of the committee, which is outlined later, the SBNI has also played a key role in supporting the delivery of delivering actions associated with the NI Executive's [Keeping children and young people safe: an Online Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland](#) (strategy). The strategy and accompanying cross-government [action plan](#) were published in 2021, and funding for implementation commenced in this reporting year.

The strategy is rights-based and was co-designed with children and young people, parents and carers, and those who work with them. It sets out the NI Executive's ambition that all children and young people enjoy the educational, social and economic benefits of the online world and that they are empowered to do this safely, knowledgably and without fear. This goal directly aligns with the SBNI's overarching strategic priorities and annual business and work plans.

The cross-departmental Child Protection Senior Officials Group (CPSOG), which provides strategic direction on cross-cutting child protection issues, has oversight of the strategy. The SBNI is supporting this group.

The three-year strategic action plan sets out 21 actions for different government departments and bodies to lead or support. The SBNI has been assigned 12 lead actions and three supporting actions. These include:

**Lead actions:**

- design and development of a website/ongoing content management
- establishment of a social media presence to raise awareness of the repository and information
- develop years four and five of the action plan
- development of a core set of online safety messages for children and young people, parents and carers, in conjunction with key stakeholders
- development of further specialist messages for vulnerable groups
- development of age appropriate and accessible publications to disseminate core messages
- review of current reporting pathways and referral mechanisms to support services when issues arise, and development of an agreed reporting pathway to enable children and young people to access support if needed
- development of a reporting pathways resource for children and young people, parents/ carers and those who work with them to reinforce messaging on where to contact if help is needed
- development of a public awareness campaign to ensure wider dissemination of relevant online safety messaging
- development and dissemination of sample online safety policies and procedures to support embedding of online safety within organisations
- online safety training needs analysis for practitioners working with children, young people and those who care for them
- exploration of current inclusion of online safety training in continued professional development for practitioners working with children, young people and those who care for them, including resources used
- promotion of the use of good practice audit tools across NI, such as the '360 degree safe' online safety self-assessment tool for schools and further education colleges, or the Online Compass tool for child and youth services as a self-assessment.

**Supporting actions:**

- establishment of a formal feedback mechanism to support NI contribution to UKCIS meetings & ensure the voice of local service users and stakeholders are heard
- establish what data is held on the scale of online safety incidents in Northern Ireland, and identification of gaps
- develop metrics to determine how we measure if children are being kept safe online
- consider the development of a pilot survey for children and young people to be carried out to gather information on usage, social and emotional impact, skills, concerns and other key areas of online safety.



Actions are reflected within the SBNI's strategic business objectives, and our performance on how we're achieving our goals is set out below.

Within the SBNI structures, governance is provided by an Online Safety Steering Group which was created in summer 2022. The group is accountable to the Board for the overall direction and financial management of the SBNI's assigned strategic actions. Chaired by a Safeguarding Nurse Consultant in the PHA, other members include senior leaders from the EA, PHA Finance, the NCB, the PSNI and the SPPG. The group monitors implementation, advises the Coordinator and Online Safety Committee and identifies any emerging risks, issues and delays that may affect delivery.

### **Work of the Committee**

As part of the SBNI's Strategic Objective 3.1 above the committee has undertaken to ensure a coordinated approach to online safety. It did this in a number of different ways:

- by strengthening the links between NI and wider United Kingdom (UK) online safety structures by building networks and gaining membership of key fora. This has included:
  - (i) attending the Online Safety Bill Reference Group, chaired by the Department of Justice (DOJ) NI; (ii) engaging with Ofcom to ensure that the voice of local stakeholders' is considered for the future regulatory framework to tackle harmful content online; and (iii) securing membership to the five UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) working groups and using these channels to cultivate relationships and identify learning and opportunities for NI partners.
- working together to (i) support government departments and their agencies to develop the governance structures for the NI Executive's strategic action plan - this resulted in a new Cross-Departmental Implementation Group (CDIG) being established; (ii) provide progress reports to the CPSOG, CPSOG Subgroup, CDIG, and the SBNI's Board, Online Safety Steering Group, and committee; and (iii) co-create a composite reporting tool for the CDIG that will be used to gather implementation progress reports for the CPSOG
- designing and commencing development of a central NI repository for online safety information which will be hosted on the SBNI website
- supporting the identification of a good practice online safety self-assessment tool for consideration by the DE.

As part of its work under strategic objective 3.2 to work 'with (its) member and partner agencies to educate children and young people, their parents and carers and those who work with them to navigate the online world safely and confidently and support them to stay safe and well online, the committee has:

- published guidance for professionals, in conjunction with UKCIS Education Working Group, on, [Challenging victim blaming language and behaviours when dealing with the online experiences of children and young people](#). The guidance helps professionals to understand that children can never be expected to predict, pre-empt, or protect themselves from, abuse. Also, and irrespective of the content or circumstance, the responsibility always lies with the person who abused them
- hosted a 'spotlight on online bullying' event in partnership with the NI Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF). The spotlight was an opportunity for professional learning and awareness on the nature and impact of online bullying. It explored the risk and protective factors. Attendees heard from the Youth Parliament MP, Lauren Bond, and a range of speakers from the EA, PHA, PSNI, Stranmillis University College and Ofcom



**Aoife Nic Colaim, NCB; Martina Coogan, EA; Kathleen Toner, NIABF Chair and Fostering Network; and Orla O'Hagan, SBNI.**

- responded to growing concerns about adults communicating with children online, through the creation of [online grooming advice](#). The advice, which includes signposting information, emphasises the need for vigilance as it can be difficult for a young person to spot if they are being groomed, particularly as strangers can easily hide their identity online by using fake pictures and may pretend to be a peer
- secured training from the CEOP on the topic of online child sexual abuse. The training was aimed at professionals working in education settings, and provided an opportunity to increase professional learning and awareness

*“Thanks for making my attendance at the CEOP training with the NCA possible. This was an excellent session; well delivered, informative, timely and thought provoking.”*

- in December, the committee partnered with PSNI and EA to raise awareness about children receiving new electronic devices for Christmas. The education campaign included a coordinated letter aimed at parents and carers that was issued via the Education Authority. This was supported by [media activity](#)
- the SBNI also collaborated with committee members from the Education Authority C2K Team on a ‘Safer Internet Day’ webinar aimed at education settings. SBNI were delighted to host the event and join forces with partners across the PSNI, the UK Safer Internet Centre, and the DE’s Safer Schools NI app team to raise awareness of resources and support



- during quarter four the SBNI collaborated with the South Eastern Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership and North Down and Ards Women’s Aid to develop an animation called ‘Technology and domestic abuse – where is the line?’ The animation is being co-produced with young people who have lived experience of domestic abuse. It will launch in June 2023, and is set to be an important education tool to help raise awareness about what is healthy and harmful behaviour online, and where to get help if the line is crossed



- the SBNI was proud to sponsor and judge the NI Anti-Bullying Forum's creative arts competition. This aims to raise awareness of bullying and gives signposting to support. The theme of this year's event 'Reach Out' was developed to encourage children to speak out about bullying. The standard of entries from primary, post-primary and special schools was outstanding. A highlight, in March, was a celebration event with the competition winners at Lanyon Place Station in Belfast



**John Thompson, Translink; Christo Thomas, NIABF Young Advisor; Kathleen Toner, NIABF Chair; and Orla O'Hagan, SBNI with pupils Niamh and Cara from St Franchea's**

- the committee continued to contribute annual funding for the [SBNI app](#), which provides online safety prompts, updates and facilitation of signposting. Aimed at parents, carers and professionals, the app is maintained by the INEQE Safeguarding Group NI. Messages are coordinated with the Department of Education [Safer Schools NI app](#), which is funded under the NI Executive's strategy
- during the period in review, efforts have been made to explore the reporting pathways and referral mechanisms to support services when online issues arise. The future Online Safety Hub will provide tailored signposting to reinforce messaging on where to contact if help is needed. Content on issues including online blackmail, bullying, and grooming, etc. is under development by the committee
- a priority focus in quarter four was reviewing the reporting arrangements when children break the law by sharing self-generated nude and semi-nude imagery. Members are mindful that this is a complex safeguarding issue and there is a commitment to ensure that there is a pragmatic and proportionate safeguarding response. This work continues and we are working closely with members, including the PSNI, to review arrangements and support mechanisms.

- Under strategic objective 3.3, the SBNI is seeking to ensure that the views of children and young people inform and influence online policy and practice development. As part of this commitment and following a procurement exercise the SBNI commissioned the Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement at Stranmillis University College to conduct a mixed-methods research study on children's online activities, harm and safety in Northern Ireland. The research is also in line with the NI Executive's Online Safety Strategy objective to facilitate the meaningful participation of children and young people, parents and carers, and those who support them, in relevant policy and service development. It also links the action for the CPSOG to develop a pilot survey for children and young people to gather information on usage, social and emotional impact, skills, concerns and other key areas of online safety.

The research, led by Professor Noel Purdy, is intended to address the emergence, nature and impact of online risks of harm and trends among all groups of children and young people in Northern Ireland. It is also to review online safety provision, including educational initiatives to safeguard and protect children online. The project is supported by an expert advisory group that has been convened by the SBNI. This group first met in December, and helped inform the design of the qualitative methodology. Membership includes members from the Online Safety Committee, Ofcom, Parenting NI, PSNI, NCB, Ending Violence against Women and Girls (EVAWG), SPPG, South Eastern HSCT, Western HSCT and EA.

Primary data collection utilised a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and followed a participatory approach involving children and young people as co-designers of the research. In January, two children and young people's advisory groups were established to help inform the design of the qualitative engagement, and dissemination. Two online surveys were developed and administered to children and young people from across Northern Ireland, aged between 8-18 years. Launched on Safer Internet Day on 07 February 2023, schools were invited to participate via a request from the EA's CPSS. A

[stakeholder social media pack](#) helped the SBNI members promote the survey on social media. In total, 6481 children and young people responded to the surveys.



In addition, a wide variety of different target populations were recruited to take part in interviews and focus groups. In total, 95 participants took part in the qualitative aspects of this research, including children and young people in primary, post-primary, special schools and youth club settings, as well as parents, teachers/school leaders, and professionals working in the field of online safety. The qualitative engagement included Traveller/Roma children, LGBTQIA+ young people, children with (severe) learning difficulties, young people in a youth club setting in a disadvantaged urban context, and pupils from an Irish-medium school.

The evidence report, which will be published in September 2023, will provide a uniquely detailed insight into how a wide range of children in NI experience growing up online. Its findings will be used to support the development of the NI Executive's cross-government action plan. Further detail will be given in next year's report.

# Case Management Reviews

## Learning from practice

**Strategic Priority 1: To provide leadership and set direction in the safeguarding and protection of children and young people.**

SBNI Business Objective 2022-23:

- 1.1: To ensure that the Case Management Review, Safeguarding and Child Death Overview Panels meet their statutory functions.

## Case Management Reviews (CMRs) are a statutory function of the SBNI which are undertaken by the Case Management Review Panel (CMRP).

The CMR Panel is required to meet at least four times per year and is independently chaired. It includes senior representatives of SBNI Member agencies.

The panel’s role is to consider notifications from member agencies in respect of serious incidents involving children and young people and to identify cases which require further consideration because there may be:

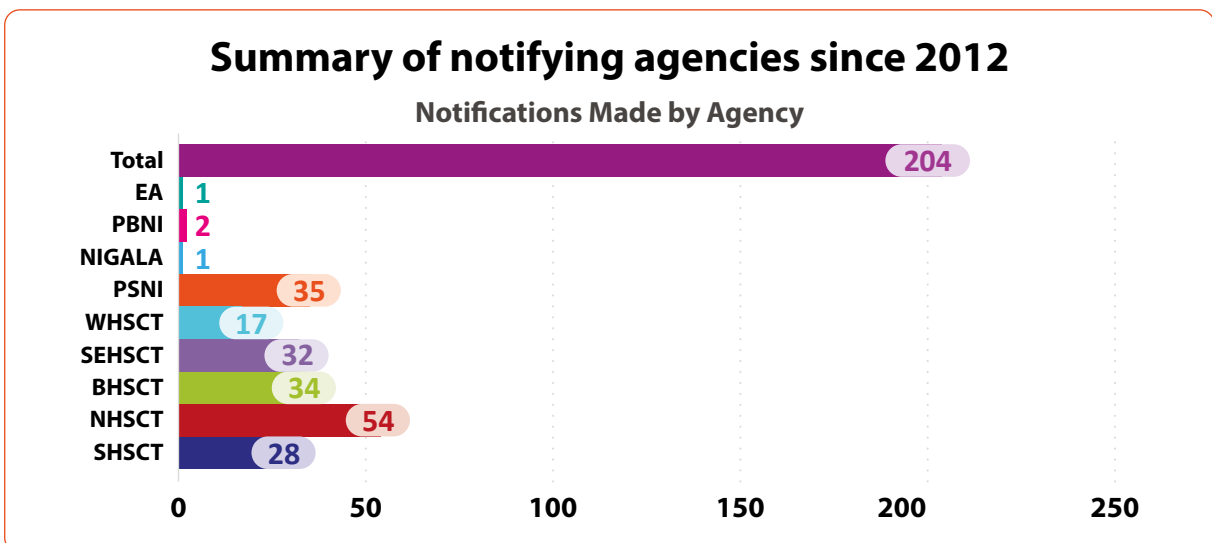
- positive outcomes for children and young people and/or
- where things have not gone well and there is likely to be significant learning.

The purpose of this process is to enable the child protection system to be strengthened thereby further protecting children and young people in Northern Ireland. The CMRP interrogates the information provided to it by the notifying agency and can seek information from others, before making a recommendation to the Board as to whether or not to commission a CMR. This recommendation is then considered by the Board which makes a decision whether or not a CMR should be undertaken. Thirty-eight (38) CMRs have been commissioned since the SBNI’s inception.

### CMR Notifications received since 2012

Since 2012 to 31 March 2023 the SBNI has received 204 notifications (including a small number of duplicate referrals).

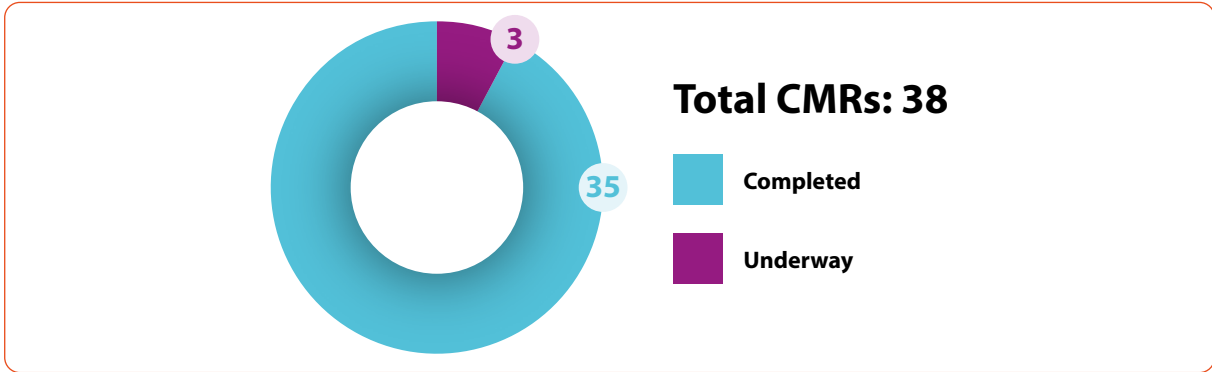
### Summary of notifying agencies since 2012





### CMRs Completed since 2012

At 31 March 2023, the total number of CMRs completed is 35, 3 CMR's are underway.



### CMR Notifications received during 2022-2023

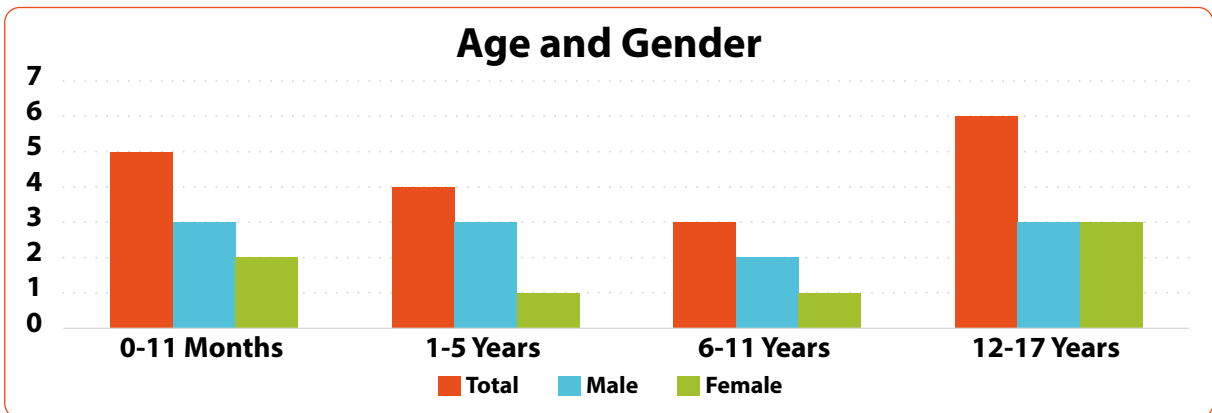
During 2022-2023, 14 CMR notifications in respect of 18 children were received by the SBNI. Of these notifications 1 Case Management Review was commissioned in respect of 1 female child.

The notifications related to 18 children of whom 11 were male and 7 were female.

The age range of these children who were notified to SBNI were as follows:

- 0 – 11 Months - 5 children (3 male & 2 female)
- 1 Year – 5 Years - 4 children (3 male & 1 female)
- 6 – 11 Years - 3 children (2 male & 1 female)
- 12 – 17 Years - 6 children (3 male & 3 female)

### Age range of children subject to CMR Notification

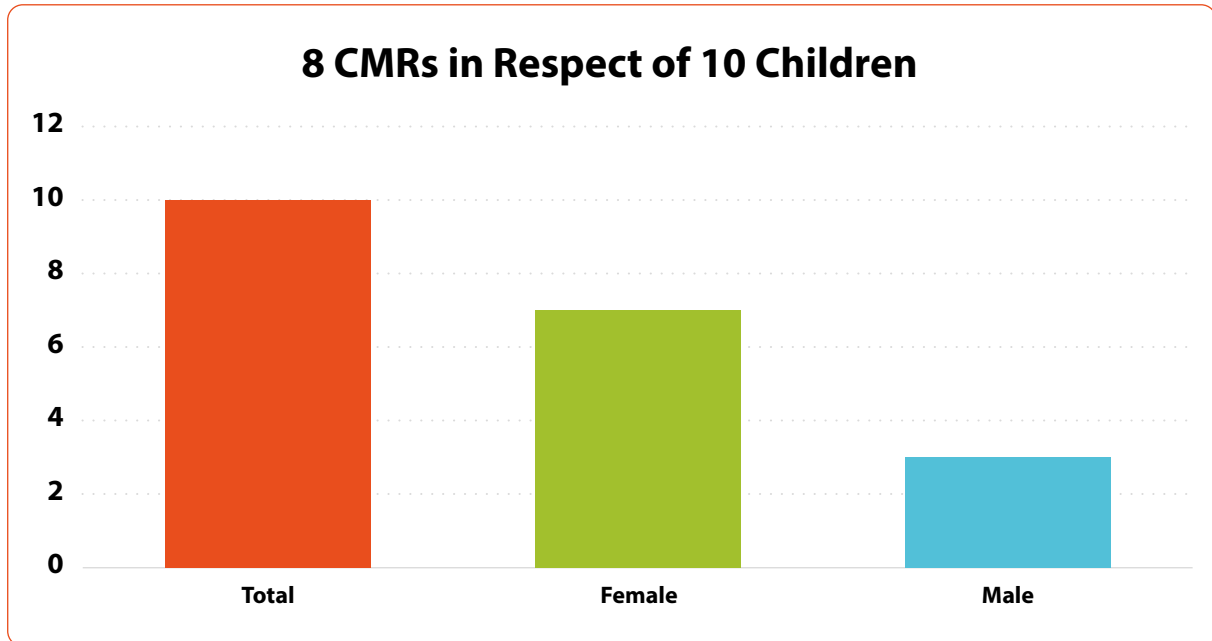


12 of the 14 notifications received were considered by the Board in 2022-2023. Of the 12 the Board concluded that one met the criteria to proceed to a CMR. The remaining two of the 14 notifications will be considered in 2023-2024.

### Completed Case Management Reviews

During 2022–2023, 8 completed Case Management Reviews were presented to and approved by the Board. These reviews focused upon 10 Children (3 males and 7 females).

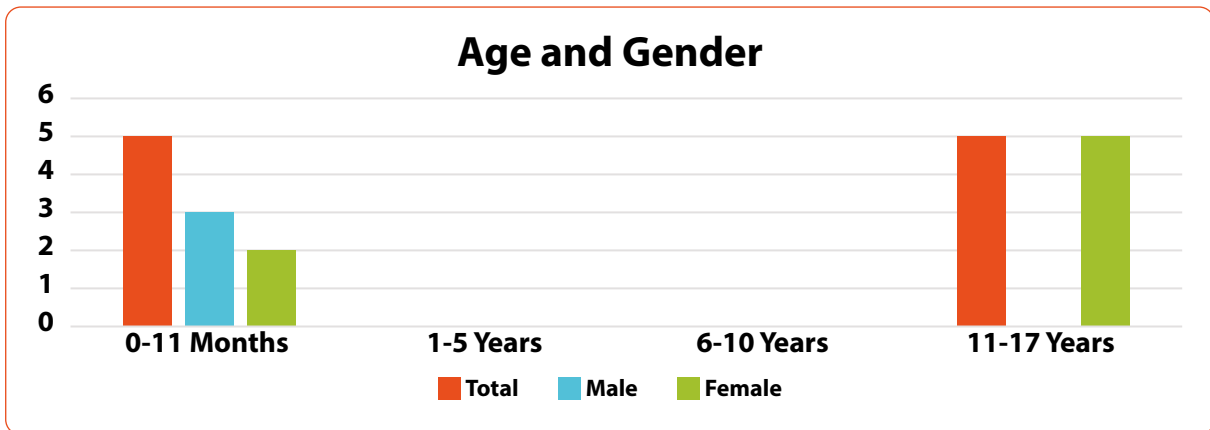
#### Gender of children involved in completed Reviews



The age range of these children were as follows

- 0 – 11 months – 5 children (3 male & 2 female)
- 1 – 5 years - 0
- 6 – 10 years - 0
- 11 – 17 years – 5 (5 female)

### Age range of children involved in completed Reviews



### Completion Times for CMRs

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic the average time taken to undertake CMRs was 9.5 months from the decision by the Board to commission a CMR. This timeframe has been impacted significantly, largely as a consequence of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021. The delay in completion of the reviews was also impacted by the following:

- 'pausing' of work in the early stages of the pandemic and subsequent circuit breakers.
- authors requiring to 'shield'.
- unavailability of staff members from member agencies to complete Individual Agency Reviews (IAR's) as a consequence of both Covid and related workforce pressure.
- during one review the author was required to replace the entire team due to long term ill health and team members moving post. This required the team to recommence the review process.

In addition, further delays in respect of two of the CMRs presented in-year to the Board, were attributable to delays in the recruitment processes for authors.

Despite these interruptions and difficulties, staff endeavoured to ensure as timely a response to the completion of reviews as was possible in the difficult and uncharted circumstances.

All CMRs which commenced immediately before the pandemic, in the early stages of the pandemic and during the pandemic are now complete.

The average time of completion of the 8 reviews presented to the Board in 2022-2023 was 15.6 months.

It is anticipated that during the next business year the timeliness for the completion of reviews will improve they will have commenced post pandemic.

### **Summary of learning and improvements arising from these Reviews**

CMRs are intended to generate recommendations for improvement and highlight areas of good practice. All CMRs are followed up by comprehensive action plans by member agencies to ensure all recommendations are acted upon. The action plans include timescales and are reviewed by the relevant local Statutory Safeguarding Panel.

There were 53 recommendations associated with the completion of the 8 reviews in 2022-2023.

Learning across the reviews arose from cases involving:

- child sexual exploitation
- adolescent self-harm and suicide
- physical abuse
- sudden infant death
- a still born child.

Themed recommendations from all eight CMRs can be found in Annex 3.

### **Dissemination of Key Messages and Learning from CMRs**

All completed CMR reports, including identified learning and recommendations, are shared with the organisations involved as well as others who have an interest.

In addition, dissemination of learning from CMRs is delivered via regional and local events held regularly across Northern Ireland. This sharing of learning is co-ordinated and undertaken jointly by the CMRP and the Safeguarding Panels. The events in 2022 -2023 were held via virtual platform which enabled a wider group of professionals to attend than may have been able to do so if the sessions were delivered in person.

During the business year, seven dissemination of learning events were undertaken by the SBNI. These comprised of a regional event for senior managers and cross departmental colleagues, five local Safeguarding Panel events and a bespoke CMR learning event for CCGANI (formerly NIGALA).

These events were attended by in excess of 700 professionals including managers and practitioners from across the spectrum.

As in previous years these events were rated very highly in the evaluations. The SBNI however, remains keen to explore how it can further disseminate and embed the learning from the completed reviews.

### **On-going Training Programme for CMR Authors**

Training for CMR authors continued to be delivered in year and focused on the following areas:

- Think Family Model
- opportunity for CMR Authors to shadow more experienced authors as they led on reviews
- child sexual exploitation
- domestic homicide reviews
- learning from Serious Case Reviews in other areas of the UK
- use of electronic platform training - ensuring authors had the skills to undertake their reviews via Microsoft Teams.

# Safeguarding Panels

## **Strategic Priority 1:**

**To provide leadership and set direction in the safeguarding and protection of children and young people.**

**SBNI Business Objective 2022-2023:**

**1.1: To ensure that the Case Management Review, Safeguarding and Child Death Overview Panels meet their statutory functions.**

**and**

**Regulation 31: Functions of Safeguarding Panels:**

- (a) co-ordinating the implementation of the Safeguarding Board's strategic plan for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children**
- (b) monitoring the implementation of the Safeguarding Board's policies and procedures**
- (c) promoting an awareness of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children**
- (d) implementing any arrangements established by virtue of regulation 38(b) for sharing the findings of case management reviews**
- (e) promoting communication between the Safeguarding Panel and children and young people.**

**All five Safeguarding Panels met on five occasions throughout the 2022-2023 reporting period. Panels follow within one week of the SBNI Board meeting, which ensures information is cascaded in a timely manner.**

This year also saw the welcome addition of a new organisation to the Northern Area Safeguarding Panel, with the attendance of a representative of the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service.

The induction booklet for members, designed and delivered in 2020-2021, was amended and updated in line with the SBNI Strategic Plan 2022-2026. This has continued to be a useful introduction to new members and a refresh for existing members. Attendance at panel meetings has continued to be good.

A ‘five panels’ development day’, facilitated by the HSC Leadership Centre, was held on 03 October 2022. This was used to review the year to date and importantly, to focus on the SBNI Strategic Plan 2022-2026. The event had inputs from both of the SBNI Professional Officers on the core SBNI business and a very useful presentation from a Barnardo’s NI representative on Unaccompanied and Separated Children.



**Belfast Area Safeguarding Panel**



**South Eastern Area Safeguarding Panel**

As mentioned above the Safeguarding Panels under Regulation 31 of the [SBNI \(Membership, Procedure, Functions and Committee\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2012](#) have five functions as detailed below:

## 1. Co-ordinating the Implementation of the SBNI Strategic Plan

The primary purpose of the Safeguarding Panels is seen as delivering the SBNI strategic plan at a local level by coordinating and utilising their multi-agency/disciplinary expertise and resources. With the introduction of the SBNI Strategic Plan 2022-2026, panel work plans were drawn up to reflect the strategy and its specific priorities – domestic violence and abuse, mental health and online safety. Whilst the issue of neglect is no longer one of the key strategic priorities of the SBNI, it remains a significant feature of the local panels. Similarly, child sexual exploitation continues as a standing item of local panel business, while the central themes of 'Trauma Informed Practice' and 'Equality and Diversity' run through all aspects of panel work.

In addition to the activity by SBNI committees noted in the previous sections on Domestic Violence and Abuse, Mental Health and Online Safety, the Safeguarding Panels have engaged in the following areas of work.

### Domestic Violence & Abuse

Connection with the local Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnership (DSVP) in panel areas has been maintained.

The 'Operation Encompass' pilot (the exchange of information between PSNI and schools where a child has experienced domestic abuse the night before) continued to be rolled out during this year, with all areas except Belfast (to be completed in May 2023) finalised. Each panel had a presentation on 'Operation Encompass', from the lead person in the EA responsible for the programme. Panel representatives from Education and Policing also provided updates.

'Ask for Angela', the PSNI led safety initiative in conjunction with Hospitality Ulster was shared and supported in all panel areas. This initiative is being rolled out with the support of licenced venues and security staff across Northern Ireland to help keep people safe when enjoying a night out. It supports people who, when frequenting a hospitality venue, feel unsafe, vulnerable or threatened to discreetly seek help by approaching venue staff and **asking** them for '**Angela**'. This code phrase will indicate to staff that the person requires help and a trained member of staff will look to support and assist them. This might be through reuniting them with a friend, seeing them to a taxi or by calling venue security and/or police.



### Online Safety

The SBNI Online Safety Coordinator and the Online Safety Committee worked with the panels to ensure that members were kept up to date with the progress of the delivery of the Executive's Online Safety Strategy action plan. Newry Mourne and Down and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Councils, in collaboration with the Southern HSCT and the South Eastern HSCT have been active this year in the promotion of the 'BeSafeOnline' digital campaign and this has been shared and discussed at those local panels.



**Northern Area Safeguarding Panel**

The Northern Area Safeguarding Panel was briefed on the work that Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is undertaking in partnership with Health and Social Care and the NSPCC, in engaging with schools, youth groups, teachers and leaders via the Dry Arch Group to keep young people safe from cyber crime.

### Child Sexual Exploitation

The PSNI representative at each panel continues to give an update within the confidential section as to the local position, both in terms of young persons at risk and 'persons of concern'. The outworkings of the Criminal Justice Inspectorate Northern Ireland (CJINI) inspection and the Leonard Review on CSE continue to be considered at panel meetings.

A very successful event on 'Creating Safer Spaces; Raising Awareness of CSE in Communities' was held in the Lodge Hotel in Coleraine, it was jointly facilitated by PSNI and the local Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

Panel members were also provided with information on the Barnardo's 'Sexual Exploitation Ends Now' (SEEN) service. This offers direct therapeutic intervention to children and young people who are sexually exploited/at risk of CSE and/or at risk of going missing from home or care.

## 2. Monitoring the implementation of the SBNI's Policies and Procedures

All five panels continued work to ensure that members are kept informed of core policies and procedures with respect to safeguarding children. All panel members were invited to download the SBNI App and to encourage staff to do the same. This gives immediate access to policies and procedures in addition to useful support and links.

In this year, the review of the Child Protection Case Conference Appeals Process was completed with contribution from some panel members. Panel members also contributed to the development of guidance in respect of sexually active children.

### 3. Promoting an awareness of the need to safeguard children

Panels receive and review the child protection data and activity specific to their trust area at each meeting. This is presented by the relevant trust's Assistant Director (AD) for Children's Services and enables the identification of trends, consideration of potential responses and encouragement of multi-agency collaboration.

This year panel members became more aware of the increasing numbers of asylum seeking and refugee children across Northern Ireland and the safeguarding concerns relevant to them. The issue impacted on all panel areas and the work of several of the members, most particularly in health & social care, education and Barnardo's NI. In response, all panels have placed this topic on the agenda as a standing item.

### 4. Implementing any arrangements for sharing the findings of CMRs

Each panel is responsible for ensuring that the key learning from CMRs is disseminated. All five panels organised events, which were delivered virtually during the month of February, following on as soon as was possible from the regional event.

CMRs, including new notifications, pending reviews, approved reports and ongoing action plans remain a vital and substantial part of the confidential section of each panel meeting.

### 5. Promoting communication between the Panels and Children and Young People

Engagement with children and young people to ascertain their views and encourage their active participation remains a standing item at each panel meeting, with information being shared amongst members.

Panels were briefed on the successful Text-A-Nurse programme, a confidential health advice text service for 11 to 19 year-olds. Following positive feedback from children and young people this was expanded to parents, carers and school staff in all panel areas. The service provides advice and guidance on how to talk to 11 to 19 year-olds on sensitive topics such as emotional health and wellbeing, alcohol and drugs, sexual health, bullying and general health and wellbeing issues.



**Southern Area Safeguarding Panel**

# Policy and Procedures Committee

## **Strategic Priority 1:**

**To provide leadership and set direction in the safeguarding and protection of children and young people.**

### **SBNI Business Objective 2022-2023:**

**1.2: To ensure that the non-statutory committees fulfil their delivery obligations within their terms of reference by,**

**Review, update and disseminate the Regional Core Child Protection Policies and Procedures.**

**One of the statutory functions of the SBNI is to ensure that staff have policies and procedures in place to assist them in protecting children and young people. This role is undertaken by the Policy and Procedure Committee and actioned through Strategic Priority 1 – ‘To provide leadership and set direction in the safeguarding, protection and welfare of children and young people’.**

The committee is chaired by a Director of Children’s Services in the Northern HSCT and comprises of senior managerial representatives from the SBNI member agencies which includes; five HSCTs, PSNI, YJA, SPPG, PHA, PBNI and EA, a General Practitioner (GP) representative, an Adult Mental Health representative and a PHA Allied Health Professional Consultant.

The committee met throughout the business year and was supported by several task and finish groups who were considering aspects of the Regional Core Policy and Procedures specifically in relation to the:

- revision of the Appeals Process in Child Protection Registration
- regional Guidance for Northern Ireland on Under Age Sexual Activity
- alignment of Signs of Safety with Regional Policy and Procedure
- guidance on the Management of Allegations Against Staff of a Child Protection Nature.

These items were approved at the December 2022 SBNI Board meeting.

On two occasions during the reporting period the Board sought assurance from members on;

- GP’s and Child Protection Case Conferences (CPCC) – specifically that the HSCTs were issuing GPs with invites to attend the CPCC in a timely manner and that they were also providing minutes of the CPCC to GPs; both in accordance with Child Protection Policy and Procedure
- all five trusts reported full compliance with policy and procedure
- that the joint Department of Health and Justice Letter: ‘Effective Information Sharing – Safeguarding & Child Protection’ and the DoH Information Sharing Guidance published in August 2021 had been circulated.

All member agencies reported full compliance with the requirement to share the letter and assured the Board that staff were made aware of the importance of effective sharing of information.

Following on from learning derived from CMR's the committee is currently further developing the SBNI Policies and Procedures Manual in respect of 'The Child Protection Register', and specifically 'Children/Young People and Families Who Move', with regard to the transfer of child protection cases, to include pre-birth child protection cases across the HSCTs and across jurisdictions. This transfer guidance should provide clarity on the roles and responsibilities of all professionals involved with expecting parents, parents, and families in terms of information sharing and escalation of concerns in order to promote collaborative working.

# Child Protection Committee

## Strategic Priority 1:

To provide leadership and set direction in the safeguarding and protection of children and young people.

### SBNI Business Objectives 2022-2023:

1.2: To ensure that the non-statutory committees fulfil their delivery obligations within their terms of reference by,

Review and analyse a range of child protection data to inform the child protection system and underpinning process.

1.3: To participate in relevant child safeguarding and child protection fora.

## **The SBNI Child Protection Committee provides a vehicle for the statutory partners within the SBNI to focus on their statutory responsibilities concerning improved protection of children.**

The chair of the committee is a Director of Children's Services from the Western Health and Social Care Trust. Membership of the group comprises all five HSCTs, PHA, EA, YJA, SPPG, PSNI, CCGANI and PBNI.

During this business year, the committee undertook a fundamental review of its terms of reference, its workplan, its focus, and its membership. This work had commenced in the last quarter of the 2021-2022 business year and was carried into the first quarter of the current year.

In March 2022, following this review, it was determined that the committee should continue to be chaired by a Director of Children's Services from one of the Health and Social Care Trusts. The other members are those set out above

The newly configured committee came into existence in April 2022 and met six times in the business year. It agreed priorities in accordance with the strategic plan.

Committee work has focussed upon developing the new priorities and workplans on the following areas:

### **Continued analysis of child protection system and underpinning process**

#### **Data Analysis**

The committee continued its focus on analysing member agencies' data sets enabling measurement of the effectiveness of the child protection system.

The SPPG presented comprehensive data concerning the following:

- population trends
- nature of referrals into Social Services Gateway (GW) (Child in Need/Child Protection/ Looked After Children (LAC)/children with a disability)
- initial assessments by Social Services – GW - and onward transfer into Social Services Family Intervention/Support Teams
- children on the Child Protection Register – trends over past 10 years
- profile of children on the Child Protection Register by age and gender
- types of abuse experienced by children
- the volume of children registered more than once on the Child Protection Register
- the volume of children removed from the Child Protection Register.
- unallocated cases
- LAC data and associated trend.
- workforce pressures - volume of social work vacancies.



## High level exploration of the effectiveness of the child protection system

Committee members undertook a mapping exercise within their own agencies and brought this to the committee for discussion:

- what is working well?
- what are we worried about?
- what should we do 'going forward'?



This exercise allowed the membership to scope across their respective agencies' areas of strength as well as areas where considerable challenges are extant and consequently to agree future trajectories of work to undertake during the period of the new strategic plan.



As part of this work, the committee identified the thresholding of multi-agency referrals received by the Social Work Gateway Services within the five HSCT's as an area requiring further consideration and interrogation. As a consequence, bespoke audits were undertaken within the five Trust's Gateway Services (GW) to sample the cases which resulted in 'No further action' by social work staff. The purpose was to determine both the appropriateness of the content of the referral and the subsequent thresholding of the referral by social work staff.



Actions arising out of this audit and the subsequent analysis are due to be taken forward in the next business year.

**The Joint Inspection – Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI), Education Training Inspectorate (ETI) & Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)**

During the business year the committee helped to disseminate information in respect of a proposed joint pilot inspection of multi-agency child protection services. This pilot was commissioned by the cross government departmental CPSOG following a recommendation from the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) review into Child Sexual Exploitation in June 2020. <http://www.cjini.org/TheInspections/Inspection-Reports/2020/April-June/Child-Sexual-Exploitation-in-Northern-Ireland>.

The pilot was designed to test an audit tool in respect of collaborative inspection between Justice, Education and Social Services.

Such a joint inspection had not previously been undertaken in Northern Ireland. The model of inspection was developed using frameworks already used in Great Britain (GB). Given the pioneering nature of this pilot, several times during the year the Inspection lead reviewers met with the committee to advise on the development of the terms of reference and to discuss the proposed pilot inspection process. The pilot inspection took place in October 2022 in the geographical area of the Southern Area Safeguarding Panel. The outcome of the pilot and any local or multi-agency recommendations are due to be published in June 2023.

# Child Sexual Exploitation Committee

## **SBNI Strategic Priority 1:**

**To provide leadership and set direction in the safeguarding and protection of children and young people.**

### **SBNI Business Objectives 2021-2022:**

- 1.2: To ensure that the non-statutory committees fulfil their delivery obligations within their terms of reference by,**

**Improving process and practice in respect of Child Sexual Exploitation, across SBNI member and partner agencies by implementing the actions arising from the 14 recommendations in the CSE (Leonard) Evaluation Report and the cross-cutting recommendations from the CSE CJINI Inspection.**

## **The SBNI Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Committee is chaired by a Detective Chief Superintendent from the PSNI and membership comprises of senior management representation from EA, HSCTs, SPPG, PBNI, YJA and Barnardo's NI.**

The CSE Committee has continued to focus on implementing recommendations from the [CSE Evaluation Report 2020 \(Leonard Report\)](#) which was published in July 2020 (also available on the SBNI website) and where relevant, recommendations in the CJINI review of CSE in NI published in June 2020.

The Leonard Report was commissioned by the SBNI to evaluate the developments made by its member agencies following the Marshall Inquiry (2014) and the SBNI Thematic Review led by Pinkerton (2015) of how CSE was being assessed and managed in Northern Ireland. The CJINI Report focussed on the criminal justice system response to CSE, while recognising the vital role health and social care and education partners have in ensuring effective and enduring child safeguarding and protection. In recognition of potential cross cutting themes between the two reports they reviewed the same casefiles of young people, who were at that time managed within the CSE framework.

A cross departmental group, the CPSOG, oversees the governance of the implementation of the action planning of both reports. The SBNI's Independent Chair and the Chair of the SBNI's CSE Committee report on actions associated with the reports to CPSOG. A sub-group of the CPSOG supports the governance framework surrounding the implementation of both reports and the SBNI has representation on this group.

### **Progress of Recommendations**

As reported in last year's annual report significant progress has been made in implementing the recommendations from the Leonard Report. An overview of some of recommendations and improvements that have been implemented in this reporting year is provided below.

### **Multi-Agency Training**

The committee held a workshop in August 2022 to explore current CSE training requirements, as well as future multi-agency training opportunities. A training framework was developed using the SBNI Learning and Development Strategy and Framework as a guide. Members were asked to modify and adapt the framework to fulfil their individual organisations requirements.

A programme of professional development days was agreed throughout the year for all SBNI member agencies and their partners. The PSNI hosted the first development day on 21 September 2022. Experts from South Yorkshire Police were invited to discuss developments and improvements in multi-agency collaboration and practices following the Rotherham child sexual exploitation scandal.

The PSNI discussed the development of a 'persons of concern multi-agency assessment meeting protocol'. The aim of which is to maximise information sharing between PSNI and local HSCTs, for the purpose of identifying and reviewing persons of concern that pose a risk of child sexual exploitation. There is now an agreed operational protocol between PSNI/HSCTs which will be officially launched in May 2023.

The SPPG held the second CSE professional development day in January 2023 at the Dunsilly Hotel in Antrim. The event was attended by over 80 delegates. Speakers included Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC). They discussed the experiences of young people in care who were being accommodated within the Lakewood Secure Unit and the programmes of work currently underway to support young people in promoting resilience. Youth Action, VOYPIC, the CSE lead from the Northern HSCT and SPPG also discussed consultation work with boys and young men, to review current CSE awareness material and to assist in the design and development of an awareness raising animation for young people hosted on social media platforms. Delegates also heard from representatives from the Holly Project in Telford England. The Holly Project is an independent support service for the survivors of CSE, helping victims to rebuild their lives and shape their future.

A final training event hosted by SBNI will be held at the start of May 2023 to launch the boys and young men co-designed animation.

### **HYDRA Training**

The Police Crime Faculty delivered three CSE table top training exercises for all SBNI members and relevant representatives from government departments. The training was evaluated by delegates and is now been developed to utilise full HYDRA Minerva methodology. HYDRA is immersive learning technology to use specific skills for scenario-based teaching in areas such as policing, nursing, social work etc. The scenarios created for the multi-agency learning programme have been developed from learning outcomes as a result of case management review reports. Hydra training will launch in September/October 2023 and will run every two months. Initial evaluations from this training will be reported on within the next business year.

### Night Time Economy

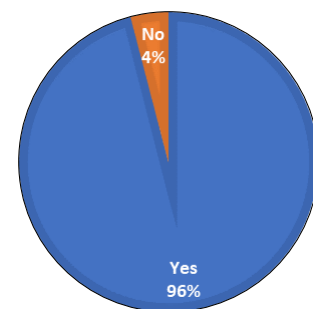
The SBNI established a multi-agency CSE Public Awareness Safer Spaces Forum in August 2022 which is currently chaired by the PSNI. The purpose of the forum is to work collaboratively to consider how agencies can promote awareness of CSE and its impact on children and young people to adults who work within the night time economy. In September 2022, Lisburn and Castlereagh Council hosted a breakfast seminar raising awareness of CSE for those businesses working within the council area. The forum built on the success of this event, by designing and developing a programme which showcased multi-agency collaboration with respect to CSE. The forum hosted two CSE awareness sessions to coincide with CSE Awareness Week in March 2023 in Antrim and in Ballymena, with speakers from PSNI, local HSCTs, a CSE lead, Youth Work Alliance and Hospitality Ulster.



**Joel Neill,  
Hospitality Ulster**

The events were attended by 80 delegates and the evaluations were positive.

Delegates were asked if, as a result of the event they had improved knowledge about the support and resources available for children and young people who may be of risk of CSE. Below is a sample of their responses:



**As a result of this workshop is your knowledge improved regarding supports for children and young people**

*“yes, especially about the collaborative working with other organisations”*

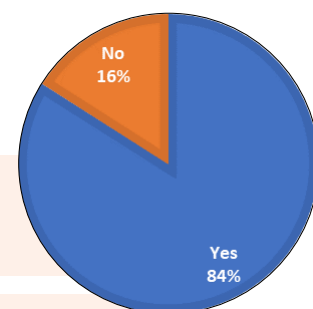
*“yes, good to hear from non-statutory agencies”*

*“it was good to know of the various resources. I particularly found the youth worker input useful”*

*“yes, more focus on engagement with youth workers would be helpful in tackling the problem”*

*“great to know that the hospitality industry is supporting and educating staff around this important subject.”*

Delegates were also asked whether the improvement in knowledge will influence their practice and/or policy development in safeguarding children and young people from CSE. A sample of responses is detailed below:



**Will your improved knowledge influence your practice policy development**

*“I work with young people at risk or who have experienced CSE. Having a wider understanding of the other services offering CSE support is important”*

*“I will be trying to solidify links with youth services, social services and Hospitality Ulster”*

*“it is really useful to be able to signpost young people to support. During home visits I can also raise awareness with families on the signs of CSE”*

*“the knowledge of how to promote the signs/triggers of how to recognise vulnerabilities.”*

*“I will be looking out for signs of CSE through body language, actions and words and train other staff/volunteers to be able to spot these too”*

*“great knowledge of CSE. Will recommend ‘Ask for Angela Service.’”*



## Boys and Young Men

Child Sexual Exploitation is a significant threat to boys and young men in Northern Ireland and the SBNI has a key role to play in raising awareness of and managing this issue. The SBNI established a Boys and Young Men's Collaborative Working Group which reports into the SBNI's CSE Committee. The group is chaired by the SPPG. The aim of the group is to work collaboratively to raise awareness that boys and young men in Northern Ireland are impacted and victimised by CSE. This year the group commissioned Youth Action and VOYPIC to facilitate focus groups with boys and young men to develop an understanding of CSE in Northern Ireland as experienced by them.

The focus groups also reviewed the SBNI's CSE 'Speak Out Shout Out' campaign which was originally developed by boys and young men in 2016. The review concluded that something new was required and to understand what that should be.

Youth Action held six focus groups involving a total of 53 young men and VOYPIC held three focus groups and a total of seven young men attended.

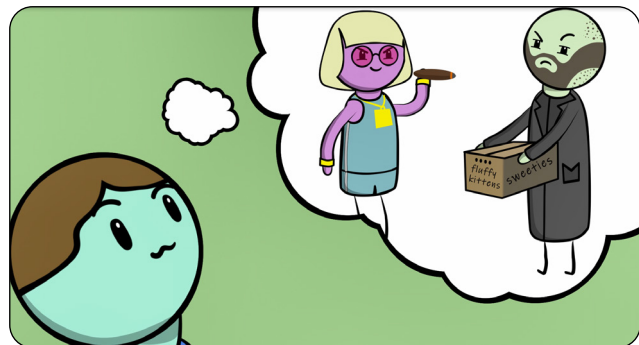
The young men focused on the use of the term 'exploitation' and felt that it was confusing and misleading. When the youth workers explained the terminology, they had a better understanding of it. In their own words, they described it as being taken advantage of or being used.

*"It's like using someone and taking advantage of them."*

*"I have never heard of that but I have heard of it when you explained it."*

*"Never in my 13 years of living (have a heard that the term 'exploitation')."*

The boys and young men supported by their youth workers, wanted to give out clear messages to other young people to raise awareness of how to try and prevent 'being taken advantage of' and decided that the best way to do that was to develop a series of animations to share with other young people, using language that the young people themselves use and depicting scenarios they could relate to.



The animations will be launched on social media (as suggested by the young men) in May 2023 at a CSE Professional Development Day hosted by the SBNI.



# Interfaith Committee

## **Strategic Priority 1:**

**To provide leadership and set direction in the safeguarding and protection of children and young people.**

### **SBNI Business Objectives 2022-2023:**

**1.2: To ensure that the non-statutory committees fulfil their obligations within their terms of reference by,**

**Promote effective collaboration of stakeholders in ensuring children involved in the faith sector are protected and safeguarded.**

## **The SBNI Interfaith Committee works in collaboration with other SBNI committees to encourage effective communication and engagement on key safeguarding initiatives.**

The committee is chaired by the Head of Safeguarding for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and membership of the group is derived from the Catholic Church's Diocese of Down and Connor, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Salvation Army, the Islamic Centre and the Moravian Church. Representatives from NSPCC, PSNI and SPPG also attend.

Faith organisations represented at the committee recognise their moral duty and legal obligation to safeguard and protect children and young people with whom they come in contact. They acknowledge the positive influence their organisations can have on children and young people, when the support structures and environments that are concerned with are managed and maintained effectively.

Members strive to achieve their objectives by encouraging and supporting co-operation across and between this sector and others working in the field of child safeguarding. In particular, the committee focussed on:

- developing partnerships with those, including the SBNI, concerned in safeguarding children in Northern Ireland
- developing and sharing good practice arrangements and safeguarding resources suitable for use within this sector, and encouraging their use across any faith organisation
- reviewing the wider SBNI policy and procedures for their applicability across the faith sector, in conjunction with the Policy and Procedure Committee
- identifying key localised issues, developing safeguarding responses within faith organisations, and sharing these with the wider SBNI member and partner agencies
- supporting the promotion within faith organisations of appropriate safeguarding messages at an operational level
- supporting the training of those in leadership positions across the spectrum of faith-based youth and children's work.

### The Abuse of Positions of Trust in Religion and Sport

The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 criminalises sexual behaviours by adults in a range of statutory roles including; health professionals, teachers, care workers and youth justice staff. The order prohibits them from engaging in sexual activity with a 16 or 17-year-old under their supervision. The four specific offences which apply are:

- sexual activity with a child
- causing or inciting a child to engage in sexual activity
- engaging in sexual activity in the presence of a child
- causing a child to watch a sexual act.

These legal protections, however, did not extend to those adults in a position of trust in non-statutory settings, including the sport and faith sectors and those providers of extra-curricular activities. In 2022, Northern Ireland's Justice Minister brought forward an amendment to the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill, to extend these protections to the areas of religion and sport. This legislation was passed in April 2022 and is now referred to as: [Justice \(Sexual Offences & Trafficking Victims\) Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#)

The new Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act (Section 5) extends the law to include an adult who:

*"Coaches, teaches, trains, supervises or instructs a person, on a regular basis, in a sport or a religion", and who "is aware that they coach, teach, train, supervise or instruct that person, on a regular basis, in that sport or religion". Religion is defined as including "a religion which involves belief in more than one god" and "a religion which does not involve belief in a god."*

The Interfaith Committee sought to fully understand the safeguarding implications as defined within the legislation and invited experts to advise members of current legislative requirements to help inform safeguarding policies. These experts were drawn from the NSPCC and the Department of Justice. Following on from a meeting with the Department of Justice, an explanatory leaflet was produced by the Department and circulated to the Interfaith Committee. This leaflet outlined the implications for religious settings.

The Department of Justice is preparing more detailed guidance on the interpretation and application of these provisions ahead of commencement.

To assist with ensuring members have access and support to relevant information and advice, the PSNI has nominated a senior detective as a point of contact within its Public Protection Branch, who will advise the Interfaith Committee on any concerns or queries they may have. This senior official has given presentations and advised the committee this year on progress in the implementation of Sir John Gillen recommendations into the law and procedures on serious sexual offences in Northern Ireland and remains a point of contact for Interfaith Committee members in relation to 'volunteer' issues.

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/gillen-review-report-law-and-procedures-serious-sexual-offences-ni>

The chair of the Safeguarding in Sport Strategic Group (SSSG), which is facilitated and coordinated by the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit, also made a presentation to the Interfaith Committee. The SSSG has called for Access NI checks in Northern Ireland to mirror vetting checks in the Republic of Ireland, so that vetting checks would be an explicit legal requirement for volunteers in Northern Ireland. The NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit also shared its National Governing Body (NGB) Safeguarding Checklist with the committee to assist member organisations when reviewing their safeguarding policies.



**Trauma Informed Practise presentation to SBNI Interfaith Committee**

# Trauma Informed Practice Committee

## **Strategic Priority 1:**

**To provide leadership and set direction in the safeguarding and protection of children and young people.**

## **SBNI Business Objectives 2022-2023:**

- 1.2: To ensure that the non-statutory committees fulfil their delivery obligations within their terms of reference, by**

### **Establishing a Trauma Informed Practice Committee to:**

**Support member and partner agencies on how to embed a sustainable transformation model of trauma informed practice and build on existing knowledge of Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma Informed Practice.**

### Trauma Informed Practice

In 2022 the SBNI took the strategic decision to adopt a Trauma Informed Approach to underpin all its work to safeguard children and young people and a Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) Committee was established. The work of the committee was then embedded into SBNI structures and the annual business plan under strategic priority 1: 'To provide leadership and set direction in the safeguarding and protection of children and young people.' with the long-term objectives continuing the themes of:



- deepening collaboration
- embedding ACEs/TI knowledge
- developing trauma informed organisational practices
- sustaining workforce development.

Committee membership includes: a HSCTs' representative, EA (Pupil Wellbeing and Protective Service) PSNI, PHA (Health and Social Wellbeing Improvement and Emotional health and Wellbeing), SPPG (Adult Safeguarding), Action for Children, Include Youth, PBNI, YJA, a Councils and Solace representative and CCGANI.

The committee is chaired by a non-executive member of the SBNI Board, who previously chaired the TIP Steering Group, and is supported by two implementation managers. Three task and finish groups have been created, which have representation across a range of sectors.

The committee began with a 'Peer Review' distributed to all TIP Committee members. The responses formed the basis of discussions regarding each organisation's Trauma Informed (TI) journey with the TIP implementation managers. The review also provided a framework for positive action.

The Transformation Model (an amalgamation of two frameworks: The Universal Service Delivery process and the Sequential Intercept Model) was also reviewed and used to measure progress with each committee member.

### Transformation model for Trauma Informed Practice

using the Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) underpinned by the Universal Service Delivery (USD) process



The work of the committee facilitated member agencies' own development as well as enabling collaboration and shared learning. Examples of developments from some of the committee member organisations included:

- **Include Youth:** The development of their new building (shared with VOYPIC) is a result of co-design with a range of service users. A video has been produced that demonstrates the process they undertook. There was also ongoing skills development of an already trauma responsive workforce.
- **Action for Children:** launched regional TIP training on its E-learning portal. This further developed the workforce. Action for Children also commenced a review of policies through a trauma 'lens'. TIP resources and examples have been added to its intranet.
- **PHA:** The TIP team were invited by the PHA to contribute to their regional webinar, with assistance from ASCERT: 'A Trauma-Informed Approach' - a joint event between Suicide Prevention and Drug and Alcohol Services to support organisations on their trauma informed journey'. 250 people joined the event on-line. This was followed by a TIP system change workshop (40 employees attended) concerning the PHA's 'Refresh and Review' Strategy. The aim was to further embed trauma informed approaches into PHA business. A new post of 'Transformation Manager' has been created.
- **PBNI:** TIP is incorporated into the corporate plan. It is recognised as essential in reducing recidivism as well as having other benefits. There are a number of champions across the organisation. The PBNI is participating in the TI Oregon pilot. It held a conference 'Supporting Our People to be a Trauma Informed Service' (March 2023) which included keynote speech from the SBNI Director of Operations



Amanda Stewart, PBNI CEO with Conference Speakers



**EA:** has circulated the [SBNI Trauma Informed Practice Online Training Brochure](https://safeguardingni.org) ([safeguardingni.org](https://safeguardingni.org)) across all schools and it is accessible for staff and the general public on the EANI website. The EA continues the rollout of access to online module Level 1 and facilitated training in Level 2 has commenced; integration of TIP with the Nurture programmes and several new roles have been funded and advertised regarding health and wellbeing of pupils.

**SPPG:** the Interim Adult Protection Board champions continued to strengthen TI approaches, particularly in adult services, throughout the year. It has also been progressing the connections between TIP and the social value aspect of commissioning.

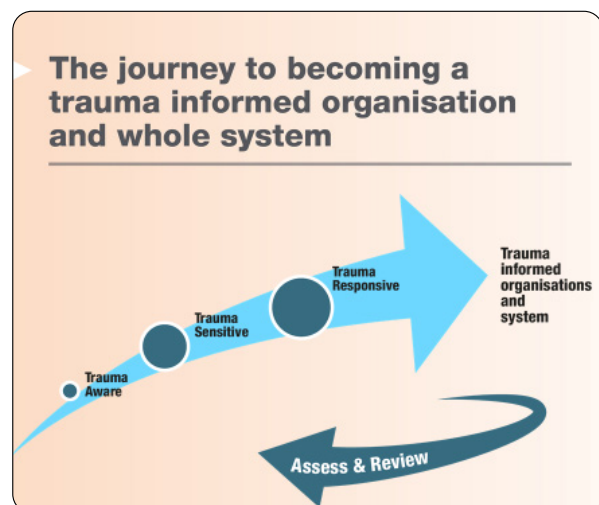
**YJA:** YJA's work with young people has moved from a risk focus into a strength-based approach. It held workshops on TIP for staff to promote best practice and the YJA senior management team has agreed to participate in the TI Oregon pilot.

**HSCTs:** Staff wellbeing has been a key issue for Trusts, especially with strains on the system regarding retention of staff and vacancies across many disciplines. Training programmes on ACEs and TIP have been rolled out with staffing elements highlighted. The Southern HSCT is participating in a pilot with TI Oregon and the Northern HSCT is delivering their own 'training for trainers' programme in collaboration with SBNI using TIP resources and training manuals and continues to pursue the TIP agenda across the organisation.

**CCGANI:** is using the SBNI training framework to support their work. CCGANI ran a 2-day training event focussed on engagement with children. TI approaches are being applied specifically to court templates and staff induction training. Views of children and young people are being actively sought and are benefitting service delivery.

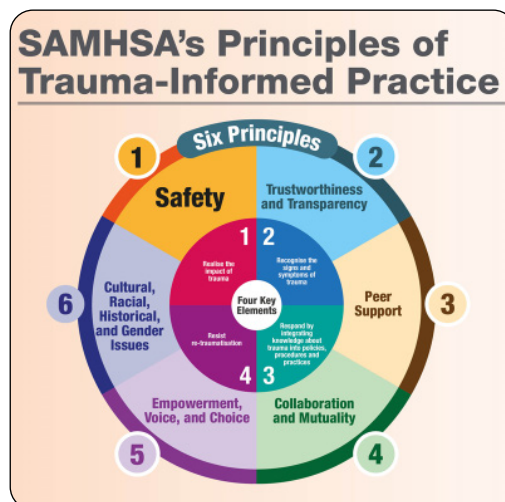
**SOLACE/Council:** are making links with policing and community safety arrangements. Papers are being prepared for SOLACE (Council CEOs) regarding TIP. Induction training in TIP is in the planning for new councillors.

In addition to the internal reviews and audits of TIP, the committee developed a workplan to support SBNI member and partner agencies on how to embed a sustainable transformation model of trauma informed practice and build on existing knowledge of ACEs and TIP. To do this it was decided to focus on three key areas of work:



**To commission updated research on implementation of TIP within organisations, to capture progress across diverse sectors; identify transferable learning; and to use these insights to plan the next steps for TIP advancement in Northern Ireland. The research would also look at developments in other jurisdictions.**

Following an open tender process in the reporting year, the Queen's University Belfast (QUB) was commissioned to provide an evidence review on the implementation of trauma informed practice within organisations. The research team includes academics and researchers from the School of Social Sciences, Education & Social Work and the School of Nursing, representing the disciplines of social work, nursing, social policy, youth and community work and is led by Principal Investigator Dr Suzanne Mooney. The research and actions resulting from it will be reported on in the next annual report.



**To commence the development of an online TIP resource for organisations which would serve as a good practice guide to support them to implement a whole system approach to becoming a trauma informed organisation.**

The online TIP resource for organisations has continued to be developed in the reporting period. It is being structured around the focus areas ('domains') as suggested by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)<sup>7</sup> and will provide examples of the trauma informed principles in action.

**To develop a communication strategy to promote training opportunities and resources**

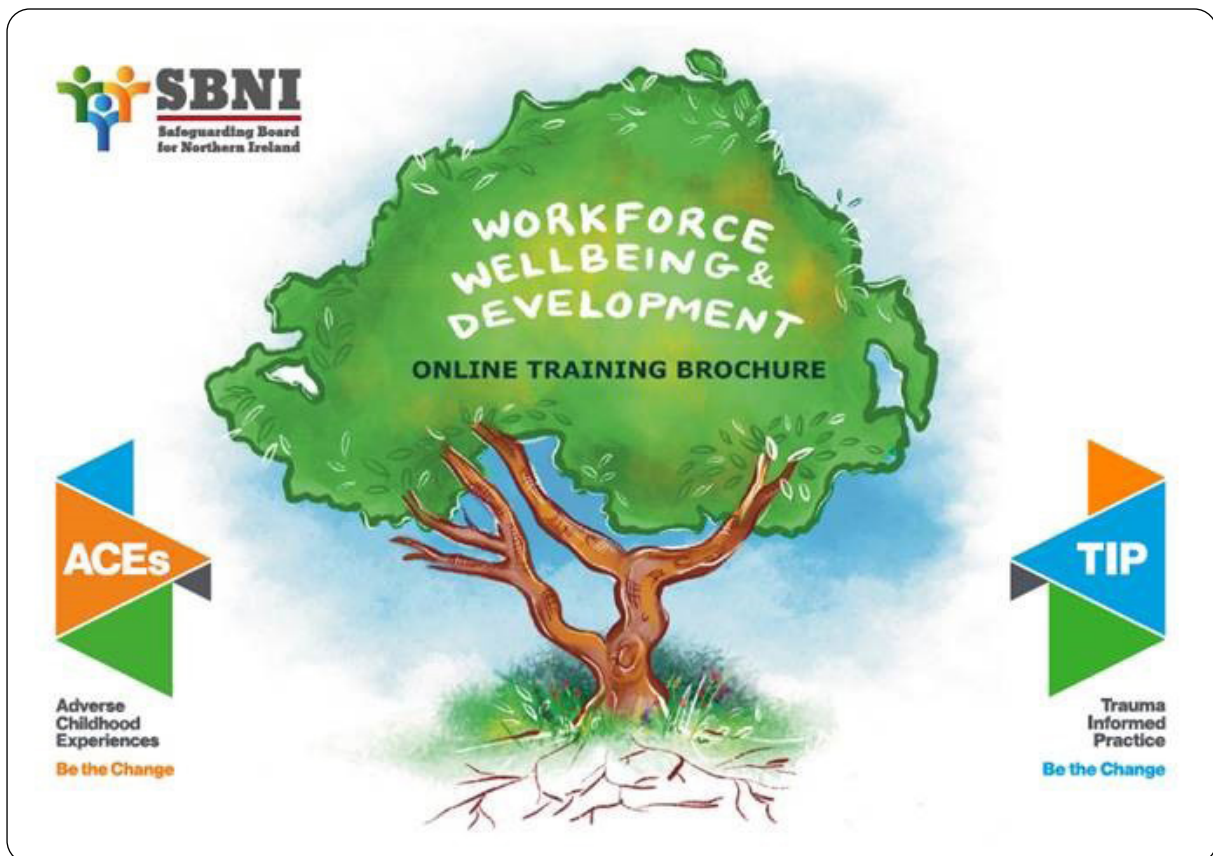
Communications strategy: The [SBNI Trauma Informed Practice Online Training Brochure \(safeguardingni.org\)](https://www.safeguardingni.org) was designed as part of the communications plan and was launched in March 2023.

The brochure provides background information, links to a range of resources and online training for practitioners across Northern Ireland which include the SBNI TIP training modules as well as the Solihull Approach TIP modules. The Solihull Approach licence



7 [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](https://www.samhsa.gov)

provides free access to a suite of training for practitioners across Northern Ireland and was extended this year for use until 2025. As of 31 March 2023, 2549 registered learners had accessed the Solihull Approach online modules. These include 4-hour modules on Understanding Trauma, Understanding Attachment and Understanding Brain



Development as well as sector specific modules which consider the impact of 'Working in High Pressured Environments' for health and social care workers, firefighters, ambulance workers and police.

In collaboration with the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC) Communications Team a series of digital communications were delivered to raise awareness of the potential impact of ACEs and introduce the concept of TIP across the whole system.

In year the committee's communications task and finish group has been developing plans focusing upon:

- the launch of the research and the online resource to support TI organisational development
- dissemination of learning from the research
- supporting a series of short workshops to encourage use of the online trauma informed organisational resource.

The TIP Implementation Managers, supported by the TIP Committee delivered presentations to, and facilitated discussions with, the Interfaith Committee, Mental Health Committee, the Learning and Development task and finish group of the DVA Committee and the CMR authors workshop, contributing to training frameworks and communicating how TIP can be infused and embedded across all work.

The implementation managers also supported individual requests to assist the implementation of trauma informed practice across the sectors of Justice, Health and Social care, Education, and the Community and Voluntary sectors. Some examples of ongoing activity by member and partner agencies are detailed below;

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland continued to train their senior management in understanding TIP. It developed a pilot in the PBNI approved hostel Thompson house. This included upskilling their work force, co-designing services with the men in the hostel

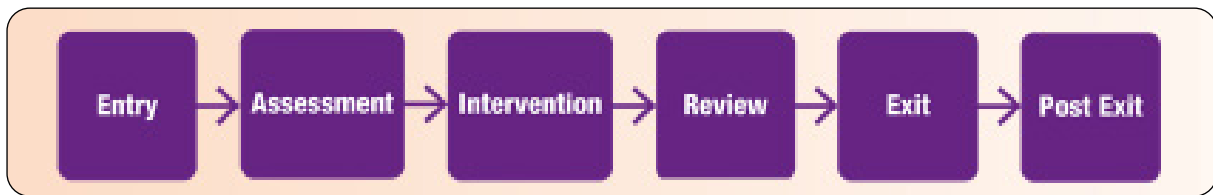


and collaborating with their PBNI partners. Positive feedback was received from staff regarding their training. In addition, plans were put in place to create trauma informed environments, more inclusive strategies regarding the running of the hostel as well as developing adversity aware and trauma informed assessment tools and interventions.

The Salvation Army found the Transformation Model to be informative and applied it where appropriate across their services. They looked particularly at the service users' journeys and outcomes and whether, on exit from a service, they were actually better off.



The Salvation Army's family and homeless services continued to develop a trauma informed (TI) strategy with support from the TIP team. This resulted in the organisation's senior executive agreeing in principle to fund TI developments, and a specific role within the organisation to lead the work. TIP was also embedded into their corporate plans across UK and Ireland. Commitment to this strategy was supported by investment in further workforce training. A conference was also held focussing upon TIP in the Salvation Army.



### Universal Service Delivery Process

The Northern HSCT continued to develop its TIP Implementation Group. The group gained members from across disciplines and services and developed a training strategy. It also linked TIP to corporate plans e.g. implementing an 'Open, Just and Learning' culture where TIP could be implicitly or explicitly embedded. Training for trainers was provided by in-house expertise with resources supplied by the SBNI TIP team. A series of podcasts were developed by psychology leads regarding TIP. Workforce development was led by Psychology and Social Work (SW) Children's Services and the Social Work learning and development team. The training included accessing online modules (Level 1: 624 participants, Level 2: 383 participants); manager training across children's services, and facilitated training modules across adult and children's workforces. The TIP team continued to offer support in terms of attending Northern HSCT TIP leadership meetings, keeping the group informed of developments in the SBNI and across the region, and providing resources.

The Northern HSCT social work training team continued to roll out SBNI TIP modules to social work and multidisciplinary staff. of the Trust looked at governance using a Trauma Informed lens and explored participation in a pilot audit with TI Oregon, which will commence in the next financial year.



Northern Health  
and Social Care Trust

#teamNORTH

The SBNI Implementation Managers also delivered workshops at the National Youth Council Ireland 'National Youth Health Programme North-South' practice sharing/ networking session and the South West College 'Holding onto Childhood -early years conference'.



## Engagement with Government Departments



The TIP Implementation Managers, a Professional Officer and the SBNI Director of Operations were invited by the Northern Ireland Executive Office to lead a TI workshop on 26 May 2023 to inform the development of their strategic framework related to Ending Violence Against Women And Girls (EVAWG).

Also attending were members of the Executive Historical Institutional Abuse Team. The workshop addressed how adversities and trauma in childhood and throughout the life course may have an impact on later life. It supported the EVAWG team to explore how they would apply a TI approach to their strategy.

Workshops and presentations were facilitated by the TIP team and the SBNI Director of Operations for the DOJ Permanent Secretary and his team and subsequently to the DE Deputy Permanent Secretary and her team. These events focused on system change and the benefits of TIP regarding outcomes for children young people, families and adults and communities and therefore the wider NI system.

### Justice

The Justice sector continued to make significant progress in terms of their commitment to embed a trauma informed approach. One of the TIP Implementation Managers attends the multi-agency Justice TIP Sub-Group. As well as the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) Regional Youth Reoffending Sub-Group chaired by YJA. This is a forum to share good practice and developments. The impact of adversity for children and parents across the lifespan is always considered to ensure an appropriate response to young re-offenders. The Transformation Model has been introduced to the forum as a means of assessing the earliest possible intercept points, understanding of roles and responsibilities and as a way of ensuring consistency across agencies when working with the same children and young people and their families. An implementation manager was invited to speak at the YJA senior managers meeting.

## Department for Communities

As well as supporting projects to develop their workforces as trainers, the Department for Communities (DfC) engaged with the TIP team in the development of the 'Developing Women as Leaders' programme. Following a pilot of the programme, the advisory group guided the implementation of the projects and advised that a Trauma Informed approach should be used. The TIP team supported this TI strategy which included awareness sessions for organisations applying for funding and for the assessors of the applications, consideration of safeguarding issues for both the adult women participants, any potential minors in the programme (16/17-year olds) and for children of the participants.

## Training and 'Training for Trainers'

An important aspect of the work of the TIP Committee is to seek opportunities for member agencies to work together across boundaries. As such further trainers from a range of cross-sectoral organisations joined the body of TIP trainers in 2022-2023, availing of the updated 3rd edition manual (January 2022). The material was updated, including Module 2 (Developing Trauma Sensitive Practice), regarding: the trauma of displaced peoples (due to war, economic instability and environmental factors) and to raise awareness of the factors for children with disabilities where trauma may be overlooked.



### Resources to Develop Trauma Sensitive Approaches to Practice

In 2022 members of the EPPOC team and EPPOC funded projects trained to become SBNI TIP trainers along with representatives from education, faith and community sectors, the Health and Safety Executive, and the arts sector. Two training sessions with a total of 26 participants were delivered by our partners ASCERT on our behalf.



The Rural Community Network (RCN) staff and member agencies also participated in the training. RCN staff delivering TIP modules for the course. In addition, academic staff from Ulster University (UU) received training and resources from the SBNI to include in their Youth and Community Work undergraduate degree. They also explored how ACEs and trauma inform their teaching and practice, relate to the communities they work with and support community resilience building through their professional skills.

The SBNI also contributed to the curriculum of the UU post graduate and Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) approved 'Social Work using Community Development approaches' whose students have roles in GP multidisciplinary teams, Older Peoples Services and LAC Services. The impact of adversity in childhood and across the lifespan was highlighted, as well as the engagement with communities to address collective need and build on community strengths.



The Clinical Education Centre (Nursing and AHP) consultants also had a refresher training session. Workforce development opportunities remain available through online modules hosted on:

1. Learn HSC: [learn.hscni.net](https://learn.hscni.net)
2. Ascertainment website: [www.ascert.biz](https://www.ascert.biz) (573 people completed level 1 'Awareness of ACEs' and 395 completed level 2 'Developing Trauma Sensitive Practice').
3. Education Authority website: <https://sites.google.com/c2ken.net/teacherprofessionallearning-ea/learning-menu/aces>
4. QUB and UU schools' web pages.

At end of March 2023 there were over 500 SBNI TIP trainers representing health, social care, justice, education, community and voluntary sectors. In addition, the Southern Regional College (SRC) of Further Education (FE) committed to progress an accreditation award at Level 3 for the SBNI TIP training modules with the Open College Network (OCN). This will benefit the emerging workforces from the college in the pilot period 2023-2024. This will then roll out to be used by suitably qualified trainers across the OCN and FE college network providing a sustainable and relevant qualification for both students and existing workforces.



Allied to this the SRC continues to develop its workforce and apply a trauma informed lens to its approach to student and staff wellbeing. They endeavour to embrace a whole college approach and are supported by their board of directors and senior managers.

### Strategic Transformation

The SBNI TIP Transformation model continued to be shared across a range of interested SBNI member agencies, partners and associates such as Action Mental Health, the Bogside and Brandywell Health Forum, the Patient Client Council, the Victims and Survivors Service and the Charities Commission.

Presentations to boards, senior management teams and TIP champions proved effective in supporting the development of TIP into corporate plans, training strategies and workforce wellbeing approaches.

TIP was integrated into a workshop for PSNI SCAID officers (Sexual & Child Abuse Investigating Detectives). Feedback was positive regarding how this informed their work both in terms of interviewing and supporting victims and their families.

An intensive training for trainers was arranged with some of the Health and Social Care Leadership Centre consultants and discussions are continuing regarding incorporating TIP into all relevant leadership courses.

# Focus on Finance

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## The Department of Health (DoH) is the sponsor department of the SBNI and allocates an annual budget.

For 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, this was **£672,788** (incl. salary uplift in year).

Additional to this, the Department of Health’s Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) provided **£75,636** to fund the SBNI for Case Management Reviews.

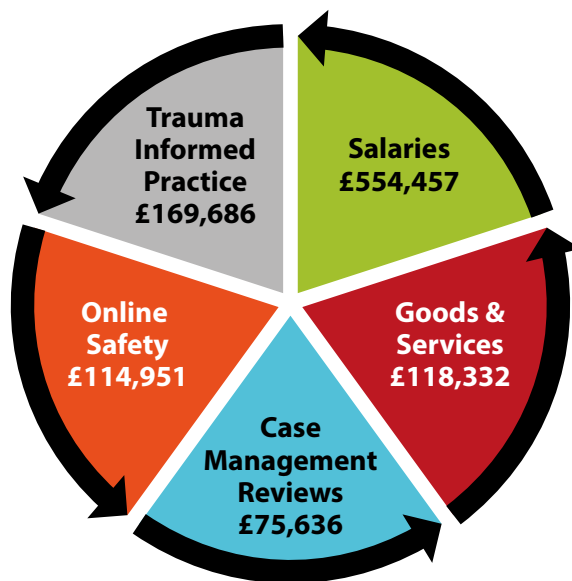
In addition to the recurrent budget the SBNI was also allocated a budget of:

- **£169,686** by the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime, to continue the work of embedding Trauma Informed Practice across member and partner agencies and departments
- **£114,951 by the DoH** to support delivery of the Executive’s Online Safety Strategy and Action Plan.

The total budget for the SBNI for April 2022–March 2023 was: **£1,033,062**

### How our money was spent by 31 March 2023:

- Salaries: £554,457
- Goods and Services: £118,332
- Case Management Reviews: £75,636
- Trauma Informed Practice: £169,686
- Online Safety: £114,951



**Significant Goods and Services (Inc. CMR) Spend in Year:**

- SBNI Operational Running Costs: **£101,000.**
- Online Safety – procurement of research and online safety hub: **£58,000.**
- Policies and Procedures: e-Platform management of Regional Core Policy and Procedures and associated guidance development- **£6,800.**
- Case Management Review learning events - **£6,500.**
- Educational plays across SBNI strategic priorities of, Domestic Violence and Mental Wellbeing as well as raising awareness of child exploitation: **£14,998.**
- Partnership Support of Child Care in Practice Journal: **£5,000.**
- Enhanced Service Level Agreement with BSO Equality Unit: **£6,969.**
- Safeguarding Panels partnership funding for Domestic Violence Awareness Raising Animations – hearing the voice of the child and young person and DARAC Training: **£5,540.**
- Trauma Informed Practice - procurement of research: **£27,000.**

**At 31 March 2023 the SBNI had achieved a break-even position.**

# Annexes

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# Annex 1: SBNI Business Objectives 2022-2023

## Strategic Priority 1:

To provide leadership and set direction in the safeguarding and protection of children and young people.

### Objective 1.1:

To ensure that the Case Management Review, Safeguarding and Child Death Overview Panels meet their statutory functions.

### Summary Update:

All of the statutory panels of the SBNI have continued to meet and fulfil their statutory duties and functions, with the exception of the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP). A CDOP was provided for in the legislation setting up the SBNI. However, the relevant articles of the legislation have not been commenced.

Details pertaining to the activity of the Case Management Review and Safeguarding Panels can be found in the main body of the annual report. The CMRP progressed eight CMR reports to completion and the Safeguarding Panels delivered on their Regulation 31 duties.

### Objective 1.2:

To ensure that the non-statutory committees fulfil their delivery obligations within their terms of reference.

### Summary Update:

The SBNI has 10 non-statutory committees; including three which respond to the strategic priorities of Domestic Violence and Abuse, Mental Health and Online Safety, and they have continued throughout this reporting period to deliver their obligations as detailed in their committee terms of reference.

**Objective 1.3:**

To participate in relevant child safeguarding and child protection fora.

**Summary Update:**

The SBNI has continued to participate in relevant child safeguarding and child protection fora, for example:

- DoJ/DoH – Domestic Violence and Abuse - Stakeholders Assurance Group.
- Multi Agency Support Hub Steering Group.
- Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC) Programme Board.
- EPPOC 'Protective Factors' Benefits Realisation Group.
- The Executive Office sub group on contingency accommodation for asylum seekers.
- Department for Communities Safeguarding Forum.
- Safeguarding in Sport Forum.



**Strategic Priority 2:**

**To hear and respond to the voices of children and young people affected by domestic violence and abuse.**

**Objective 2.1:**

Work with government departments and their agencies to prevent domestic violence and abuse (DVA) from occurring.

**Objective 2.2:**

To work with member and partner agencies engaged in the DVA arena to raise awareness among parents/carers and professionals of the impact of DVA on children and young people.

**Objective 2.3:**

To work with member and partner agencies to provide training resources and expertise in how to improve the recognition, assessment, and responses to children, young people and families experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

**Summary Update:**

All of the aforementioned objectives have been undertaken the details of which are noted in the Domestic Violence and Abuse Committee and Safeguarding Panel chapters of the annual report.

### **Strategic Priority 3:**

**To support children and young people in exercising their rights to enjoy the benefits of the online world free from harm, fear and abuse.**

#### **Objective 3.1:**

To work with government departments and their agencies to develop an online infrastructure and associated standards to prevent children and young people from experiencing harm and abuse online.

#### **Objective 3.2:**

To work with member and partner agencies to educate children and young people, their parents and carers and those who work with them to navigate the online world safely and confidently and support them to stay safe and well online.

#### **Objective 3.3:**

To ensure the views of children and young people inform and influence online policy and practice development.

### **Summary Update:**

All of the aforementioned objectives have been undertaken, the details of which are noted in the Online Safety Committee and Safeguarding Panel chapters of the annual report.

#### **Strategic Priority 4:**

**To provide a voice for children and young people affected by mental health issues.**

##### **Objective 4.1:**

To work with government departments and agencies to help reduce the incidence of children and young people affected by mental health issues.

##### **Objective 4.2:**

To work with member and partner agencies to raise awareness among parents, carers and professionals of the impact of poor mental health and any associated stigma, on children and young people.

##### **Objective 4.3:**

To work with member and partner agencies to promote awareness for children and young people, their parents and carers in how to recognise, respond and seek help in relation to mental health.

##### **Outcome 4.4:**

To work with partners to promote training in how to improve the recognition, assessment, and responses to children, young people and families experiencing the impact of mental health issues.

#### **Summary Update:**

The aforementioned objectives has been undertaken and an update can be found in the Mental Health Committee and CMR chapters of the annual report.

## **Annex 2: Case Management Review Legislation**

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**“Section 3(4) of the Safeguarding Board Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 places a duty on the SBNI to carry out CMRs in prescribed circumstances which are set out under Regulation 17 (2) and (3) of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (Membership, Procedure, Function and Committee) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012. The criteria for holding Case Management Reviews are as follows**

**17 (2)** where -

- (a)** a child has died or been significantly harmed;
- (b)** any of the following apply: -
  - (i)** abuse or neglect of the child is known or suspected;
  - (ii)** the child or a sibling of the child is or has been placed on the child protection register maintained by a HSC trust which lists each child resident in the area of the trust who, following an investigation by that trust under Article 66 of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, is subject to a plan to safeguard that child from further harm and promote his health and development; or
  - (iii)** the child or a sibling of the child is or has been looked after by an authority within the meaning of Article 25 of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995;
- (c)** the Safeguarding Board has concerns about the effectiveness in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children of any of the persons or bodies represented on the Safeguarding Board by virtue of section 1(2)(b) and (4) of the Act; and
- (d)** the Safeguarding Board determines that there is significant learning to be gained from the case management review which, if applied effectively, will lead to substantial improvements in practice in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in Northern Ireland.

**17 (3)** Where the Safeguarding Board has determined that a case demonstrates that any of the persons or bodies represented on the Safeguarding Board by virtue of section 1(2)(b) and (4) of the Act, have worked effectively (individually or in partnership) and that there is outstanding positive learning to be gained from the case which will lead to improved practice in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children across Northern Ireland”.

## **Annex 3: Summary of learning and improvements arising from CMRs**

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CMRs by their very nature generate recommendations for improvement.

Learning across the reviews focussed on

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Adolescent Self harm
- A still born child
- Physical Abuse and
- Sudden Infant Death

### **Child Sexual Exploitation**

- The SPPG in conjunction with regional Signs of Safety and Public Protection HSC Leads are developing a regional guidance in respect of safety planning which will aim to address ambiguity around safety plans, and ensure regional consistency. One HSCT is currently piloting the new guidance, which if positively evaluated will be implemented across the region.
- The SPPG and Department of Health are currently considering the need for employed waking night staff within children's homes across the region. As part of this consideration, they are assessing the appropriate professional level of staffing required taking account of the risks, to provide a professionalised consistency of service delivery. A finalised paper has been issued for consultation across the HSCT's.
- SBNI has established a multi-agency CSE Public Awareness/Safer Spaces Forum attended by representatives from district councils. Significant multiagency and engagement with Councils is underway.
- One Health and Social Care Trust has reviewed and updated its Lone Working Policy
- Assurance has been received from PSNI and HSCT's that all children and young people assessed at risk of CSE are assessed and managed within Child Protection Procedures / Protecting Looked After Children (PLAC) Procedures
- The Missing Children Protocol (Runaway and Missing from Home And Care) June 2015, has been reviewed ensuring that the young person is at the centre of responses and the most appropriate professional completes the return to home interviews unless a crime has been committed.

- In response to incidents where young people have been reported as missing from their placement the PSNI have improved how the information relating to the young person can be included and accessed through the NICHE alerts.
- The PSNI have implemented training and awareness raising with call handlers in respect to the risks to children and young people missing from care.
- The PSNI have reviewed how best to ensure the ready accessibility of Early Evidence Kits for police officers at the initial stage of a criminal investigation.

### **Child Death following an incident of self-harm**

- The Education Authority are working with HSC – CAMHS, developing an early intervention risk assessment and management process to support pupils with emerging mental health issues including suicide ideation and self-harm.

### **Child Still born whose mother had a severe learning disability**

- HSCT's have ensured that the learning from this particular review is discussed at each Trust's Adult and Children Safeguarding Committee meetings. These meetings have cross representation from both community and acute settings; therefore, the learning will reach a broader audience. (HSCTs)
- The SPPG is developing a regional policy across Adult and Children's Services that specifically takes account of the issue of temporary residence. The policy will set out clear guidance on which Trust should accept case responsibility where an individual is identified as requiring services, including pregnant women.

### **Physical abuse**

- The SBNI Policy and Procedures Committee are further developing the SBNI Policies and Procedures Manual in respect of 'The Child Protection Register', point 8, 'Children/ Young People and Families Who Move', with regard to the transfer of child protection cases, to include pre-birth child protection cases, across the HSCT's and across jurisdictions. This transfer guidance should provide clarity with regard to the roles and responsibilities of all professionals involved with expecting parents, parents, and families in terms of information sharing and escalation of concerns in order to promote collaborative working.
- SPPG has established a task and finish group to review the use of safety plans/safety networks in cases where both children's and adult mental health services are involved in line with the 'Think Family Model' and 'Signs of Safety' framework.



## Annex 4: SBNI Organisational Structure (April 2021 – March 2022)

