



Yearly Report for 2023-24

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Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce the yearly report of the Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership (PSCP) for 2023/24. Written in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, it details the work that the PSCP has undertaken to carry out and achieve the objectives of its three-year (2023-2026) safeguarding strategy, as well as highlighting contributions from our partner agencies.

This has been my first full year of being the Independent Chair and Scrutineer. My role is to provide support and challenge to the partnership, an important function and one that I take very seriously. I provide oversight of all the work of the partnership, thus providing assurance to the safeguarding partners of an independent lens being applied to safeguarding practice, analysis and any resultant recommendations.



Our partnership is based on the premise of high support and high challenge, working collaboratively to resolve issues and monitor the impact we have made together. I am very aware of the challenges ongoing within the public sector locally and nationally, particularly related to increased demand, as well as budget and workforce pressures.

Despite this our senior leaders remained visible, engaged, and dedicated to working collectively to ensure we effectively safeguard and promote the wellbeing of our children and families.

I personally meet with the executive leads from the statutory partners, as well as the Chief Executive of the local authority on a quarterly basis. In addition, I meet with the chairs of the 3 sub-groups that drive the business of the PSCP. This supports our wide range of partners to maintain a clear focus to deliver the partnership's priorities and workstreams, but also provides a governance framework for accountability.

A significant part of my role, alongside the safeguarding partners is maintaining a "critical friend" overview of organisational changes and inspections. This has been significant in this reporting year. The local authority was inspected by OFSTED and I was pleased to see the hard work and professionalism result in a continued 'good' grading, which is a strength for our children and families as well as our communities across Portsmouth.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary also reorganised during this period and assurance was sought of their continued focus on embedding the Child Centred Policing Strategy. Our Health colleagues within NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight (Integrated Care Board), as well as NHS Solent undergoing organisational change consultation, with its progress reported on regularly at the PSCP Executive and Board, with a focus on assurance that changes will not impact on child safeguarding services and responses.

2023-24 has been a busy year for the services and agencies that are part of the PSCP multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and this report highlights some of the ongoing challenges, but also the response to and impact of the multi-agency network. The PSCP will continue to work together on agreed priorities in our strategy but is also reactive to new issues as they arise.

The continued development of the Family Support Plan introduction, has seen an increase in the use of the plans, focussed on early identification and prevention to prevent children and family's needs from increasing. The data depicts the increased use, but it is also good to see that professionals are gaining confidence in their effectiveness to improve outcome for children and families.

The multi-agency response to Missing Exploited and Trafficked has evolved during this year. You will read the response that is now in place to identify, support and intervene with this cohort of our most vulnerable children. I know of the continued dedication of our multi agency, but also how well they are connected

and continue to innovate together to seek improvements, which will continue to show this as a strength for Portsmouth.

We must ensure our practitioners are supported to do their best for children and their families. The PSCP training team are at the heart of the of the continuous professional development of the workforce in terms of training but also the introduction of the 'Re-think' model of reflective practise.

One of the key challenges for Portsmouth, but also nationally, is the attendance of children at school. We know that generally when children are in regular school attendance they are at less risk and needs are being met. This a key priority for the city and the network of professionals working with children across the system. We are aware of the challenges and the response taking place in Portsmouth to this challenge is well coordinated and seeking to make the difference to improve outcomes for our children.

Finally, it is good see feedback from not only the staff working withing the PSCP network, but in particular the voice of children and young people, their families threaded throughout this report - they are our priority as a partnership

I would like to extend my thanks to all our partners for their continued support during the year, which I believe bears testimony to the positive and transparent relationships within the board and the extended partnership

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S MacKechnie', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Scott MacKechnie

Independent Chair & Scrutineer for Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership

Introduction

Welcome to the 2023-24 yearly report for the Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership. As the three statutory partners, we would take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to read this and for your support in our continuing progress to improve how we work together to deliver the best possible services to our communities.

We hope you find the report useful in understanding the partnership's work and celebrating some of the successes. These successes are only possible through the dedication and diligence of the many people working with children, young people and families across a range of agencies.

We believe Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership supports mature and effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for the children in the city. We know from our quality assurance work that our services make a positive difference to the lives of many children, young people and families every day. We do not always get everything right. Serious incidents when they occur are the subject of Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, and the partnership embraces any learning in a timely way. There is a clear focus on learning together and our partnership learning and development offer is a strong and effective one. Our learning doesn't stop there, from the task and finish groups to the case file audits to Re-thinks, the culture is of working together, learning together and delivering together which is a positive indicator of the partnership potential for the coming years.

We have valued the role of our Independent Chair and Scrutineer who has provided independent oversight, challenge and support to the partnership with a relational approach.

During this reporting period the partnership have also reviewed our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in response to the new iteration of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, and this has included briefings to strategic leaders within the partnerships to familiarise them with their responsibilities and accountabilities.

We would like to end this message by thanking you all for your ongoing support, your hard work and your commitment to this work to improve the lives of our children and families in Portsmouth.



Sarah Daly,
Director of Children,
Families and Education



Nigel Lecointe,
Detective Chief Superintendent,
Head of Specialist Crime Command



Sarah Shore,
Interim Director of Quality
and Safeguarding



About Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership



Portsmouth is a city on the south coast of England. It remains the local authority with the highest population density outside of London, with around 37 people living on each football pitch-sized area of land.

According to the 2021 census the population size in Portsmouth is 208,100 and it is estimated that 23.4% (48,500) of this is children aged 0 to 19 years.

The Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership (PSCP) is a statutory, multi-organisation partnership which oversees and leads upon children's safeguarding across Portsmouth. Assuring that organisations are working effectively, both individually and together, to support and safeguard children who are at risk of abuse and neglect.

Working Together¹ is the statutory guidance that provides multi-agency safeguarding arrangement with a legal framework. In accordance with this, the three safeguarding partners that are responsible and accountable for these arrangements in Portsmouth are Portsmouth City Council, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary

Strong, effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements should be responsive to local circumstances and engage the right people in a collaborative way. Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider are required to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children. A list of organisations that meet the criteria to be included as a relevant agency in Portsmouth can be found within our Partnership Arrangements².

In May 2023, Ofsted published its Inspection of Portsmouth's local authority children's services (ILACS) confirming that they continue to be rated overall 'good', with 'protection and help' being rated 'outstanding'. Ofsted noted that 'they (children's services) have worked with partner agencies to deliver transformation, particularly within the early help and family safeguarding teams, which stand out as areas of strong practice, delivering excellent experiences and progress for children

Our Vision

Our children and young people within Portsmouth will grow up being and feeling safe, protected, and cared for by their families and in their community. As a multi-agency partnership, we will achieve this by working with families to enable them to keep their children safe from all types of harm by providing the right advice, support, and intervention, from the right services, at the right time.

Our Structure

In addition to the Board and Executive, Portsmouth has the following Committees:

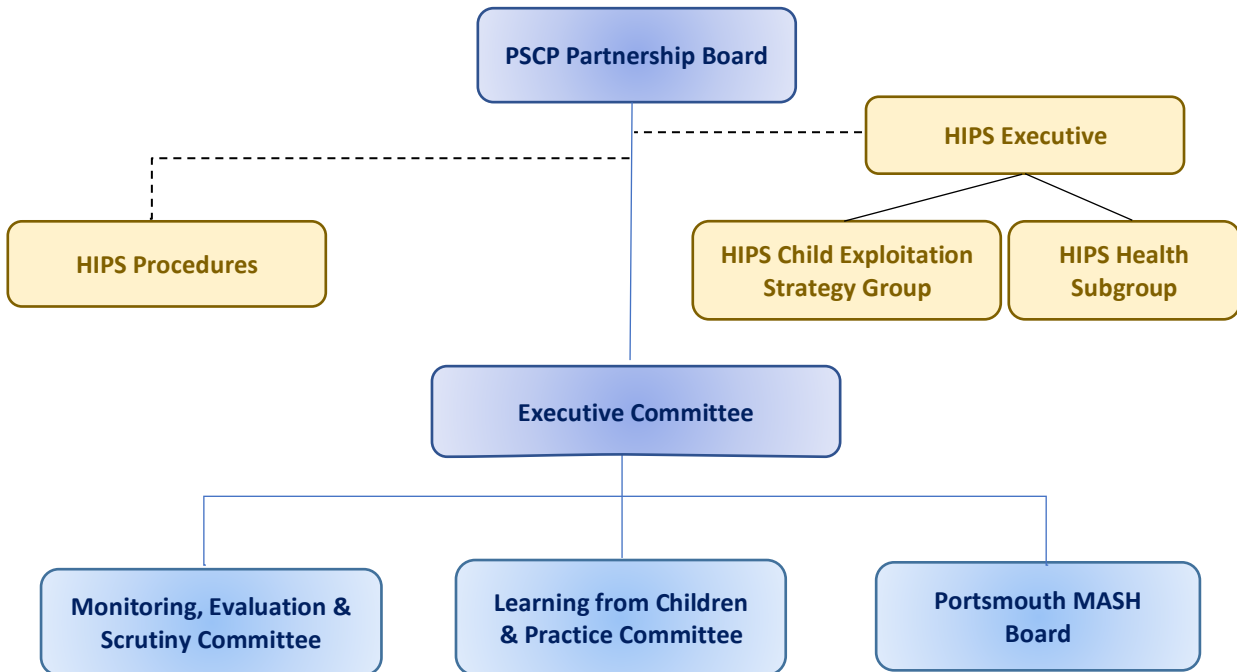
Learning From Children and Practice Committee (LCPC)- which oversees safeguarding notifications and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, commissions external authors and reviews actions and learning

¹ [Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101311/working-together-to-safeguard-children-2023-statutory-guidance.pdf)

² [About us - Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership \(portsmouthscp.org.uk\)](https://www.portsmouthscp.org.uk/about-us)

Monitoring Evaluation and Scrutiny Committee (MESC) - which oversees our comprehensive dataset and analysis, multi-agency audits of practice, recommendation tracking and compliance with safeguarding standards set out in the Portsmouth Safeguarding Compact which is completed every two years by over 200 agencies in the city.

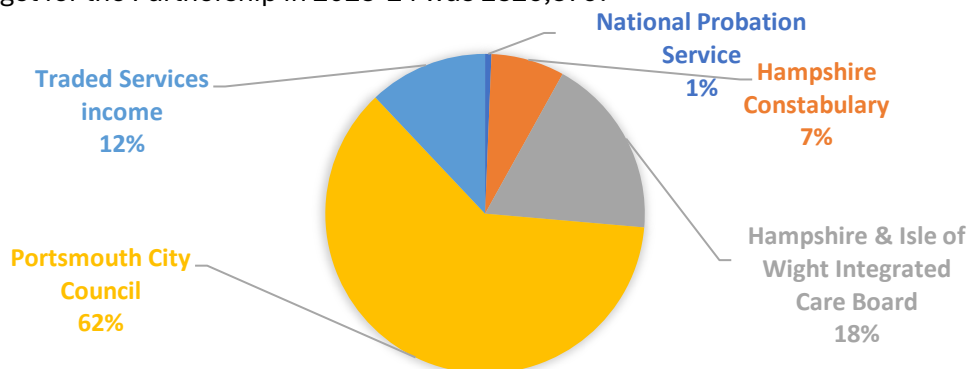
Portsmouth Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Board - ensuring effective resourcing, delivery, and quality of decision-making at the multi-agency front door



In recognition of the fact that two of our partners and several of our relevant agencies work across two or more local authority area, our partnership is part of a wider Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton (HIPS) safeguarding arrangement. Whilst not statutory, this enables effective joint working across a wider geographical footprint. The same Independent Chair and Scrutineer covers all the local partnerships and the HIPS Executive

Financial contributions to support the Partnership

The total budget for the Partnership in 2023-24 was £326,879.



The three biggest areas of Partnership spending for this year were:

- Staffing = £273,500
- Provision of websites and learning resources = £19,825
- Contribution to HIPS Child Death Overview Panel = £12,000

Progress against our priorities

The Portsmouth Safeguarding Strategy 2023-26³ was agreed by the Partnership in 2023 and includes 8 strategic priorities. For each of these a delivery plan has been developed to provide a framework for measuring our progress as a partnership.

We measure this progress by:

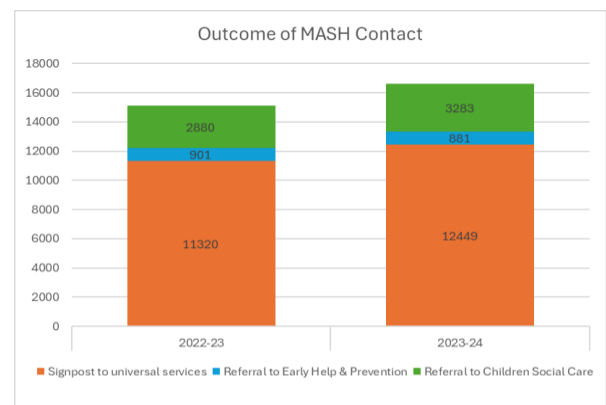
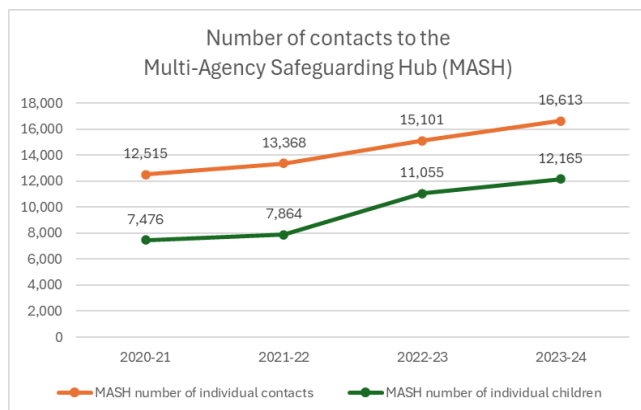
- Refreshed dataset - aligned with the strategic priorities.
- Quarterly delivery plan updates - management leads have been identified for each priority and they provide an update as to progress on a quarterly basis. This will be reviewed by the Chair of Monitoring Evaluation and Scrutiny Committee (MESC) and the PSCP Independent Chair and Scrutineer. It will also be sent to Executive Group members quarterly as a document for their information.
- Delivery plan scrutiny - the leads of each priority provide an update on strengths, successes and challenges against their delivery plan at one of the quarterly MESC meetings each year.
- Executive Group reports - The Chair of MESC provides a six-monthly written report detailing any learning, areas of success and/or challenge identified through the review process.

1. Children and family's needs will be identified at the earliest point, and they will receive effective early support and help

What we learnt

Between 2022-23 and 2023-24 there has been a 10% increase in the number children about whom contacts were made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Whilst not as large as the 40.5% increase seen last year, it still represents a significant rise in the demand upon MASH.

74.9% of the contacts MASH received resulted in being signposted to universal services, 5.3% in a referral to Early Help & Prevention (tier 3) and 19.8% in a referral to Childrens Social Care (tier 4). These represent a similar percentage split as last year.



There are quarterly multi-agency audits of the MASH that continue to show strengths in the quality of contacts, and that a good and timely multi-agency response is provided. In the last year the audits focused on consent, thresholds, sexual abuse referrals and the police reports of children coming to their notice. Overall 80% were graded as good or outstanding, evidencing good practice in terms of consent, shared understanding of thresholds with timely and good recording of proportionate decisions being made. 85% of the threshold decisions were made on the day the contact was received. The audits also showed police reports were shared in a timely way with good detail.

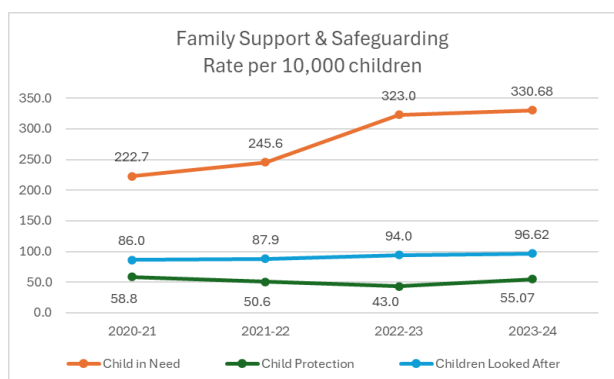
³ [PSCP-Strategy-2023-26-FINAL.pdf \(portsmouthscp.org.uk\)](https://portsmouthscp.org.uk/PSCP-Strategy-2023-26-FINAL.pdf)

The integrated Early Help and Prevention service has continued the delivery of early help through the Section 75 partnership between Portsmouth City Council and Solent NHS Trust. The Section 75 will be extended until March 31st, 2025. The ILACS in 2023 found that *'impressive early help services are a strength and have improved since the last inspection in 2018. Well-designed and resourced integrated support services are commissioned to deliver an excellent range of services and interventions through five family hubs across the city'*.

The Targeted Early Help Service received an average of 145 referrals per month during 2023-24, with two peaks where 223 referrals were received in May 2023 and 209 in January 2024. Overall the number of children receiving a service from Targeted Early Help reduced from 958 in April 2023 to 886 in March 2024. This meant that practitioners held on average a caseload of 15 families as opposed to the 12 families the service was built on.

During 2023-24 there was an increase in the re-referral rates to Targeted Early Help, from 22% to 24%. Most of these children had been stepped across to tier 2, receiving ongoing support from universal services. The step across process was reviewed to determine whether it was being consistently applied and as a result the process was refreshed and launched to practitioners. The impact of this is being monitored in the services business plan.

Targeted Early Help saw an increase in the step-up rates from their service into Children's Social Care from 9% to 14%. Quality assurance activity to review this evidenced that these were appropriate decisions and highlights the effectiveness of the early help social worker role in escalating children to tier 4 as increased risk factors emerged.



The rate per 10,000 of children on a Child in Need (CIN) Plan remains significantly high, following a national trend where there has been an increase in the number since April 2022. This is likely linked to school attendance restrictions being lifted due to COVID-19 no longer being in place and demonstrates the important role staff in education play in identifying children at risk of abuse or neglect.

Unfortunately, comparative figures nationally are not normally available until at least November each year and so we are unable to provide a comparison within this report. We are also aware that the Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT) that is used to source this information has recently been as it does not meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. There is no indication as to when the alternative to LAIT will be available.

What we are doing

In Portsmouth we have re-designed our universal early help offer in collaboration with families and relevant agencies. This tier 2/3 offer is now identified locally as 'Family Support' encouraging services to offer family-based practical and relational support, with a strong focus on the social needs of families and how they are related to inequality and poorer outcomes for children.

Family Support Plans (FSP) were introduced to replace Early Help Assessments (EHAs) as our approach to delivering this support. There were 84 FSPs being developed in the last 6 months of 2022-23 compared to 338 FSPs in 2023-24. Due to there not previously being a data mechanism to monitor the number of EHAs a direct comparison cannot be made.

The very nature of early help makes evaluating its impact more complicated than evaluating a formal and individual-focused intervention. However it is hoped that working with more families at an earlier stage

will result in improved outcomes for children, preventing situations from escalating. The vision is that earlier identification and support will reduce the number of children and families being referred to the MASH for child in need or child protection interventions.

To support this ambition:

- The team of Link Coordinators within the local authority work to support early years, schools and colleges in identifying those families that have additional needs and may benefit from an FSP.
- A quality assurance programme is being developed to consider the effectiveness of FSPs and the learning will be used to produce six-monthly 'Top Tips for FSPs' such as:
 - including the voice of the child
 - how to contact other settings to help inform the plan
 - how to accept step across FSPs
- The PSCP launched The Day in the Life Tools⁴ to help practitioners gain a better understanding of what is happening in families and to work with parents to identify action that they could take that may lead to improved outcomes for their child(ren).
- The PSCP in 2024 will be publishing a revised threshold document with more comprehensive guidance to identify the needs a child has aligned to the right support option available
- The PSCP have revised their multi-agency early help training to support and equip key professionals with knowledge and skills to undertake early help practice and effectively use the Family Support Plan.

The partnership in the MASH is supporting the following good practice:

- Police - Supporting MASH navigations and other partnership activity such as Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), missing, exploited and trafficked (MET) meetings and the daily Police Management Meeting.
- Education - the MASH offers professional support and advice to schools. There is an on-going joint training programme with the PSCP training team around supporting this offer and ensuring the best quality referrals into the MASH.
- Health - The health navigation offer in the MASH ensures the Portsmouth MASH has a health insight/input into all navigations. The NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight (NHS HIOW) has appointed a Childrens and Looked After Children Transformation Lead who is reviewing the Childrens MASH health model. This is in consultation with Local Authorities across all HIPS localities, standardising processes where appropriate, whilst building on and improving existing systems in a way that supports a localised response to local need.
- Youth Offending Team (YOT) - Colleagues from YOT are now integrated within the MASH and all contacts relating to children aged 10 years and older are reviewed for YOT involvement.
- Probation are currently recruiting to a post that will be based in the MASH to support timely information sharing and further broaden the multi-agency contributions to MASH navigations
- The contribution of housing has been strengthened through the year with good joint working and information sharing, and they have joined the MASH Board.

The national Family Hub grant has enabled the development of five family hubs in the city and a digital family hub. The objectives of these are to join up and enhance services ensuring all parents and carers can access the support they need when they need it. The ambition is to:

- provide support to parents and carers so they can nurture their babies and children, improving health and education outcomes for all.
- contribute to a reduction in inequalities in health and education outcomes for babies, children, and families across England by ensuring that support provided is communicated to all parents and carers, including those who are hardest to reach and/or most in need of it.

⁴ [PSCP-DIL-Guide-FINAL.pdf \(portsmouthscp.org.uk\)](#)

- build the evidence base for what works when it comes to improving health and education outcomes for babies, children, and families in different delivery contexts.”

The funding, which is for two years April 2023 to March 2025, was divided into work streams:

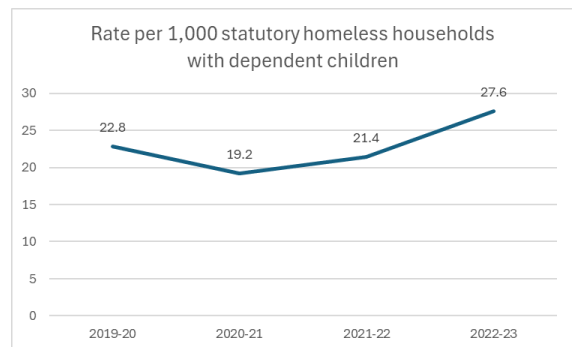
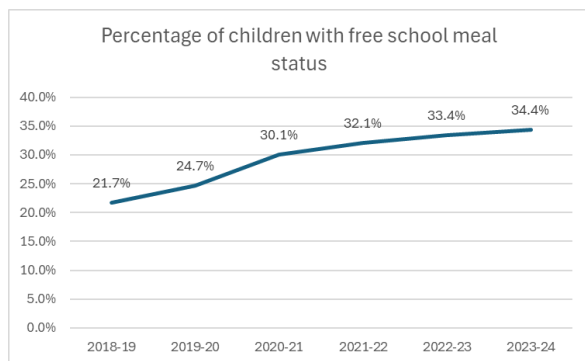
- Perinatal Mental Health and Parent Infant Relationships
- Parenting Support
- Infant Feeding
- Home Learning Environment

2. Families will receive effective and timely support when children are at risk of experiencing neglect

What we learnt

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Percentage of CP Plans due to neglect	49%	35%	34%	42%
Number of CP Plans due to neglect	127	78	61	90

Because of the cumulative nature of neglect it can make it harder for professionals to disentangle the complex overlap with poverty and deprivation. Within Portsmouth we are seeing an increase in the number of homeless households with dependent children. This is alongside a rise in the number of children in receipt of free school meals, a means tested provision. In the past year there has also been a rise in the number of children on a child protection plan under the category of neglect.



The #BeeWell survey⁵ asked young people about their dental health, In line with trends seen across HIPS, visits to the dentist were lower for pupils on free school meals (FSM) and they were also more likely to report pain in their teeth at a rate of 24.7% compared to peers in Portsmouth 16.8%.

Substance	North %	Central %	South %	HIPS %
Vapes	5.3	5.5	3.7	5.9
Cigarettes	1.4	3.1	1.1	1.8
Cannabis	2.8	2.6	0.5	1.9
Other drugs	0.4	1.7	0	0.7
Alcohol	17	12.6	4.7	14.6

The survey also asked about their use of substances and what is notable is that substance usage varies across Portsmouth neighbourhoods in line with areas of deprivation in the city. With more frequent use of these substances being reported by young people living in Portsmouth central and/or north, than south.

⁵ #BeeWell is a survey used in secondary schools used for the first time across HIPS in 2023. It was completed by 22,000 young people in Years 8 and 10, with 1,316 of those pupils living in Portsmouth.

What we are doing

In the Partnership's Annual Report for 2022-23 we outlined the action we were taking in response to a deep dive into multi-agency practice in response to children experiencing neglect conducted in 2021. Since then we have updated the Neglect Practice Guidance for Portsmouth and launched the Day in the Life Tools. The multi-agency review of the indicators of need relevant to neglect within the Thresholds Document has sought to ensure they are appropriate for all ages and stages of childhood. We will work with partner agencies to develop materials that can be used across the workforce and help practitioners understand how they can support their work across different services and range of tiers of need.

The Stronger Futures Academy Practice Development Leader has met with all of the Family Safeguarding and Support Teams to promote the Day in the Life Tools. Feedback from the teams is that these tools have been positively received and serve as a useful method for gathering a clearer picture of a child's lived experience. Social Workers have used pictures and other means of direct work based on the Day in the Life Tools questions to gather information and produce evidence-based decisions.

A further piece of work exploring the links between poverty and neglect was jointly undertaken by the Practice Development Lead, Public Health, and Tackling Poverty Co-Ordinator to co-produce training material for a Child Neglect and Poverty Aware Practice Workshop. The workshop aims were to:

- improve practitioner awareness of the Portsmouth picture of financial hardship.
- consider the links between financial hardship and neglect.
- promote a compassionate and informed approach to working with families experiencing financial hardship.
- share and explore the resources available to children and families.

The session has received positive feedback from participants, including:

'It was helpful to consider poverty from several view points' ... 'To be more curious and consider the impact on parenting' ... 'Very powerful to consider the distinction between lack of parenting skills vs inadequate parenting because of financial hardship'.

Further delivery of this session is being planned and consideration is being given to providing this training across partner agencies to ensure the workforce understand the links between financial hardship and neglect.

3. Families will receive effective and timely support when children are at risk of experiencing sexual abuse

What we learnt

It is recognised that Portsmouth reflects the national picture of there being few children on a Child Protection (CP) Plan due to sexual abuse.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Percentage of Child Protection Plans due to sexual abuse	1.2%	0.4%	2.3%	0.0%
Number of children seen for CSA medicals	13	13	20	21

In quarter four of 2022-23 the MASH audit identified a concern regarding the response to a referral of intrafamilial sexual assault. Action was taken in respect of the child concerned and it was agreed at the MASH Strategic Board that the focus of the quarter 1 2023-24 audit to review the response in MASH to contacts where there were concerns regarding sexual harm. This audit identified that this an area where we need to strengthen practice. In particular:

- Threshold decision making between section 17 and section 47
- Joint working between police and children's social care
- Decision making regarding the use of medical examinations and ensuring this includes appropriate consultation with health representation

- Putting a robust safety plan in place in response to referrals from Hampshire Constabulary's Internet Child Abuse Investigation Team where the request is to not immediately contact the family.

What we are doing

The PSCP worked with the other Partnerships in Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Southampton to develop a new Child Sexual Abuse Strategy⁶ (CSA) and associated online toolkit. This was launched at the beginning of the year to support professionals working with young people and their families in the HIPS areas. This strategy has been produced to support a co-ordinated approach to preventing CSA, and improve the identification, protection, and support for victims, survivors, and their families. It has been created to improve the ways in which children’s needs and risks are understood, recognised and responded to at all stages.

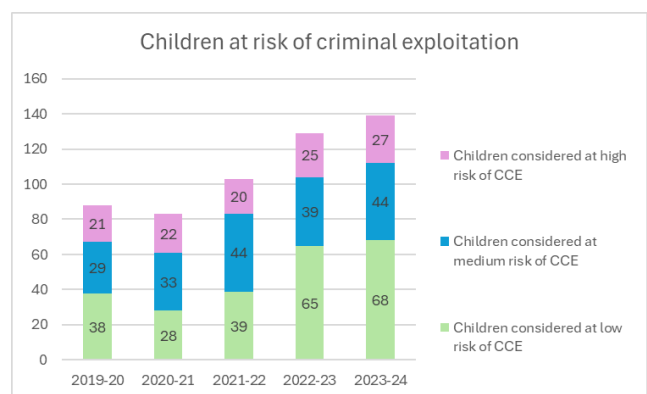
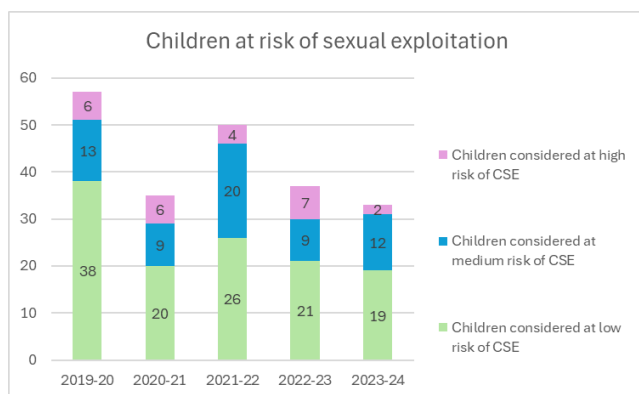
The HIPS CSA strategy included a focus on the benefits and importance of child protection medical examinations and since it was implemented there has been a rise in children being referred and seen by specialist medical services.

A task and finish group is developing a delivery plan to implement the HIPS CSA Strategy in Portsmouth. The group is working with partner agencies to identify a more indicative dataset to be able to measure the impact of this work and to better understand the demographic of children in Portsmouth currently experiencing or at risk of sexual harm.

4. Young people will be kept as safe as possible from all forms of extra-familial harm, and there will be effective transitional safeguarding arrangements in place to support vulnerable young adults

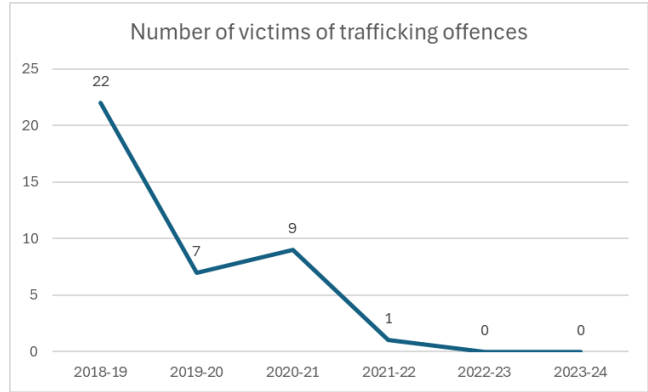
What we learnt

Over the past 5 years there has been 42% reduction in the number of children identified as at risk of sexual exploitation (CSE), and a 58% increase in the number of children identified as at risk of criminal exploitation (CCE). It is believed that this may be a result of workforce development undertaken in the last few years that has focused on supporting practitioners in identifying CCE as a form of harm. It may also be due to the 'hidden' nature of sexual exploitation that makes CSE more difficult to identify than CCE where there are often more visible, external identifiers. The training offered across the workforce will be reviewed as a result.



Also of note is that in the same period there has been 97% reduction in the number of victims of crime that are CSE related and a 100% reduction in the number of victims of trafficking.

⁶ [3.3 Child Sexual Abuse | Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton \(hipsprocedures.org.uk\)](https://hipsprocedures.org.uk)



Children's Services Performance Oversight Board in quarter 3 reviewed the increasing knife crime and youth violence and how we respond. It is a small number of young people in Portsmouth who have committed acts of interpersonal violence against another young person. Understanding our city and developing our data in relation to relationship of this is vitally important, as is our knowledge of the nature of the wider problem including awareness of the context of other forms of violence and harm in young people's lives.

Data provided by police in June 2023 for this identified, that of the known habitual knife carriers in Portsmouth, 14 were aged 14-17 years old and of these 9 were open to Children's Social Care. The analysis evidenced the following factors associated with vulnerability to experience violence:

- Experiences of harm and abuse can affect children's development, and for some children they also increase vulnerability to further harm, abuse and exploitation. They may also mean some children are more likely to react to impulsively to perceived threat. However causal pathways are complex and do not automatically result in those types of risk.
- Trusted adults and healthy relationships are important for children of all ages. Physical and psychological safety must both be considered when working with any child.
- In relation to extra-familial harm, communities play a role in both presenting risks to children and keeping them safe. Engaging with communities is an essential part of any response to serious youth violence. Understanding how communities can support and protect their young people is equally important.
- Inequalities can also affect children's vulnerability to serious youth violence. Some groups of children are disproportionately at risk including children from Black, Asian and ethnic minority groups; children with special educational needs and/or disabilities; children with care experience; and children eligible for free school meals.

What we are doing

Missing Exploited and Trafficked (MET) Panel - this weekly meeting has been embedded and is well attended by key partners including Police, Youth Justice Service, Adolescent Service, Early Help, Motiv8, Urbond, Youth and Play, MASH, Children Social Care, Education including link coordinators and when required health colleagues. Children across the tiers of need are referred if an emerging theme is identified and the Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (CERAF) inform the children we discuss with new referrals. Weekly the MET review children to ensure there are robust plans in place with actions highlighted, recorded and shared with the child's network. A public health approach has been adopted in both MET and Serious Harm Action, Reduction and Prevention Panel (SHARPP), working collaboratively with a range of partners and professionals to adopt a strengths-based and solution focussed model.

We are working to create greater resilience within our workforce and our wider communities through shared understanding and ownership of the underlying factors which must be tackled to reduce harm. Children seen as 'high risk' are regularly reviewed and quarterly a review of all children considered 'low

risk' who have no identified network takes place. An assimilation of information from partners is collated to support decision making on closure, continuation or escalation.

Two-day training for all partners was provided for the partnership which forged positive relationships and joined up response to safeguarding all children across the city. 91% said the content was relevant to their work, and 98% agreed that the learning would help improve outcomes for children. Since the launch of Weekly MET the core panel have discussed 136 individual children, 140 children have been reviewed resulting in 248 total discussions. The core membership will undertake a full multi agency review and audit in October 2024.

Safer Me Plan - Portsmouth initiated a small-scale pilot to implement a plan that aimed to bring together a child and their network to mobilise the multiagency system to work in collaboration with the child to increase safety in response to missing episodes, extra-familial risk, harm and abuse. The SAFER ME PLAN has been completed across the Adolescent Service and is now being taken forward across all areas of CSC, EH Care, Youth Justice Services and more recently our voluntary sector as well as education partners. The aim is to integrate the plan into the RHI and Missing Processes, ensuring children identified via the Missing, Exploitation and Trafficking pathway have a 'live' multiagency plan in place. The plan is completed with the child and their network and is designed as a jointly owned intervention, travelling with the child and shared across key agencies.

Feedback from young people included:

"Yeah it works, probably helps out a lot. Worked through it quite easily, one step at a time. 100% got my view in it. If my friends had to do it, I would tell them it's all good. Includes everything it needs to."

"[I] felt some control over what is shared, will never want my photo to be shared but like I got to choose it. I want to plan what happens when I go missing, the safer me plan is good and lets me contribute to bigger plan."

"I think the Safer Me Plan is an excellent piece of intervention as it encourages participation by allowing children and young people to practically contribute to their plan, such as identifying who their safe adults are, how they will let people know if they are not safe and what they need from adults and professionals around them. As a Team Leader I have limited opportunities to actually meet young people, the Safer Me Plan brings young people to life and shows them as individuals."

The Safer Me Plan is now embedded within the recording system of CSC and EH and shared with partners within the weekly MET.

Contextual MET Meetings - a monthly multi-agency meeting to look at contexts in which exploitation is occurring, including space, places and peer groups. This is now part of a working group to explore the wider community safety, chaired by Head of Community Safety.

Young Adult Safeguarding Panel (YASP) - this is a pilot to consider the transitional support arrangements for care experienced young adults and exploited children turning 18. It is attended by Children Social Care, Adult Social Care, Police, Probation and housing providers.

In the past 9 months since it started 18 children have been considered, Despite the cliff edge faced for those who do not have Personal Advisor or have Care and Support Needs that make them eligible for adult services, there have been some successes including a young adult who attended his own panel and gave the feedback that it was really helpful to understand how decisions were being made about his life. Whilst a young adult is asked to give consent, our goal is for all young adults to attend the panel. A review meeting will take place with the Adult Social Care in November 2025 to evaluate the effectiveness of the panel and how the response to contextual safeguarding can be strengthened.

Serious Harm Action, Reduction and Prevention Panel (SHARPP) - takes place monthly and had been developed to identify and discuss children affected by, or at risk of being affected by serious youth violence, either as victims or who cause harm to others through violence. This has a partnership membership and is taking a Public Health Approach to serious harm within our city.

Habitual Knife Carrying, Serious Youth Violence Triage Monthly Meeting - is jointly chaired by Portsmouth City Council and Police. It will identify individuals affected by, or at risk of being affected by, serious youth violence with a specific focus on knife crime. By this we mean children who are victims of violence, who cause harm to others through violence, and children who are both victims and perpetrators of violence- particularly where that violence relates to knife-related crime

Drug and Alcohol Support Service (DASS) - delivers a free and confidential service to all children and young adults up to the age of 25. Commissioned and funded by Public Health and is part of the 10-year combatting drug strategy. This includes open access to children alongside support to their network. DASS received 97 referrals in 2023-24 which represents a 385% increase on the previous year.

Working together in action - In 2023 the British Transport Police (BTP), South Western Railway and Portsmouth City Council came together to address specific challenges at Portsmouth and Southsea Station. The catalyst to this work was due to reports of anti-social behaviour and assaults against rail staff. The group set about working to understand the context around the issues and behaviours. This included observations, direct discussion with stakeholders and young people themselves.

It was established that the relationships between rail staff and several young people were poor, with staff having suffered harm and there being a lack of understanding how best to respond to vulnerable children. The impact was an increased number of incidents reported to British Transport Police, a concern from rail staff about their safety at work, and vulnerable young people being at risk across the rail network.

Staff came together to think collectively about how they could work together to remedy the difficulties identified. They set about ensuring systems to support the flow of information between agencies, including intelligence and direct contact with children, taking the following steps:

- Training from Workplace Violence team, including use of Body Worn Video and how to best engage with children and deescalate conflict
- Joint deployment across the Station footprint to work together and build improved relationships with children
- Affirming ways to share intelligence and report incidents, ensuring this information is shared across the working partnership leading to action

These steps led to significant impact including:

- A reduction in serious incidents of violence and antisocial behaviour, from weekly reported assaults to incidents of fare evasion
- A shift in culture; seeing 'the child' behind the behaviour – opening people to consider 'what else' might be going on for a young person who presents
- Direct contact between the train operating company and the local authority meaning children's services could initially respond instead of BTP
- Children viewing other partners as people who could help them, such as young people seeking help from train company staff and BTP
- Extended partners being concerned with the safety and wellbeing of children who come to notice across the rail network
- Young people sharing their care plan with rail staff (to be considered in the context, that they felt safe enough to seek support)
- Staff and BTP speaking positively, and engaging positively with children who previously they had a negative view of

View of the Local Authority - We have seen the broader group of young people, beyond the child who frequently came to attention. Working together has helped us have these conversations and to see the challenges and how we can support one another. We can now respond in a way that minimises those challenges, all coming together to work and communicate. The joint working has increased learning in both ways and particularly around the context on the rail network.

“I feel much better about where to share information, seek information to safeguard children, and I really enjoy the events as they are really helpful. Through these events, we have identified 8 to 10 children who have then had EH assessments and support as a result” [Service Manager]

View of South Western Railway - There are more positive reports of children who previously were of concern, there are positive interactions with children. Young people have been able to see police and rail staff as ‘safe’ if they are at risk, and previously they would not have done so. The railway has welcomed other agencies and stakeholders into the space to work together.

View of BTP - Having the Local Authority contacts has been so beneficial, as young people don’t always tell us anything, for example a child was assaulted, and we identified the suspects only through the work with the Local Authority. Our collator brings together the information from Children’s Services and South Western Railway, and then the information is shared. When an issue arises, we have the capabilities of Children’s Services to respond rather than British Transport Police.

“If I were to go to another area, the first thing I would do is get in touch with Children’s Services, we now can complete safeguarding checks in five minutes, when previously it would have taken us an hour.” [BTP Sergeant]

The work has led to improved relationships that allow open discussion, challenge and collaboration, ultimately making children and staff safer, whilst reducing demand on policing.

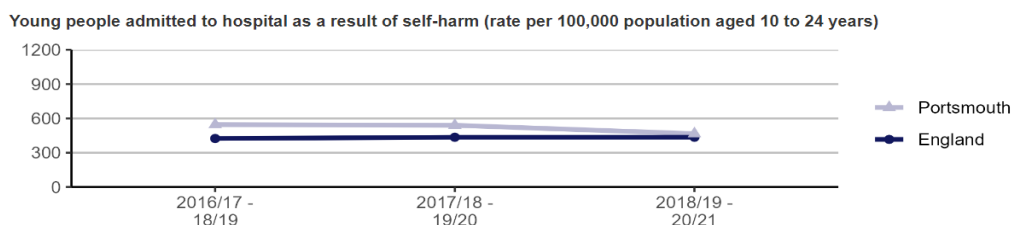
Through ‘working together’ in action, the approach has increased community guardianship with more awareness and activity that increases safety beyond disruption. There is a framework between the key agencies that means young people are identified or can seek support, action can be taken to reduce harm and conflict, and staff ability to respond with more knowledge has increased.

The overall ethos has been to **report more, see more, respond more – together.**

5. Children and young people have access to appropriate support that recognises the impact of trauma resulting from adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

What we learnt

Nationally, the rate of young people being admitted to hospital as a result of self-harm, between 2016 and 2020, is not significantly changing. This is not the case in Portsmouth, where the trend is decreasing. The admission rate in the latest pooled period is now similar to the England average.



What we are doing

For several years the PSCP has offered Introduction to ACEs training⁷ for those who work with children and families in Portsmouth. To complement this the PSCP now offers online Trauma Informed Care Training⁸ to help them better understand:

- What trauma is
- The impact of trauma and how it presents
- How to detect and respond to it effectively
- How to work in a trauma-informed way
- How to look after yourself when supporting a traumatised individual

The CAMHS Specialist Trauma & Relational Therapies (STaRT) team provide a dedicated mental health service for Portsmouth children we care for, and care experienced. CAMHS STaRT complete assessments and provide consultations to staff and carers with the aim of providing an early intervention preventative response for the network around the child/young person. They also provide training to social workers and foster carers.

There is an expectation that all social care staff undertake the Trauma Informed Care e-learning to give them a good base-line knowledge of the impact of trauma on physical and mental health. There is some work to be done in ensuring compliance from the whole workforce in respect of this.

In addition, there are several more specialist training courses that social care professionals can take depending on their role. For example many of the staff in Portsmouth are now proficient in Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy, Parenting and Practice (DDP) which helps practitioners work with and support children and families with developmental trauma. Similarly, a cohort of staff are trained in TIMOC (trauma informed model of care), an early intervention framework that recognises that trauma is present and enable practitioners and foster carers to use practical tools to help improve wellbeing. TIMOC is particularly used with young people who came into the country seeking safety and asylum. The staff in the local authority's children's homes undertake specific training to care for our children using a trauma-informed lens.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary have been working really hard to ensure officers and staff are more trauma informed in their approach to dealing with children, young people and adults. Trauma Informed Practitioners are working with District Police Team following a successful trial 2021-2022. The support of the practitioners has not only improved how officers respond when dealing incidents but how they deal with trauma themselves and support each other.

Every officer joining the force receives an introduction to Trauma Informed Practice. This means officers are equipped at the earliest point to understand how trauma can affect behaviour and the risks of further traumatising individuals.

The force has listened to members of the public in relation to signposting after suicides and taken action to improve this, recognising that as officers these incidents can be difficult to process but even more so for members or the public who will not expect to be witnessing or dealing with such incidents.

6. There is an effective response to safeguarding children with additional needs and those from diverse communities

What we learnt

According to the #BeeWell survey across HIPS inequalities persist in wellbeing scores particularly across gender and sexual orientation. The greatest disparities for both mental wellbeing and emotional difficulties were observed for those identifying as Trans- or Gender-Diverse (TGD).

⁷ [An-Introduction-to-ACES-Stress-Brains-Trauma-and-Resilience](#)

⁸ [Trauma-Informed-Care-Training](#)

Reports of discrimination due to race, skin colour or where born, and faith is slightly higher in Portsmouth than the HIPS average whereas reports of discrimination due to disability is slightly lower.

Domain	HIPS	Portsmouth
% reporting experiencing discrimination because of race, skin colour, or where they were born	23.94%	29.62%
% reporting experiencing discrimination because of their gender	20.84%	22.16%
% reporting experiencing discrimination because of their sexual orientation	13.90%	13.58%
% reporting experiencing discrimination because of their disability	14.95%	12.80%
% reporting experiencing discrimination because of their religion/faith	11.34%	14.58%

The Executive Committee reviewed the response in Portsmouth to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel Report 'Safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings'⁹. The report stressed that local authorities have a role to play in quality assuring and monitoring placements by ensuring that all statutory visits are face-to-face. It was found that the expectation in Portsmouth is that visits to our children are undertaken in person by both social workers and independent reviewing officers and are only completed virtually by exception.

However, it was recognised during this review that children who are not cared for by the local authority, and are in 38-week residential education placements, were not receiving any oversight other than their annual review, which is education focussed. In response the Quality and Safety review has been implemented for all children in residential placements - initiated by commissioning at point of placement, completed by social workers and reviewed by independent reviewing officers. In light of this being a new process, a tabletop review of whether this has been implemented is being undertaken. This will inform future focus (if needed) on oversight of the placements and the visits being completed.

For children in 52 week education settings whose placement had not been subject to a Quality and Safety Review completed these have been completed and overseen by the Head of Inclusion.

What we are doing

The LGBTQ+ team in the Early Help and Prevention Service have started to undertake FSPs for tier 3 families they are working with. 2023 saw the completion of the Underserved Communities Research Project which evidences high satisfaction and support from service users who have accessed the LGBTQ+ Service.

There are bi-monthly multi-agency meetings to support those working across the services with children with disabilities, including Social Care, Early Help, schools and health colleagues. This supports shared learning and problem solving across the network and ensures that professionals across all agencies maintain a shared view of the child's progress and continuing needs.

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is a nationally funded programme offering free activities and meals to school-aged children from low-income families during school holidays. In recognition of the fact that Portsmouth has higher rates of under-14s with SEND compared to the national average, over 40% of commissioned HAF providers in 2023 were qualified to support children with SEND.

Additionally, the specialist provider Enable Ability received the Southeast division award at the HAF Awards 2023 for its outstanding and innovative care.

⁹ [Safeguarding children with disabilities in residential settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114121/safeguarding-children-with-disabilities-in-residential-settings.pdf)

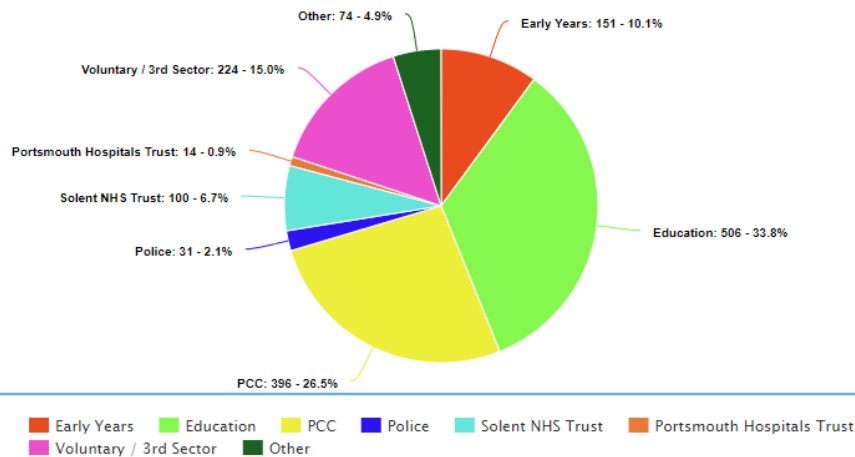
7. Providing sufficient professional and organisational development to ensure there is effective response to safeguarding children within Portsmouth

What we learnt

A statutory function of the safeguarding partners is the provision of appropriate multi-agency safeguarding professional development and training. The PSCP continues to provide both multi-agency and single agency training to those working with children and their families in Portsmouth. Safeguarding partners have contributed to this area of work both in terms of financial contribution and by providing expertise to co-deliver the training provided by the partnership.

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Number of Multi-Agency Courses Run	134	127	125
Number of Attendees on Multi-Agency Courses	1,337	1,416	1,496
Number of Single Agency Courses Run	17	27	63
Number of Attendees on Single Agency Courses	408	1,220	1,506

Multi-Agency Training Attendance by Sector



The training and workforce development opportunities offered are informed by the learning from child safeguarding practice reviews, the safeguarding and early help compact audit, data, practice review audits and feedback from attendees on training. The themes which have emerged are:

- Professional Curiosity
- Communication
- System recording
- LADO enquiries / allegations
- Multi-agency collaboration
- Escalating concerns when there is a difference in professional opinion
- The impact of language and victim blaming on keeping children safe from harm
- Safer Recruitment
- Building, maintaining and repairing relationships - relational and restorative practice
- Developing a safer culture in organisations

What we are doing

As a partnership we are committed to supporting organisations with growing and sustaining a safer culture. This requires organisational based development work and training to support the change. Resulting in there being an increased delivery of single agency training to ensure there is consistency of message, targeted information and bespoke content to meet the needs of their workforce. This has

included long term input with specific organisations identified through data, the Portsmouth Compact and LADO investigations to address organisational development and embed a safer culture.

The impact of targeted work has been recorded through evaluation:

- Created environments which enable curious safeguarding conversations within the team to ensure that the right processes and procedures are being followed. In addition, growing confidence and competence in safeguarding decision-making.
- Deepening understanding of responsibilities to have Safer Practices in place e.g. safer recruitment, DBS
- Listening to the needs of the workforce to create an environment whereby safeguarding practices can be challenged and grown in line with roles and responsibilities.
- All targeted organisational work has focused on individual's actions collectively contributing toward cultural change
- Organisations understanding and knowing how to escalate concerns when necessary and how to have conversations with other professionals when there is a difference in opinion.

The Kirkpatrick Model is the method for evaluating PSCP training. The model allows the assessment of both formal and informal training methods and rates them against four levels of criteria: reaction, learning, behavior, and results.

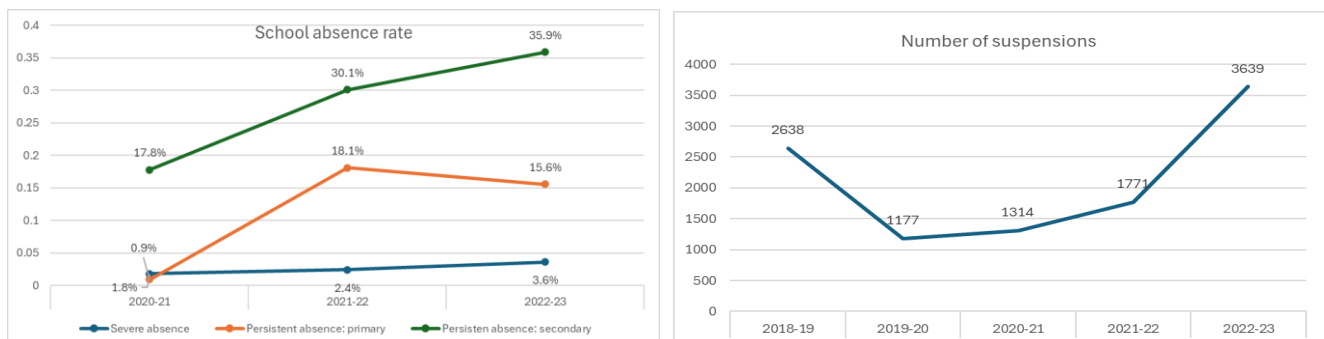
PSCP training team have been focussing on key areas of development throughout all training which are in-line and linked with local and national learning. Being able to measure the results in terms of impact on practice is an on-going and sometimes challenging process.

Themes have emerged from the 'results' element of the evaluation model that is collected through 3- and 6-month post course evaluation which are:

- Increased confidence in practice to following the correct processes and using Portsmouth Thresholds
- Increased confidence in being able to have effective safeguarding conversations.
- Knowing who to contact and when - getting the right help at the right time for children
- Knowing how to effectively contact MASH

A focus of training is always to increase confidence, knowledge and skills. As a result of much consultation and learning there has been a particular focus on having effective safeguarding conversations and all the knowledge and skills this requires. It is encouraging to see that this is an area whereby delegates have reported a shift, particularly in confidence.

8. We will ensure there is a good understanding of safeguarding risks for children within education settings and an effective response to these



Due to the school year (September-July) and the PSCP yearly reporting (April-March) not aligning, the most recent data relates to the academic year September 2022 - July 2023. What the absence data shows is that whilst the persistent absence rate (where 10% or more missed) has decreased by 2.5% in primary schools; it has increased 5.8% in secondary schools.

Most notable is the 105.5% increase in the number of suspensions, with the majority of these relating to pupils in secondary schools. What has been noted when considering this data at school level is that those which have been early adopters of relational practice have seen a significant reduction in their number of suspensions. Therefore it is hoped that with the targeted support offered by the Relational and Restorative Practice in Schools Implementation Lead we will begin to see more schools adopting this approach to address behaviour and reduce the need for suspensions.

What we are doing

Wellbeing in Education Team - This team is part of the Early Help and Prevention Services and supported 52 children through the year. Of the children where interventions ended:

- 81% recorded a positive change in attendance at school
- 67% of children have either sustained or improved their attendance score since closing
- The average increase in attendance was 32%.
- Around 3/4 of the children were known to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) at allocation and following intervention this has fallen to 1/4.

Attendance Graduated Response Document - This document offers guidance to schools, ensuring a consistent approach on the next steps to be taken, including guidance on:

- Working together to improve attendance
- Strategies to improve school attendance
- Working with parents
- Personal attendance plans
- Barriers to attendance
- Timescales
- Attendance codes
- Legal processes
- Supporting documents and resources

Vulnerable Pupil Tracking - This takes place across all schools in Portsmouth and the local authority Link Coordinators on a fortnightly basis. The process enables the identification of children who are potentially vulnerable.

Vulnerability markers relating to education include:

- Children who have had 2 or more suspensions
- Children who have attendance below 50%

The link coordinators will discuss these pupils with the schools, identifying key barriers to attendance, current strategies in place to support them, plans to improve attendance, potential support available, legal processes and next steps.

Attendance Enhancement Team - Funded through the Portsmouth Education Improvement Area (PEIA) grant, the team have offered support to all Primary, Secondary and Special schools during the academic year. This support has taken many forms, including the provision of training and continuous professional development related to attendance procedures, support with parent meetings, data analysis to enable schools to identify key groups and trends, workshops within school for targeted pupils and sharing of good practice. A Personal Attendance Plan was also created and established by the team at the beginning of the school year. This is a short-term attendance plan that is developed during a discussion between the family and the school to identify the barriers to attendance and produce actions for all involved to address these and improve attendance. These meetings were initially attended by members of the PEIA attendance team, but many schools are now completing and reviewing these independently.

Severely Absent Meetings - These are held termly with our secondary schools to enable discussion on children who have attendance below 50%. They are multi-agency meetings that include professionals

from children's social care, early help, mental health support team (MHST), CAMHS, youth justice, attendance team, neurodiversity team, link coordinators and school colleagues. The purpose is to identify the key barriers to attendance and agree a plan of support and next steps to take. The multi-agency team are there to support the school and advise on appropriate pathways and next steps. During the academic year of 2023/24 over 450 individual children were discussed through this approach.

Data Reporting of Severely Absent Children - Once a month a list of all children who are severely absent from school is shared with managers across the local authority's Children, Families and Education Directorate This enables frontline practitioners who are working with individual children to be aware of the attendance and suspensions and ensure that this is a part of the plan of support. The report also includes the reason for non-attendance, active plans in place to support them and the date the child was last seen.

Learning from Children, Families and Practice

Sometimes a child suffers a serious injury or death as a result of abuse or neglect. Understanding not only what happened but also why it happened can help improve our response in the future. As such when the local authority notifies the PSCP of a serious incident, a Rapid Review is undertaken to consider the impact that organisations and agencies had on the child's life, and on the lives of their family members, and whether or not different approaches or those actions could have resulted in a different outcome.

During 2023-24 the Partnership were made aware of 2 children that had met the criteria for Serious Incident Notification and a Rapid Review was undertaken in accordance with Working Together. Neither of these resulted in a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review being commissioned. However, where any learning was identified during these Rapid Reviews, it was captured with single or multi agency recommendations being made as appropriate.

Re-think - a response to improving and strengthening multi-agency working

Strong, collaborative leadership and timely decision-making are crucial to the effectiveness of multi-agency working and to identify and address system issues

Working Together, 2023

A critical part of multi-agency working is understanding each other's roles and responsibilities, finding a shared understanding of risk, being accountable for decision making and having robust conversations when there are differences in opinions of how to progress support for a family. Sometimes differing opinions, despite being a healthy part of practice, can impact upon outcomes for children.

PSCP are committed to ensuring that professional relationships and effective multi-agency working is at the heart of practice. When professionals deem there to be limited progress for a child and/or there is professional conflict a 'Re-think session' can be initiated to address such concerns. This is a local response to ensure children are at the centre of decision making and professional relationships are prioritised.

PSCP are currently undertaking a Realist Evaluation of the impact of Re-think. Rather than the traditional binary 'does it work' question, this methodology addresses the more nuanced questions of what works, for whom, under what circumstances and how?

Early findings are:

- Collaborative working across the network is improved following a Re-think as a shared reality is formed due to all perspectives being heard and professional trust increasing
- Different decisions have been able to be made due to there being space to explore reflectively rather than being task focussed
- Creative solutions have led to more effective engagement with families
- Understanding other's roles and responsibilities has been invaluable to know both limitations and reasons for decisions which have been made
- Having space to hear each other and reflect together on what has happened has enhanced relationships, grown learning and impacted positively on working together
- Sharing responsibility for the plan and associated risks has helped professionals work better together - reducing professional anxiety and growing a shared accountability
- Feeling safe enough to share honestly has impacted positively on professional respect and trust
- Sharing information to ensure clarity, purpose and assurance has increased professionals understanding resulting in better communication and children being safer
- Having a neutral facilitator has supported professionals to feel psychologically safe to share openly and honestly leading to better information being shared
- Having a neutral facilitator has helped those in managerial positions to engage freely without having to also consider the network dynamics, chairing responsibilities and note taking.

Resulting in freedom to listen effectively, reflect deeply and find creative solutions to overcome barriers, conflict and 'stuckness'.

There has been on-going support from partners to enable frontline practitioners to attend and prioritise this work. This is reflective of the strong multi-agency relationships within Portsmouth and a shared commitment to getting it right for children and their families.

Year	How many re-thinks ran	How many cancelled	How many people involved
2022-23	5	0	32
2023-24	30	1	272

Themes which have emerged include:

- Re-think provides a safe space to consider what is happening through a different lens and facilitates a space which many professionals do not have within their own organisation. It highlights that for some partners there is limited access to reflective supervision.
- Re-think supports the on-going work of developing a safer culture by addressing language used, developing empathy and compassion for parents / carers as well as promoting the child's needs being paramount.
- Re-think constructively challenges the need to ensure that the child's lived experience is at the forefront of practice and enhances ways of being able to understand this.

Issues explored within the Rethink arena where practitioners feel most challenged or stuck, often relate:

- Adult Learning Disability
- Neurodiversity
- Disconnected relationships with parents (parent's 'not engaging')
- Not fully understanding the lived experience of the child
- Differing approaches e.g. punitive verses restorative

Through the Realist Evaluation we hope to achieve a more robust measure of the impact Re-think is making on outcomes for children and their family. However, there is an on-going commitment to understand the specific learning and actions from each individual Re-think which is reflected in this review.

The success of Re-think which is reflected within the feedback and the growing nature of requests means there is a need to grow the ability to neutrally facilitate more sessions and work is underway to understand how this can be achieved.

Indeterminate Mark Pathway

In 2022 an increasing number of contacts to MASH made in accordance with the HIPS protocol for 'the management of actual or suspected bruising or other injury in infants who are not independently mobile' were found to be birth marks or birth injuries. The principle had been that any bruising should be suspected as caused by physical abuse and thus would trigger a Section 47 safeguarding response. These referrals can cause distress to families and mobilisations of large resources for children social care, health and police.

Wanting to adopt a more proportionate and relational response to families when a non-mobile infant is presented to health with a previously unreported mark, Portsmouth implemented an Indeterminate Mark Pathway. This was piloted in collaboration between Solent NHS Trust and Portsmouth MASH, whereby MASH could refer directly for a paediatric opinion before deciding on section 47 investigation.

In the two years prior to this pilot there were an average of 14 infants referred to MASH with suspected or actual bruising under the protocol, compared to a total of 3 during the pilot (which lasted 48 weeks).

PSCP Yearly Report 2023-2024

Area	Pre-pilot (average per year)			During Pilot (48 weeks)		
	Yearly average	Bruise/ injury	All other cases	Total	Bruise/ injury	All other cases
Portsmouth	14	2	12	3	1	2

The pilot resulted in a large reduction in MASH referrals, with no evidence of injuries being missed. Whereas other districts within south east Hampshire area continued to show trends similar pre pilot trends. This pathway is now being rolled out across the HIPS area.

Learning from Monitoring, Evaluation and Scrutiny

Recommendation Tracking

The PSCP has evolved a method of tracking the recommendations made to the multi-agency safeguarding system in Portsmouth (from case reviews, data analysis, audits, and inspections) whereby once every 2 months relevant agencies are sent a request to update their progress against these. The returns are presented to the Monitoring, Evaluation & Scrutiny Committee whose role is to consider whether the action fully meets the ambition as set out in the recommendation; and whether there is sufficient evidence of the robustness of its implementation and/or impact on the effectiveness of improving safeguarding arrangements.

	Number at start of year	New, added in year	Completed in year	Outstanding at end of year
Children's Social Care	1	5	6	0
Adult Social Care	1	0	1	0
Education Service	1	0	1	0
Hants & IoW ICB - Portsmouth place	1	0	1	0
Hampshire Constabulary	1	0	1	0
Portsmouth Hospital University Trust	1	0	1	0
PSCP	18	7	7	18

Safeguarding & Early Help Compact Audit

The Partnership is collectively responsible for the strategic oversight of local safeguarding arrangements, to ensure that organisations working with children and families in Portsmouth are compliant with their statutory duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

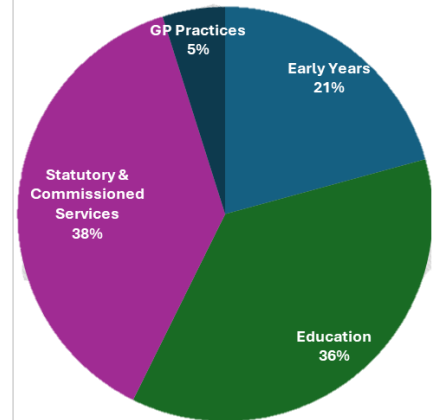
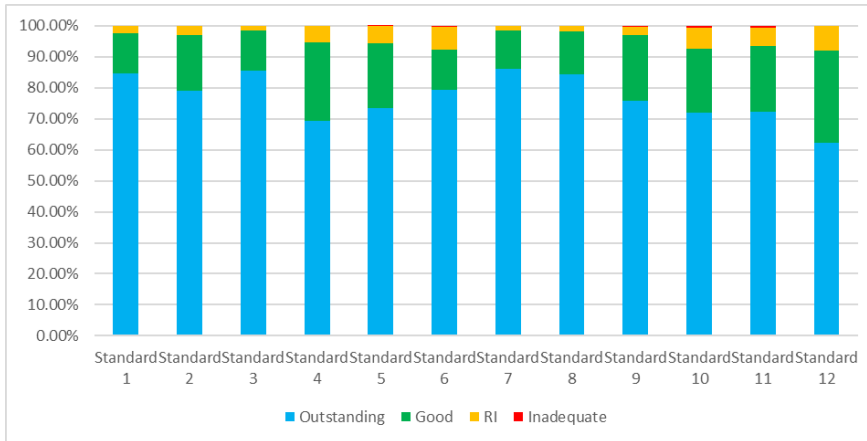
Part of the way in which the PSCP does this is to require all services that work with (or regularly come into contact with) children and families, to complete a self-assessment once every two years against 12 standards with varying indicators to reflect the varying statutory requirements. This is referred to as the Compact Audit and more details of this can be found [here](#) on the PSCP website¹⁰.

1. Senior management commitment	5. Induction, training & appraisal	9. Information sharing
2. Staff responsibilities & competencies	6. Recruitment	10. Equality of opportunity
3. A clear line of accountability	7. Allegation management	11. Disabled children
4. Service development	8. Effective inter-agency working	12. Commissioning

There is a quality assurance process in place overseen by the Monitoring, Evaluation & Scrutiny Committee to review the individual returns and progress against the action plans. By reviewing all the returns, it allows us to engage both at a setting and sector level to address any gaps in knowledge and/or practice. Briefings are produced summarising the learning at a sector level, and the learning is used to inform future PSCP training and support development.

This year a total of 82 returns were received, 73.9% of those which were requested. This is a significant decrease in completion rate compared to 2022/23 (93.7%) and 2021/22 (93.5%). The process for requests and subsequent following up has not changed from previous years, so the reason for the drop in completion is unclear. For those settings who failed to submit their Compact Audit this year, the PSCP will be writing to them and requiring them to submit a return in 2024-25.

¹⁰ <https://www.portsmouthscp.org.uk/10-learning-from-practice/10-2-portsmouth-safeguarding-and-early-help-compact-audit/>



The overall analysis of the returns submitted this year indicates that there are 6 areas of practice where there is a need for improvement¹¹, these are:

- Standard four** = 5.37% requires improvement
 This is predominantly Education and Early Years settings stating that their anti-bullying policy needs to be updated and made child friendly; and that pupils and parents should have more information regarding safeguarding available to them.
- Standard five** = 5.40% requires improvement, 0.12% Inadequate
 Mainly Education and Early Years settings stating that they need to improve their processes around annual appraisals and supervision; and that they would benefit from more governor safeguarding training.
- Standard six** = 7.47% requires improvement, 0.18% Inadequate#
 Safer recruitment was highlighted as an area for development for a high number of respondents. although very few organisations had nobody trained.
- Standard ten** = 6.80% requires improvement, 0.50% Inadequate
 A high number of respondents did not have an equality impact assessment in place, with some having not heard of it prior to the audit.
 Improvement was needed in the range of formats in which information on their services is produced. Within Education especially, an increase in the number of children with English as an additional language will require an increase in training for staff, to ensure that potential vulnerabilities are known and understood.
- Standard eleven** = 5.70% requires improvement, 0.76% Inadequate
 Further training for staff in communication skills when working with disabled children and young people was an area that was frequently highlighted.
 Organisations stated that they would benefit from knowing where to access an up-to-date list of resources and local specialist services who could support children with additional needs.
- Standard twelve** = 8% requires improvement
 An area for development was contracts for commissioned services including an explicit reference to safeguarding children.
 Similarly, contracts for commissioned services including a requirement for safeguarding and whistleblowing policies was an area frequently noted as requiring further work.

As a result of this we will be producing an FAQ document signposting organisations to useful information and resources on:

- The creation of accessible documents for the sharing of safeguarding information with children and families
- Training available on topics such as safeguarding supervision, FGM, Prevent etc.

¹¹ Where the percentage of RI and Inadequate = 5% or more

- relevant equality impact assessment tools, with guidance as to how and when settings should use these.
- Portsmouth EMAS, who can support education settings when working with children who have English as an additional language.
- Portsmouth Local Offer website that provides information on support for children with additional needs.

Additionally it was recommended that the PSCP:

- Work with the Inclusion Service, PCC Learning & Development and the PSCP Training Team to see if training for staff in communication skills and methods to work with disabled children could be made available.
- Develop guidance to clearly describe settings safeguarding responsibilities when commissioning services to work with children, or who may come into contact with children when delivering these services.

Where organisations identify any areas of practice that require improvement or are inadequate, they are asked to develop an action plan describing what they will do to improve practice. The following year they are required to submit an update on the progress and impact of these actions

Some of the good practice examples given are:

- *It's all about awareness. It's helped the staff be more in the know and it's been great for management to keep an eye on where our staff are at.*
- *All teams know how to safeguard children, the actions have raised the understanding that safeguarding is everyone's business.*
- *Policies and procedures will be updated to ensure they are relevant and when we do have to take on staff/volunteers in the future we will have a rigorous and robust recruitment procedure in place.*
- *The impact of the actions we have taken has led to a more confident staff team in understanding the policies within the setting, it has increased their knowledge and helped them support our families more effectively.*
- *Ensuring all staff have refresher and current PREVENT training has also supported a more effective workforce that are confident in the signs to watch out for.*
- *Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead monitors PSHE sessions when safeguarding areas are taught, particularly ensuring that more vulnerable pupils have engaged and understood the aims of these sessions. School works with Early Help and wider safeguarding teams, challenging when required. Ofsted report in May 2023 graded safeguarding as 'good' overall.*

Organisations are also asked to outline any challenges or barriers they have encountered when implementing these changes:

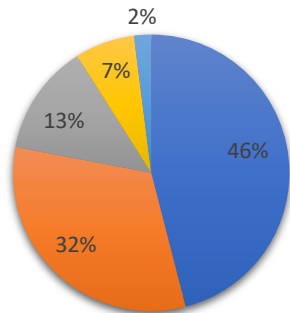
- *It's very tricky to find the time for these, we are however aware and trying to make it work but cannot say it has always been easy.*
- *Finding a suitable course for Safer Recruitment that was also cost effective for us, as we are a charity.*
- *We are working on our systems to ensure that we can capture the data simply and securely.*
- *Time pressures to ensure staff are given the opportunity for additional safeguarding training required without impacting on their time with the children.*

Feedback from children and families

Every year in February, Portsmouth's Children and Families Service invites feedback from children, parents and carer that they work with.

Parents feedback (42% of parents participated in this survey)

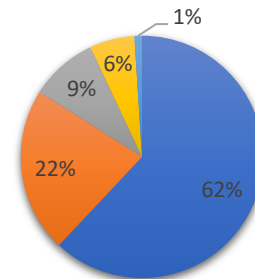
I think Portsmouth City Council's services for my child is:



Thank you so much for supporting me and child, it's been a very long journey that I will never forget, never dreamed of working alongside you from the start but look how it turned out. We now have good chats and a lot of support from you. The mistakes made in the past we can't change them; we can only modify our behaviour going forward and that's with all the kind support from you.

■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Ok ■ Poor ■ Not sure

I think that the support provided to my family by their social worker is:



My worker really helped understand my situation and gave great guidance.

■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Ok ■ Poor ■ Not sure

Children's feedback about their social worker (38% of CIN & CP children participated in this survey)

She listens to me and I feel she has helped a lot with home. She hasn't done anything which has upset me, nor do I feel she has areas to improve on. I feel she has helped a lot and I really like her. She offered us lots of different support which we tried, and things are going well. I always felt heard.

Do you feel able to talk to your social worker about things that are important to you?

92% said yes

Do you think you have a chance to have your say?

94% said yes

If she says she's going to do something she does it, she listens to me and is good at explaining things if I don't understand. She is awesome.