

Barking and Dagenham Safeguarding Children Partnership (BDSCP)

Annual Report 2024 – 2025

1. Foreword & Introduction

Foreword from the BDSCP Executive Group Chair

Stuart Bell – Chair, BDSCP Executive Group

"I am proud to introduce this Annual Report for the Barking and Dagenham Children Safeguarding Partnership Executive Group, and its Board. This Report outlines the activities and achievements across the statutory partners – Metropolitan Police, Integrated Care Board and London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. I would also like to acknowledge the work of our close partners Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospital NHS Trust, North East London Foundation Trust, Education partners and other agencies and services provided by the community and voluntary sector."

2024/2025 has been a busy year for colleagues across all organisations and I want to personally thank all staff for their diligence and hard work that has allowed us to make progress while facing financial challenges and organisational uncertainties, caused by moving policy directions outside of our control. Despite the challenges, our partnership continues to work tirelessly and innovatively towards making Barking and Dagenham safer for vulnerable residents.

In this report you will see information on rising needs and demands on services and how committed we are to providing the best possible services to children and families in our borough. You will see how our Board and Committees have actively led the response to Child Sexual Abuse across London and have been praised for our approaches in tackling Neglect and Child Exploitation.

As a partnership we rely on other agencies to work with us, to help us learn and shape services to meet local needs, so I want to thank everyone in the partnership for their work with universities and notable experts who support us to shape how we work.

This is our first year of delivering within the new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements and my concluding thought is that we are building stronger relationships and sharing organisational approaches that have allowed us to develop better understandings of each other that has resulted in our being unified as a Partnership.

Introduction from the Barking and Dagenham Children Safeguarding Partners

We are pleased to present the annual report of the Barking and Dagenham Safeguarding Children's Partnership for the period 1 April 2024– 31 March 2025. This report is presented on behalf of the statutory partners and the local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. This report highlights the impact of our work, it showcases how our joined-up approach is making a difference in protecting and supporting children, promoting their wellbeing, and enabling them to thrive.

The report outlines the key activities and achievements of the Executive Group, the Board and its partners over the past year. All partners are working hard to protect and safeguard children and families in Barking and Dagenham, whilst facing rising demands for key services that play a vital role in supporting and safeguarding children and families.

Our work across this year has continued to focus on three core priorities; Neglect, Child Sexual Abuse and Child Exploitation. We have made good progress in these areas and would like to thank all our frontline staff, professionals, advisors, schools, colleges, families and children for the involvement and participation as we work towards better protection and safety for our vulnerable residents.

During this year, we have also undertaken preparatory work for the many changes arising from the Department for Education's (DfE) children's social care reform, known locally as the Families First Partnership Programme, which is included in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. This programme of work will be driven by the Partnership in the coming months, and we are working closely with the DfE to ensure that the Families First Partnership Programme delivers improved outcomes for children and families here in Barking and Dagenham.

We are also expecting significant changes following the Government announcement to disband NHS England, which will also impact on our local Health and Care partners. However, the duty to Safeguard will remain and all partners will continue to work together during these changing times.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA)

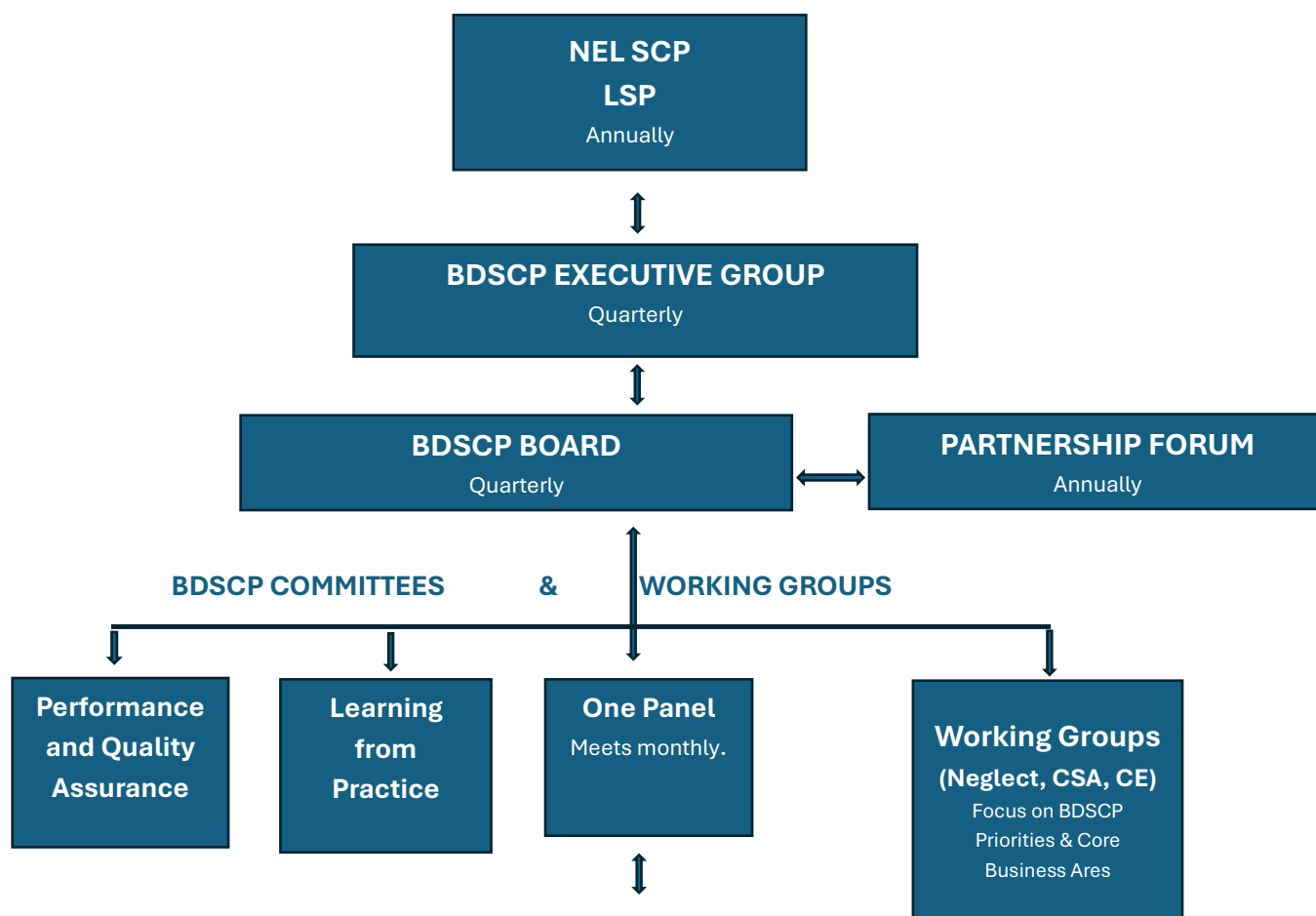
In 2024 we implemented our Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA). The Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) and the statutory guidance issued within Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 requires each Local Authority Area to establish local arrangements for safeguarding children and young people. The purpose of these local arrangements is to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, also, to work together to identify and respond to the needs of children in the area. They ensure that, at a local level, organisations

and agencies are clear about how they will work together to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

Responsibility for these arrangements is shared between four safeguarding partners: the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, the Metropolitan Police Service, Education and the NHS North East London Integrated Care Board. Other 'relevant' agencies also have a duty to safeguard children and young people under the Children Act 2004. The Barking and Dagenham Safeguarding Children Partnership Board's (BDSCP) arrangements define how safeguarding partners, relevant agencies and other organisations work together to coordinate their safeguarding services.

These arrangements include details about how safeguarding partners identify and respond to the needs of children, commission and publish local child safeguarding practice reviews and provide independent leadership and scrutiny. The most recent published arrangements are [available here](#). At least once in every 12-month period, the safeguarding partners must prepare and publish a report on what the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies for the local authority area have done because of the arrangements and outline how effective the arrangements have been in practice. This annual report will be published on the BDSCP web pages and shared across the wider strategic partnerships.

BDSCP Delivery Structure & Core Committees



SIN

As required.

BDSCP Executive Group: Responsible for high-level oversight, meeting quarterly.

BDSCP Board: Provides governance and holds all partners accountable within our operating model, meeting quarterly under the leadership of Chair Detective Superintendent Charmaine Laurencin.

Performance and Quality Assurance leads on monitoring performance, assuring quality services are delivered and undertakes audits and self-assessments across the partnership.

Learning from Practice Committee leads on ensuring lessons are learned from reviews and responded to by developing and implementing action plans to drive improvement. The Committee chairs take a lead and oversight of the delivery of reviews and play a pivotal role in ensuring that relevant partners collaborate effectively to learn lessons from local, regional and national published reviews. The committee leads on the design and delivery of the Learning and Development offer to all partner organisations.

One Panel is the shared Committee of the Safeguarding Adults Board, The Community Safety Partnership and the Safeguarding Children Partnership. The Committee is a multi-agency group which receives referrals on cases in Barking and Dagenham that may meet statutory review criteria, such as a Safeguarding Adults Review (SARs), Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) or Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDRs). The purpose of the Panel is to provide a multi-agency decision-making forum for all referrals relating to statutory reviews, using the relevant criteria and to make recommendations in respect of what type of review should be undertaken, if any. The focus of the panel is to identify opportunities for system-wide learning to improve practice.

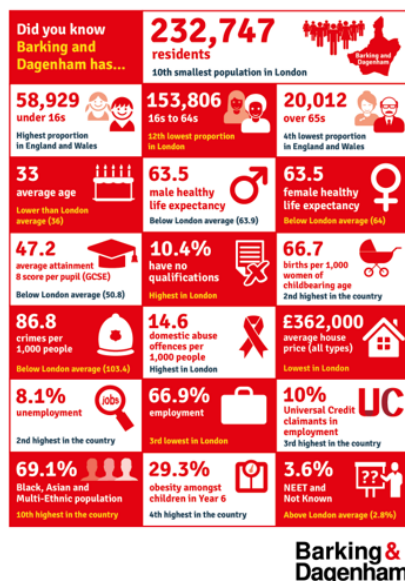
Introduction to our Board Chair:

Detective Superintendent Charmaine Laurencin is the Chair of the BDSCP Board. Charmaine, as a senior Metropolitan Police Officer has extensive knowledge and experience of Children's Safeguarding. She is a valued strategic leader within our Borough and has expert understanding of the challenges we face in keeping vulnerable children and families safe. Charmaine leads the Board to ensure it provides assurance to the Executive that our Statutory Duties are fulfilled. Charmaine ensures all partners are held accountable within our operating model.

About Barking and Dagenham: Key Demographics

Barking and Dagenham continues to have a growing population with 25% of all residents aged under 16. Like many London Boroughs, we are faced with rising demands on services as our residents face increased poverty and unemployment. We also have the highest rates of domestic abuse in London, which makes our need to safeguard vulnerable residents even more acute as we recognise the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people.

Some key facts about Barking & Dagenham



- our population grew by 33,000 residents between the 2011 and 2021 censuses (17.7% - 3rd highest in England & Wales)
- and has grown by another 14,000 residents since June 2021 (end of last official COVID-19 lockdown in the UK)

We have the youngest population in the country

- 25% of all residents aged under 16
- 2nd highest birth rate in the country

Barking & Dagenham is an attractive place to move to:

- house prices are lowest in London
- one of the cheaper places in London for private renting (6th lowest)
- building many new homes
- lower than average crime rate

Our residents face many issues, including:

- **unemployment** (2nd highest rate in the country)
- **poverty** (4 in every ten children live in poverty (after housing costs); 3rd highest rate in country of Universal Credit claimants in employment – working people on low incomes needing to claim benefits)
- **skills shortage** (highest proportion of adults in London with no qualifications)
- **domestic abuse** (highest rate in London)
- **obesity** (4th highest proportion in country of children in Year 6 recorded as obese)

Priority Areas & Activity

Our priorities for 2024/25 were:

- Child Exploitation
- Neglect
- Child Sexual Abuse

To address our priorities, we established three Working Groups led by professional experts in each field. The Child Exploitation and Child Sexual Abuse Working Groups are chaired by The LBBD Council's Director of Operations, Children's Care and Support. Each working group has a work programme to deliver improved outcomes for our residents. All working groups report to the BDSCP Board quarterly.

Neglect

Neglect has featured in almost every serious case review and partnership review in Barking and Dagenham in recent years.

The effects of neglect on children are significant, throughout their childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. There is evidence of the adverse effect of neglect on all the seven dimensions of development, including health, education, identity, emotional and behavioural development, family and social relationships, social presentation, and self-care skills. Sometimes the effects are fatal.

In Barking and Dagenham, we 'Think Family'. We know that children experiencing neglect can carry its impact into adulthood. We know self-neglect and neglect in vulnerable adults can be complex, with our safeguarding duties applying to those with care and support needs within the 2014 Care Act.

Key Achievements:

A Strategic Approach: One of the first actions of the Neglect Improvement Programme Task and Finish Group (NIPT&FG) was to create the strategic framework for the improvement activity ahead. The NIPT&FG produced a strategy and launched it at the Neglect Symposium held in March 2024. The Symposium was attended by practitioners from across the Barking and Dagenham workforces. All signed up to the priorities within the action plan.

Information, advice and guidance: Alongside the new Neglect Strategy, the NIPT&FG launched new intranet and internet pages at the Neglect Symposium. There was no single, easily accessible source of information, advice and guidance for professionals working in Barking and Dagenham prior to this. The new pages provide general information as well as specialist guidance for those in the children's and adults' workforces. The webpages are a repository of all resources that might be needed to address neglect. The NIPT&FG ensures the webpages are regularly updated as improvement work is undertaken. The NIPT&FG also monitors usage as in our data focused meetings.

The Neglect Roadshows: Following on from the success of our multi-agency Neglect Symposium, we designed a Neglect Roadshow – a short session focused on the Neglect Strategy and training content to support professionals across workforces to understand neglect and self-neglect, how to spot the signs and what to do about it as a result. The roadshow has been delivered far and wide, across council services, partners services including the Police, General Practitioners and the voluntary sector, as well as to key forums such as the Barking and Dagenham Private Sector Landlords Forum. The roadshow has been evaluated extremely positively, and impacts have been felt – with an increase in communication between children's and adult's front doors and services, as well as an increase in referrals into early intervention services.

Growing the Toolkit: Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) training has been made mandatory for all social workers, and we have designed a tool for frontline social care managers to ensure all cases that should have a GCP2, have a GCP2. We are seeing the impact of this focus, with an increase in the number of completed GCP2s from 54 in 2022, 136 in 2023 to 263 in 2024. The NIPT&FG also designed and launched a neglect screening tool for non GCP2 trained professionals to use including teachers, GPs, housing officers and voluntary sector providers. Key professionals have been

trained in how to use the tool. We also successfully bid to be an early adopter of the GCP2A, a tool developed by the NSPCC to help practitioners identify risk of potential neglect pre-birth and for very young babies. We have successfully piloted the Graded Care Profile 2 Antenatal (GCP2A) and will be rolling it out in 2025.

Rethinking Commissioning: The NIPT&FG developed commissioning principles able to be applied to all contracted services – ensuring that the system works with a shared understanding of neglect, uses the same language and we all understand our bit of the jigsaw and how it links to preventing and tackling neglect. The principles include several specifications and measures that can be applied as appropriate. These principles are already informing the commissioning activity of the Barking and Dagenham Community Safety Partnership.

Data Driven Reports: the NIPT&FG designed and agreed a performance management framework. To create ongoing focus, new data reports were developed, allowing the NIPT&FG to understand the journey of a family through our systems.

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)

Sexual abuse can impact on every area of a child's development; psychologically, cognitively, socially, emotionally, behaviourally, physically, and sexually. Many of the children and families referred into North East London Child Sexual Abuse Sunrise Hub present with more than one additional complex issue, which increases their vulnerability. This includes learning difficulties and/or neurodiversity, sexual exploitation (including online), exposure to domestic abuse, homelessness, substance abuse, parental mental health difficulties, and being a refugee or asylum seeker.

Our vision is: To ensure that Barking & Dagenham children who are victims and survivors of sexual abuse receive the best possible medical, emotional and social support, including advocacy to support them through their recovery, and that they get justice for the crimes committed against them. To ensure appropriate prevention work reducing childhood sexual abuse incidences by empowering children to speak out and perpetrators to seek help early on.

Key Achievements of the Child Sexual Abuse Working Group

What's going well and the difference we have made

- **Partnering with the CSA Centre of expertise and piloting the CSA Response pathway** – the workforce has access to tools and resources– increasing knowledge and skills in identifying and responding to CSA. LBBD has a strong reputation nationally for the work we are doing on CSA
- **CSA Quarterly Newsletter, CSA Intranet site and bite size training** – staff have access to current information, resources and referral

pathways. Staff report feeling more confident. New social care staff understand our approach to CSA

- **CSA Practice leaders training, an intense 10-month training staff to become experts in understanding and responding to CSA** – we have trained 40 staff and additional 20 being currently trained
- **CSA think space (multi-disciplinary) – a fortnightly opportunity for social workers to have a reflective discussion about a child – obtaining advice /guidance and case direction, including emotional support** – feedback is very positive, staff feel more confident and supported
- **Developed and embedded the social care liaison role on behalf of NEL ICB** - advisory role at strategy meetings, provides training, reporting to quarterly partnership forum
- **Strengthened links with the NEL Sunrise hub** – LBBD now have highest rate of referrals to Sunrise Hub across NEL
- **Specialist Intervention Service (SIS) – in house therapeutic team, providing therapy to children who have suffered sexual abuse** – Audit's highlight SIS Therapy team having positive impact on children's well-being and helping carers feel confident to manage the child's trauma
- **Children's CSA practice lead undertaking monthly dip sampling audit activity, testing quality of practice** – Early findings show an improving picture – good use of CSA think space, and pathway being followed for children experiencing sexual assaults
- **NSPCC Stepping stones sibling sexual abuse pilot** – LBBD successful in a bid to partner with the NSPCC who will offer systemic family therapy to families impacted by sibling sexual abuse – supporting families with safety planning and keeping families together
- **Schools – role of Dedicated Safeguarding Lead in every school** sharing best practice with schools increasing their ability to identify and respond to CSA concerns
- **Responding to current issues** e.g. schools' response to Everybody's invited Ofsted recommendations, and annual schools report capturing school's confidence and training needs
- **Continued focus by CSA partnership re barriers children have in talking about abuse e.g. black, disabled, LGBT+, Asian** – CSC are reporting on ethnicity and additional needs to highlight disproportionality and intersectionality
- **Voice of the child** – obtaining feedback from children and families who have been in receipt of our services

Child Exploitation & Risks Outside the Home

Tackling child exploitation has been a priority for the BDSCP for several years. In 2018 we partnered with the University of Bedfordshire with the aim of introducing a contextual safeguarding approach to how we work with adolescents at risk of harm from outside of their homes. Since this time the partnership has worked closely together.

The Adolescent Safety and Wellbeing Strategic Group is the cohort of partners who meet monthly and are responsible for delivering the Adolescent Safety and Wellbeing Strategy which was co-produced with young people. The associated work plan is reviewed annually. This meeting considers the needs of children at risk of exploitation, serious youth violence and gangs. This meeting feeds into the BDSCP Board and the LBBD Community Safety Partnership Board. Under the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, the Adolescent Safety & Wellbeing strategic group is now known as the Child Exploitation Working Group.

ROTH Pathway

In 2024/25, work commenced on creating a new Risk Outside the Home (ROTH) pathway, building on our earlier collaboration with the University of Bedfordshire. This initiative acknowledges that conventional child protection plans are not effective for adolescents facing risks outside the home environment. To better reflect the collaborative safeguarding approach we aim for with children and their caregivers, the term “child protection” has been intentionally excluded from the ROTH terminology.

The new pathway mirrors the structure of the traditional child protection (CP) process and offers three potential outcomes: a ROTH Child in Need (CIN) Plan, a ROTH Plan (which operates at the CP level and addresses significant risks outside the home), or a standard CP Plan.

The ROTH pathway is scheduled for launch in June 2025, accompanied by training and development opportunities for partners and frontline staff. This will ensure that children and young people affected by ROTH receive a more targeted and effective response, with tailored plans designed to address their complex needs and reduce the risks they face.

Our Vision

Our vision was co-created with young people and sets out our aims and ambitions:

“We aim to give children and young people hope, opportunity and celebrate their success. We will work to challenge and support young people to be the best they can be, helping them feel connected to their community. We will provide and improve access to services for young people to divert them from harm and exploitation and to help them to achieve their goals and aspirations. We aim to provide a service where children feel safe, listened to, supported to be brilliant and understood to be the experts through their own experiences. We will value the diversity of young people and their families; our aim is to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and to promote equality of opportunity”

Key achievements of the Child Exploitation Working Group

What's going well and the difference we made:

- A partnership owned **Adolescent Safety & Wellbeing Strategy and action plan** – providing clarity of vision, purpose, core principles, measures and multi partner action plan
- Improved understanding of LBBB exploitation profile including drivers of exploitation- **monthly data and audit / deep dive review of children's cases** allows us to better understand the LBBB profile, including what the key risk indicators are for our children
- Partnership approach at tactical meetings supports **identification of unsafe locations / places and persons** – Community Safety Partnership responds to make spaces safer; police use police powers e.g. CAWN
- **Practitioners obtaining feedback from young people and parents at end of involvement** – this has strengthened our understanding of “what works” and made the positive difference, which has informed training and improved practice approaches, as well as commissioning
- **New Head of Youth Support & Participation** – developing a clear tiered Youth offer – strengthening the child's voice – children and their parents understand what youth services are in their community, offering alternatives to young people
- Children's Social Care **dedicated Exploitation lead** – driving a more consistent identification and response to risk outside the home
- **A strengthened missing co-ordinator team** – providing return home interviews and better understanding of reasons for missing episodes
- **Strengthened school inclusion underpinned by Inclusion pledge** – a single shared language and approach aligned with Children's Social CARES practice framework and trauma informed approach
- **Successful Designated Safeguarding Leads conference** – DSL's feeling better informed and understanding what services are available
- **Responsive community safety teams** – supporting community contextual safeguarding initiatives e.g. tackling illegal vape sales, targeting knife sales, Safe Havens initiative
- **Police Make safe programme** – safeguarding training local hotels.
- **Implemented MOPAC non-criminalisation of LAC children and care leavers protocol**
- **Children's safeguarding summit – primary and secondary** – a selection of children from most schools gather to talk about safety in school and in the community
- **Understanding disproportionality**- all data at MASE and CEG reports on ethnicity breakdown of the cohort and continuously challenge ourselves on the impact of adultification.
- **Strengthened CAMHS attendance** – having been able to efficiently chase up and fast track assessments CAMHS assessments and intervention
- **National recognised NRM panel** – the majority of children referred get a timely conclusive ground decision and associated action plan

There are some common challenges facing all our Working Groups and we will progress these as we move into 2025/2026.

Learning from Case Reviews

National, regional and local safeguarding practice reviews are key to improving frontline practice across all partner organisations. Our Learning from Practice Committee plays a vital role, ensuring we learn from our peers and our local experiences. During the year we completed two child safeguarding practice reviews (CSPR) and held two rapid reviews.

Rapid reviews are meetings that are convened with all relevant agencies and frontline practice workers to discuss and agree how a referral is managed or acted upon. Not all referrals received meet the threshold for a full CSPR, so we rely on the rapid reviews to understand how practice can be improved and if there are areas of any concern that we can respond to in our Learning Programme.

CSPRs are undertaken when a referral meets the threshold to look more closely into the involvement of agencies where a referral is of a more serious nature. The CSPR is often undertaken by an independent professional who explores actions and experiences of services who have interacted with individuals or families.

The learning identified from both rapid reviews and CSPRs are taken with equal esteem to help all organisations improve their practice. In 2024/25 the Rapid Reviews highlighted:

- The impact of Covid on families and the subsequent lack of engagement with professionals
- How difficult it was to fully engage with families where children were home educated (hidden children)
- The value of professional curiosity and chronologies to aid emerging themes and risks was also identified as an area of learning.

Areas of good practice included: staff commitment, being assertive and tenacity by practitioners when risk is identified, escalation of concerns through safeguarding supervision to put safety plans in place, and effective liaison between police and health where safeguarding concerns are raised.

Case Study Summaries

Rapid Review: Domestic Abuse & Clinical Interventions

This review related to severe domestic abuse and parental mental health issues where a father severely harmed his family. A primary learning point was the excellent practice shown by the family GP, who recognized the father's mental health deterioration and filed a proactive safeguarding referral to children's social care without maternal consent. The local school also demonstrated best practice by proactively training staff in honour-based violence and coercive control detection,

serving as a trusted community hub. Statutory partners agreed that a full CSPR was not required as learning was immediately actioned.

Child Safeguarding Practice Review: Child J

Child J was 16 years old when he faced severe extra-familial harm. The review highlighted that a lack of progress was too often blamed on the individual adolescent rather than structural inequalities, racism, and resource deficits. It confirmed indicators of adultification bias, where Child J was not viewed first and foremost as a child. This has driven a complete overhaul of our local contextual safeguarding arrangements and the implementation of our devolved National Referral Mechanism (NRM) decision-making.

To address the areas of learning identified across the reviews, we ensure our training programme offers opportunities for all practitioners to develop and improve their skills and knowledge while learning from the experiences of their peers.

Case Reviews also led to the development of two Action Plans, that are monitored through our Learning from Practice Committee and fed back to the One Panel to ensure we are proactively putting measures in place to improve practice in our borough.

From Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews areas of learning have been highlighted in:

- Lack of appropriate placements for Looked After Children – reflected nationally and not unique to Barking and Dagenham
- The need to recognise a child's human rights relation to Article 2 (restraint) and Article 3 (taking best interests into account with placement moves)
- the importance of a robust planning for adulthood and transition to adult services
- Lack of professional curiosity
- Need to utilise neglect screening tools
- The need for robust multi agency working and cross border working was also highlighted as an area for improvement.
- Need for deeper understanding of the lived experience of trauma and abuse

“2024/25 has been a busy year for everyone involved in embedding and improving learning across the partnership. The take-up of our Learning and Development programme continues to grow and we continue to add new areas of learning to develop and enhance the skills of practitioners”

Kate Byrne, Co-Chair Learning from Practice Committee

Learning from National Reports

In March 2025 the National Panel published a Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel report: "It's Silent": Race, racism and safeguarding children – Panel Briefing 4. In addition to adopting an anti-racist lens in everything that we do, we have reaffirmed our commitment to anti-racism by including a statement in our Strategic Delivery Plan which will be reflected in all our Committee and Working Group activities.

Our Learning and Development Programme includes anti-racism and unconscious bias training and we are making progress to increase the voice of the child in our work. We are moving from traditional consultation to genuine co-production with young people and will be holding a Child Safety Summit during 2025. We are working to ensure that the pledges and insights voiced by young people at the Safety Summit are not just acknowledged but actively embedded in all safeguarding and safety strategies across Barking and Dagenham.

We are also pleased that the Metropolitan Police are rolling out new training for all Police Officers in their new Child First Strategy which aims to ensure children are treated as children and reduce the levels of 'adultification' experienced by young black and ethnic minorities.

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

*Our total number of looked after children decreased by 5 (1%) children during 2024/25 from 436 to **431**. Our rate per 10,000 decreased from 68 to **67**. We remain above the London average (51) and statistical neighbours average (59), but below the national average (70). (As at the end of September 2025 our LAC numbers have further declined to 401, which is a rate of 60 per 10,000).*

LBBD has complex issues of poverty and an increasing child population which impact on the above London and Statistical Neighbour average. However, prevention of coming into care remains a focus for Children's Services. The work of the Specialist Intervention Service has multiple offers to support children and families to work through challenges and this is embedded within the work of CSC.

The Early Help and Adolescent offers have been under-developed in this area, but there is now a focus on maximising the support to families at a much earlier stage to prevent escalation of children coming into care. The Social Work Reform, Families First, is highlighting the importance of supporting Kinship care and this is an area

that we already prioritise and support and will develop further in order for children to remain within their family and friends' network.

The legal planning process is robust, and the use of the Public Law Outline (PLO) has positively impacted on children remaining out of care by focussing work on understanding the needs and functioning of families, putting the correct interventions in place to enable children to remain with family and therefore not escalating to care proceedings and children coming into care. During the reporting year 18 children did not enter care after a successful period in PLO. This equates to approx. 1 in 3 children did not enter care via PLO work.

*The number of care leavers (aged 18-24) open as at the end of 2024/25 was **335** (rate of **149** per 10,000). This was an increase of **30 (10%)** on the 305 care leavers (rate of 136 per 10,000) at the end of the previous year. (As of the end of September 2025, there are 331 care leavers open (rate of 148). Please note, comparator data is not published for Care leaver numbers.*

Care leavers post 18 has been a growing area in the borough for several reasons. Firstly, we have seen an increase in older children entering care for the first time during adolescence and therefore moving into the care leaver cohort quite quickly. As we strengthen the adolescent offer we expect that there will be a reduction of older children entering care during crisis.

Early Help Referrals

Over the last 18 months the nature of Early Help support in Barking and Dagenham has sought to establish a stronger network of internal and external partners, who work jointly in our locality model to provide preventative services to children who need our help. Our delivery model is shaped around three localities in the north, west and east of the borough, which provides a range of practitioners from a number of disciplines working together, collaborating and ensuring that there is good alignment in supporting children. The Early Help localities, by design are also the home of the Family Hubs, which ensures that there is a coordinated and seamless approach towards universal and targeted support.

Access to Early Help support has been simplified to ensure that the process is more straightforward, so that families can self-refer alongside wide range of professionals. The Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) is the single entry point for support and services. Both families and professionals are encouraged to complete the MARF before submitting online to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), our integrated front door for Children Services. The MARF enables the MASH to review,

apply threshold to the level of support the family requires and ensures that the right support at the right time by the right partner agency is provided. This approach has enabled Early Help performance data to show year on year improvement, reaching a wider audience of families and demonstrating low re-referral rates.

In 2024/25, there were 6,080 referrals to Early Help services - an increase of 7% compared to 5,667 referrals in 2023/24. Of these, 64% (3,919) originated from Targeted Early Help Advisory Service online referrals, followed by 30% (1,812) from completed MASH assessments, and 6% (349) from completed EHM contacts. The overall increase in referrals for support is positive and demonstrates that partners and families are more aware of the Early Help offer.

The top three referral source agencies in 2024/25 that sought an Early Help service for families were: Education partners, primarily schools, accounting for 34% (2,038) of all referrals; the Police, contributing 28% (1,681); and Health partners, specifically other primary health services, making up 20% (1,209). In view of the Early Help service in Barking and Dagenham reflecting a partnership offer and delivery, it is expected that key partners who have greater access to children and families will be high referrers into the service for those families who are vulnerable and need support.

Targeted Early Help episodes

In 2024/25, Targeted Early Help teams collectively initiated 1,862 Targeted Early Help episodes, down from 2,400 in 2023/24 - a 22% decrease. This reduction is largely due to effective triage by the Targeted Early Help Advisory Service, a service that is part of the MASH, which signposted children to preventative services such as the Family Hubs and Family Navigators, Parenting programmes and Universal (Start 4 Life) Services.

In 2024/25, the most frequently recorded presenting issues across all episodes were Mental Health Issues (26%), Domestic Violence¹ (17%), Behavioural Issues (16%), and Neglect (13%). This represents a shift from 2023/24, where Behavioural Issues were highest at 19%, followed by Mental Health Issues (18%), Domestic Violence (16%), and Neglect (10%). Mental Health Issues increased by 8 percentage points, becoming the most prevalent concern, while Behavioural Issues declined by 3 points. Neglect rose by 3 points, and Domestic Violence saw a modest increase of 1 point.

Early Help Assessments

In 2024/25, 697 families completed Early Help Assessments - a 17% decrease from 840 in 2023/24. This drop is a result of the 22% reduction in new Targeted Early Help episodes supported by greater use of the wider early help system, which includes partners and the third sector community.

Referrals to Children's Social Care

In 2024/25, statutory social care referrals increased by 14%, rising from 4,640 to 5,307—an additional 667 referrals compared to the previous year. Our referral rate per 10,000 children rose from 724 to 825, remaining significantly above all comparator benchmarks: National (518), Statistical Neighbours (527), and London (556).

The highest proportion of referrals came from the Police (1,645 – 31%) and Education (1,469 – 28%). Timeliness of referral processing improved, with 89% completed within required timescales, up from 87% in 2023/24.

At the end of the year, the repeat referral rate remained at 22%, consistent with the previous year. This matches the National average (22%), but is higher than both London (19%) and Statistical Neighbours (19%). To address this, we have introduced a Service Manager oversight system for all repeat referrals where the outcome of the Single Assessment is no further action. This system is currently in place within the Assessment and Intervention Service, where the majority of repeat referrals are allocated. It is now being rolled out to other services that also undertake Single Assessments, to ensure consistent oversight and decision-making across the service.

We are also working to strengthen our partnership arrangements and reinforce the Lead Professional role, in response to the high volume of referrals received by MASH at crisis point, often without evidence of prior early intervention.

Strategy Discussions and Section 47 Investigations

The number of children that progressed to Section 47 investigations during 2024/25 was 1386 out of 2206 strategy discussions, a conversion of 63%. For the previous year, this figure was 62% (1174/1960). There was an increase in the number of Section 47 investigations initiated during 2024/25 of 226 (19%), with 1386 initiated, compared to 1160 in 2023/24. Our rate per 10,000 is now 215 (compared to 181 in 23/24) - we are above all comparators - National (187), SN (175) and London (195).

The % of S47s progressing to ICPC in 2024/25 decreased from 32% to 30%. We are in line with the London average of 30%, but below the National (32%) and similar areas (35%).

The percentage of Section 47 investigations resulting in No Further Action increased from 8% to 12%.

Statutory Single Assessments

In 2024/25, the number of completed Single Assessments increased by 22%, totalling 1,084 assessments. Our assessment rate now stands at 924 per 10,000

children, up from 759, and remains significantly above all comparator benchmarks: National (536), Statistical Neighbours (539), and London (543).

Performance in terms of timeliness has also improved, with 91% of assessments completed within the statutory 45-day timeframe, up from 89%. This places us ahead of all comparators, whose performance ranges between 85% and 90%.

Notably, the majority of our assessments (25%) are completed between days 21–30, ensuring timely support for families. The introduction of weekly performance tracking has been instrumental in driving this improvement, supported by robust internal monitoring systems.

To further strengthen accountability, we are rolling out a Delayed Assessments Accountability Form, which teams must complete for any assessment reaching day 40. This system is already in place within the Assessment and Intervention Service and the Family Support and Safeguarding Service, which together complete the majority of assessments across the service

Child Protection Conferences

A Child {protection Conference is a meeting organised by children's social care when there are serious concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing. It brings together professionals (like teachers, doctors, and social workers) and the child's family to share information and decide how best to keep the child safe. The aim is not to judge, but to work together to understand the risks and agree on what support is needed to protect the child.

During 2024/25 we saw a significant increase in Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC), ICPCs: 414 children were subject to an ICPC, a 26% rise from 328 in 2023/24. The rate per 10,000 increased from 57 to 62, placing the borough above all comparators (Similar areas: 61; London: 59; National: 60).

Transfer-in ICPCs: The number of transfer in ICPCs rose from 40 to 69, contributing substantially to the overall increase and reflecting higher inward migration of families with existing child protection plans.

Improved timeliness: 92% of ICPCs were held within the statutory 15 working day timeframe, up from 85% the previous year. This performance exceeds comparator averages (77%-80%).

Sustained review performance: Child Protection Review Conferences were held on time in 98% of cases, maintaining last year's high standard and outperforming comparators (90%-93%).

Drivers of increased ICPCs:

- Rise in referrals and Section 47 investigations (up 19%).
- Socio-economic pressures including cost of living impacts, domestic abuse, and parental mental health.
- Increased population mobility and transfer in cases.
- Practice vigilance and threshold application to ensure child safety.

The borough's ICPC rate and safeguarding activity are higher than regional and national averages, but this is matched by strong performance in timeliness and review compliance. The partnership responded effectively to rising demand, maintaining high standards in timeliness and oversight. The increase in ICPCs reflects both greater need and improved identification of risk, with safeguarding arrangements acting swiftly and robustly to protect children.

Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan

A Child Protection Plan sets out the steps everyone will take to keep a child safe from harm. It's created after a Child Protection Conference if professionals agree that a child is at risk. The plan includes what needs to change, what support will be offered to the family, and how progress will be reviewed. It's a practical tool to help families get the help they need while making sure the child's wellbeing is the top priority

In 2024/25 we saw a sharp increase in the number of children on child protection plans: At year end, 349 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan, an increase of 99 children (40%) compared to 250 in 2023/24. The rate per 10,000 rose from 39 to 54, placing the borough above all comparators (National: 42; Similar areas: 41; London: 41) for this period.

More plans initiated, fewer plans ended: 389 new Child Protection Plans were started during the year (up from 273), while only 285 plans ended (down from 410). This imbalance contributed to the overall rise in children remaining on plans due to the complexity and evidence or ongoing risk and harm.

Repeat plans: 66 children became subject to a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time, up from 51 the previous year. However, the percentage of repeat plans fell to 17% (from 19%) due to the higher number of new plans overall. This is below comparator averages (London: 21%; England: 25%; Similar areas: 22%).

Plans lasting over two years: The proportion of ceased plans that lasted more than two years decreased from 9% to 7% (20 children), though this remains slightly above comparator benchmarks (typically 4–5%).

Why Have CPP Numbers Increased?

The rise in Child Protection Plans is directly linked to the 26% increase in ICPCs held during the year. With more children reaching the threshold for multi agency intervention, a greater number progressed to formal plans.

Fewer plans were ended during this period (285 vs 410 last year), suggesting longer durations in stepping children across to CIN plans given the multi-faceted complexity of need and risk being presented. While the proportion of long term plans - more than 2 years, has reduced slightly, it remains above national norms, indicating the complexity in cases.

Local safeguarding data, points to rising concerns around domestic abuse, parental mental health, and neglect, all of which contribute to sustained risk and the need for continued protection. These factors play a significant role in the complexity of risk children are experiencing in LBBD, requiring CP plans that address and mitigate this risk, which often increase our involvement with families.

Population mobility and transfer in cases: A notable rise in transfer in ICPCs suggests more children moved into the borough already on plans, adding to the overall caseload.

Core Groups

The number of Core Group meetings held in timescale for children subject to Child Protection Plans increased to 87% as at the end of March 2025, up from 81% a year earlier.

Child Protection Visits

The proportion of children subject to Child Protection Plans visited 2 weekly decreased to 83% at year-end 2024/25 compared to 85% the year before. 97% of children subject to Child Protection Plans were visited and seen within 4 weeks at the end of 2024/25, a slight decrease on the 2023/24 outturn of 96%.

Missing Children

The number of children missing from home (not in care) increased in 2024/25, whereas the numbers of episodes decreased slightly. There were 253 children reported missing with 737 episodes, compared to 224 children with 744 episodes in 2023/24. Return home interviews within the recommended 72 hours period remains an area of concern with low performance, decreasing from 54% to 46% during 2023/24 and again during 2024/25 to 43%.

The number of looked after children missing has increased from 64 to 68 over the last year, with an increase of missing episodes from 389 to 459. Return home interviews within 72 hours for looked-after children shows an improvement at 44%, a rise from 35% when compared to 2023/24.

It is of concern that the number has reduced for missing children with return home interviews completed as we have had additional capacity of missing co-ordinators to complete return home interviews. Whilst the completion of these interviews may be lower the offer of an interview to children within 72 hours is higher. There are some times when children go missing on more than one occasion and we are unable to complete the forms before they go missing a further time. We will look at this in more detail over the coming months to ensure that there is not an issue with data quality or we are wrongly recording when children have more than one missing episode.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

At the end of March 2025, 60 young people were open in children's care and support for whom there were current CSE concerns – an increase on the 39 at the end of 2023/24. This increase is due to enhanced oversight of children at risk of extra-familial harm and a change in process that means the service manager with single oversight of missing children now opens the CSE risk assessment where indicators of this form of exploitation are indicated in the information that children give when spoken to about their missing episode.

We are also working with our IT provider to develop a single exploitation workspace in our children's electronic records system aimed at streamlining the process for identifying children at risk of all forms of exploitation. This enhancement is anticipated to go-live in spring 2026.

Police Powers of Protection

In 2024/25, 25% of children came into care because of the use of emergency police protection powers (54 children). This is an increase on the 22% (42 children) reported in 2023/24. This remains above all comparators (9-14%).

"In the coming months, I will take on the role of Chair of our new Performance and Quality Assurance Committee. This group will play a vital role in providing assurance to the Executive Group that we are making a difference to frontline practice"

Elaine Allegretti, Director of Children's Services, Director of Adult Social Care, Chair Performance and Quality Assurance Group.

LADO

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is responsible for the management and oversight of all investigations into allegations against those working with and who volunteer with children and is responsible for preparing the annual report to the

Barking & Dagenham Safeguarding Partnership and establishing processes to disseminate learning to the children's workforce.

Nationally, all agencies and settings that provide services or staff working with children are required under statutory guidance – Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2023, to have clear procedures for responding to allegations against staff, whether they are paid or voluntary. Within education services, additional guidance is found within 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024'. The criteria when these procedures are initiated are when a person or persons have:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

In Barking and Dagenham, the requirements of the LADO process are set out in the London Safeguarding Children Procedures and are followed by all London boroughs. These procedures require the local authority to have additional consideration when a person:

- Has behaved in a way in their personal life that raises safeguarding concerns. These concerns do not have to directly relate to a child but could, for example, include arrest for possession of a weapon.
- As a parent or carer, has become subject to child protection procedures.
- Is closely associated with someone in their personal lives (e.g. partner, member of the family or other household member) who may present a risk of harm to child/ren for whom the member of staff is responsible in their employment/volunteering.

In Barking and Dagenham, we encourage all employers and managers to seek advice from LADO about the conduct of staff regardless of how 'low-level' it may be deemed. Where concerns do not meet the threshold as set out in guidance, the LADO service records these as either a 'consultation' or as 'info and advice' depending on the nature of the concern.

Quantitative Performance & Social Care Data

There has been an increase of total contacts to the LADO service by approximately 4% in 2024/25 when compared to the 2023/24 period. Since the decline of contacts during the 2020/21 Covid period, there has been a continued increase in contact from the partnership with the LADO service and the level of contacts are now above the

peak 2019/20 period seen pre-pandemic. (1.2). The percentage of contacts which met threshold has remained stable at a conversion rate of approximately between 8 and 10% of all contacts (1.4).

Of the 445 contacts, 98.8% were responded to within 24 hours of the contact being received into the LADO service. Of the 1.2% which fell outside of this timeframe, the contacts did not meet the allegations threshold and were not submitted via a formal referral form but rather came into the service via email without being explicit that LADO advice was required. Of the contacts which met threshold, 100% received a threshold decision and LADO advice within the 24 hours timeframe.

Of the contacts which met threshold and required an initial allegations meeting (ASV), 92.5% were held within 5 working days as per the London Safeguarding Children Procedures guidance. Of the 7.5% which fell outside of this timeframe, this was due to availability of professionals which required the meeting to be outside this timescale or the LADO required further enquiries before being able to reach a threshold decision. This has not resulted in unmanaged risk. All contacts which met threshold, risk was managed to ensure that children are safeguarded, and staff are supported whilst subject to an allegation.

Of the categories of harm, physical harm remains the most referred matter into the LADO service and the category of harm most likely to require an allegations meeting. Where we have seen a slight shift from the 2023/24 period, is neglect is the second most likely category of harm to require an allegations meeting.

It is expected that in 2025, the DfE will publish the LADO handbook which will be a national best practice guidance for the management of allegations and defines the parameters of the role and the process of managing an allegation. It is possible that there will be implications and require a review of our local procedures to ensure that we are aligned with the DfE guidance.

Private Fostering

The primary responsibility of the local authority is to safeguard and promote the welfare of these children and young people by:

- Meeting the duty to promote public awareness of the requirement to notify the local authority of Private Fostering arrangements and, therefore, to reduce the number of 'unknown' Private Fostering arrangements.
- Responding to notifications and assessing the Private Fostering arrangements; and meeting the duty to support Private Fostering arrangements.

This responsibility is underpinned by the Replacement Children Act 1989 Guidance Private Fostering; Children Act 2004 (Section 44 amends Section 67 in the 1989 Act); the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Private Fostering 2005. Under Standard 5 of the NMS, local authorities are expected to effectively monitor the ways in which they discharge their duties and functions in relation to Private Fostering.

The Private Fostering Regulations came into force on 1st July 2005 and were intended to strengthen and enhance the Children Act 1989 notification scheme. Also published were the minimum standards for Private Fostering. These minimum standards are intended to focus local authorities' attention on Private Fostering by requiring them to take a more proactive approach to identifying arrangements in their area.

Private Fostering is concerned with situations in which individuals are caring for children and young people, under the age of 16 and under 18 if disabled, by private arrangement with parents, with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more.

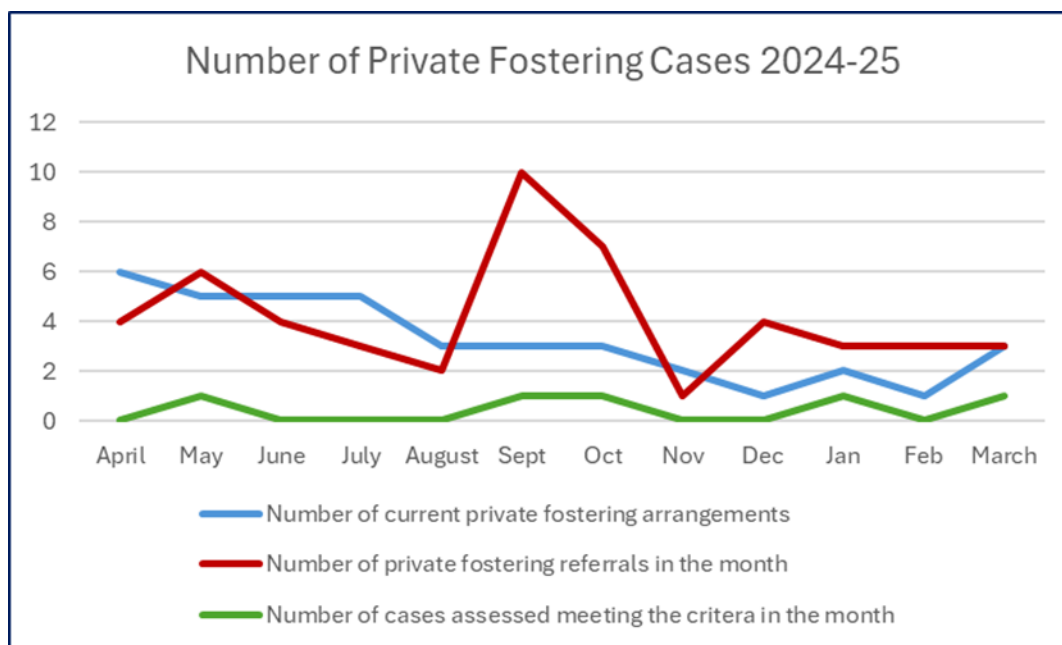
Private foster carers can be from the extended family, such as a cousin or great aunt, or they may be a friend of the family or other non-relative, such as the parents of the child's friend. A person who is a close relative of the child, as defined by the Children Act 1989 (a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether by full or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership or stepparent) are not eligible to be a private foster carer. The period for which the child is cared for and accommodated by the private foster carer should be continuous, but if a child receives an occasional short break this is not considered to break that continuity.

Examples of Private Fostering arrangements are:

- Children sent from abroad to stay with another family, usually to improve their English or for educational opportunities.
- Asylum seeking and refugee children who live with family or friends in this country.
- Teenagers who, having broken ties with their parents, are staying in short-term arrangements with friends or other non-relatives.
- Children living with host families, arranged by language schools or other organisations.

- Children living with members of the extended family, e.g. great aunt.

Numbers of Private Fostering Cases for the period 01/04/2024 - 31/3/2025



During the year 2024/25, the Adoption and Kinship Team had 50 new Private Fostering notifications over this period. 6 children returned to parents; 12 children, following assessment, were confirmed to be living with blood relatives and no longer met criteria for Private Fostering arrangements; 20 were referred to the Safeguarding Team for ongoing work/assessments; 2 were referred to another local authority; 4 were over the age of 16 years with no disabilities and therefore not privately fostered. 6 cases were carried over from 2024/25. At the end of March 2025 there were 3 active cases that progressed into the current financial year 2025/26.

SEND Inspection

The SEND inspection took place 8 to 12 July 2024 with the previous inspection having been completed in March 2017.

In Barking and Dagenham the responsibility for planning and commissioning services for children and young people with SEND needs lies with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBD) and North East London Integrated Care Board (ICB).

Children with SEND Needs and Services

The child population in Barking and Dagenham has risen sharply over time with a high number of families arriving in the area from other London areas, or further afield, including some from overseas.

Barking and Dagenham has approximately 8,500 children and young people with SEND and 2,914 of these have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.

LBBD commissions one main provider to deliver Alternative Provision (AP) for children or young people unable to attend a school due to social, emotional or medical needs, and those who are at risk of permanent exclusion

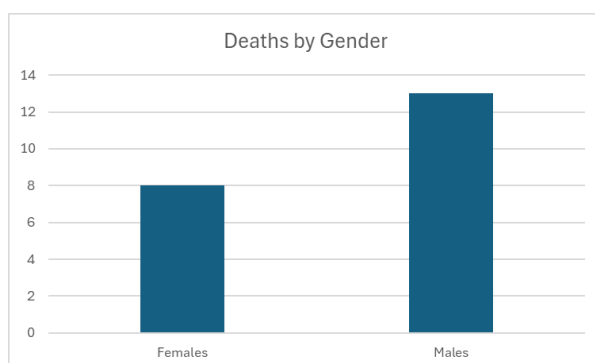
Areas for improvement

The Inspection highlighted some areas for improvement including:

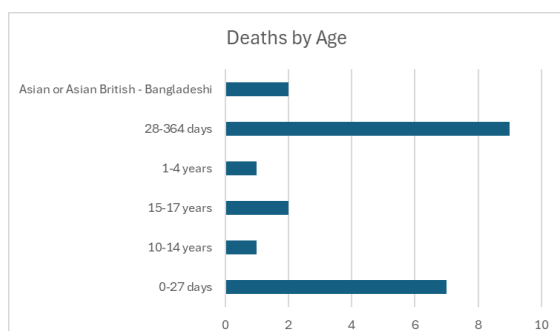
- Considerations to support young people's Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) start too late and are not well managed.
- from Year 9 onwards, annual reviews and amendments to EHCPs reflect young person's views, future aspirations, and how they will be supported to achieve best outcomes for adult life;
- Leaders to ensure families receive appropriate antenatal support in line with Healthy Child Programme.

Child deaths

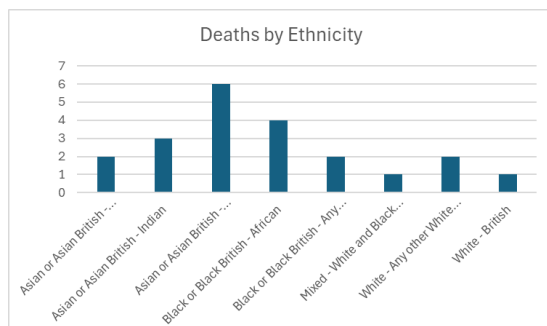
During the year a total of 21 Child Deaths Notified to Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP). A higher proportion were male children, consistent with both local trends in previous years and the national picture.



The largest number of notifications involved infants under one year old, aligning with previous years and national data.



Most deaths occurred among children identified as non-White British and non-White Other ethnicities.



Child Deaths Reviewed by CDOP

CDOP reviewed 17 deaths of Barking and Dagenham children during this period. Deaths are categorised according to nationally defined categories set by the Department of Health.

Note: Reviews may not occur in the same year as the death.

Learning from CDOP Reviews

- Two deaths were categorised as Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI).
- A SUDI Prevention Task and Finish Group, convened by North-East London CDOP teams, identified the need for multi-agency collaboration to ensure prevention messages reach the most vulnerable families.
- The group proposed adopting a 'Prevent and Protect' model across North-East London, ensuring all relevant agencies and practitioners are equipped with the skills and knowledge to support families at increased risk.

Local Initiatives and Support

CDOP is actively supporting the Barking & Dagenham Safe Sleep Packs Project, which aims to:

- Reduce SUDI.
- Improve infant health, wellbeing, and development.
- Promote the best start in life for babies.
- Provide essential items such as safe sleeping equipment, baby clothes, blankets, and other newborn essentials.
- Support new mothers in deprived areas by improving access to wraparound services, maternal mental health support, and Post-Incident Reviews (PIRs).

Safe Sleep Training

- Training was rolled out across Barking & Dagenham, Redbridge, and Havering, ensuring consistent, evidence-based safe sleep messages are shared across all three areas.
- Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, with practitioners reporting increased confidence in supporting families, a stronger understanding of safe sleep practice, and a greater ability to reinforce prevention messages in their day-to-day work.

Learning and Development Programme

We remain steadfast in our commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people across the borough. Through strong multi-agency collaboration, the Partnership ensures that robust safeguarding practices and effective child protection procedures are embedded within and across all organisations working with children and families.

Training and workforce development continue to be a cornerstone of our safeguarding approach. Throughout the year, BDSCP has delivered a comprehensive programme of learning opportunities, drawing on the expertise of local professionals and commissioned specialists. This blended model supports high quality inter-agency working and ensures that our training reflects both local priorities and national best practice.

Who We Train

BDSCP training is designed to reach a wide and diverse audience across Barking and Dagenham. It is open to professionals and volunteers working with children, young people, and families in statutory, voluntary, community, and independent sectors. This includes staff in education, health, social care, housing, police, and early help services.

The training offer supports practitioners at all levels, from frontline workers to strategic leads, ensuring that safeguarding knowledge and skills are embedded throughout the workforce. Each training is tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and is aligned with local policies and procedures, making it directly relevant to those supporting residents within the borough.

Training Engagement & Uptake

In 2024/25, the BDSCP actively promoted its training programme across the partnership through a range of engagement activities that led to a significant increase in uptake, with over 1,000 delegates registering for training.

This growth reflects the continued commitment of the local workforce to strengthening safeguarding knowledge and practice, and highlights the value placed on high quality, multi-agency learning opportunities.

Training delivered in 2024/25:

Course Title	Platform
Adultification	On-line
Attachment in Practice	On-line
Basic Safer Sleep	On-line
Child and Adolescent Neglect	On-line
Children Missing from Education and Elected Home Education	On-line
Consolidating Multi-agency Practice by enhancing Professional Curiosity	On-line
Designated Safeguarding Lead Certificate 2 day training	In-person
DSL Refresher	In-person
Managing Allegations and the Role of the LADO	In-person
Managing Allegations and the Role of the LADO Cancelled	In-person
Multi-Agency Safeguarding & Child Protection Introduction	On-line
Multi-Agency Trauma-Informed & Relationship-Based Practice	On-line
Multi-Agency Working with Men & Invisible Family Members	On-line
Parental Mental Health and Safeguarding	On-line
Safeguarding and Perinatal Mental Health	In-person
SUDI and safer sleep for babies	On-line
Supporting Recovery & Health of Children Affected by CSA	On-line

Partner Agency & External Learning Opportunities

In addition to the core BDSCP training programme, the Partnership actively promoted a range of free and virtual learning opportunities offered by external organisations. These included sessions and resources from:

- **Refuge** – focusing on technology facilitated abuse and digital safety planning.
- **DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service)** – providing guidance on safer recruitment and referral processes.
- **Kooth** – supporting mental health awareness and engagement with neurodiverse and SEND young people.
- **London Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP)** – offering conferences and thematic learning events.
- **Virtual College** – delivering e-learning modules on topics such as child sexual exploitation, FGM, forced marriage, and serious case reviews.
- **NSPCC Learning** – offering online safety training and safeguarding resources.

- **CSA Centre** – sharing practical guides and tools for working with children affected by sexual abuse.
- **Research in Practice** – providing a series of free podcasts exploring key themes in social care, safeguarding, and professional development.

These opportunities were shared with the workforce to complement the BDSCP offer and support wider professional development across the partnership.

“It is so important that we continue to revise and adapt our learning programme to offer the current and relevant issues facing practitioners working in all partner organisations. We have highly skilled practitioners committed to best practice which is why I am proud of the learning we offer and how this is embraced by staff”
Zahid Iqbal, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Adult, Co-Chair Learning from Practice Committee

Annual Safeguarding Conference

With the understanding that adult safeguarding is everyone’s business, we held our first joint safeguarding conference across the Safeguarding Adults Board, the Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Community Safety Partnership in November 2024. Professionals, partners, community representatives and services users attended the conference to listen to a number of presentations and share their experiences.

The conference was a success, and we had positive feedback. Individuals left feeling empowered, with increased knowledge of what services are available, knowledge of community support and having made useful contacts. We will build on this by holding another joint conference in 2025 to enhance knowledge and partnership working.

Financial Summary

BDSCP operates via pooled multi-agency contributions. The tables below show the certified income and expenditure allocations for the 2024/25 cycle.

Table 7.1: Partnership Revenue & Income Sources

Statutory Partner Agency Contribution	2024-25 Funding Level
NHS North East London Integrated Care Board (ICB)	£31,000.00
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBD)	£31,000.00
London Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Allocation	£41,707.40

Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) / Board Grants

£10,000.00

TOTAL INCOME CONSOLIDATED

£113,707.40

Table 7.2: Operational Expenditure Breakdowns

Expenditure Category	2024-25 Outturn
Partnership Core Staffing Costs	£58,473.94
Multi-Agency Learning and Development Delivery	£16,716.05
Commissioned Independent Practice Reviews (CSPRs)	£13,775.00
Independent Strategic Scrutineer Fees	£10,360.00
Council Hosting & Infrastructure Chargebacks (IT, Legal, Overheads)	£8,066.90
TASP National Membership Framework	£1,200.00
Safeguarding Young Advisors Engagement Network	£1,200.00
Miscellaneous Operating Expenses	£5,270.83

Strategic Priorities: Next 12 Months

During the next 12 months we will appoint a new Independent Scrutineer who will take on a role of bringing challenge and advice to all areas of our partnership. We know the importance of critical friends to bring an independent voice to our work, and we will be recruiting to the role in the coming months.

We also recognise that safeguarding vulnerable children and families has commonalities with the work of our colleagues in the Safeguarding Adults Board and Community Safety Partnership. To make those links and connections even stronger we will work together to develop shared priorities across the Safeguarding Adults Board and Community Safety Partnership. A joint workshop is planned for January 2026, and this work will inform future priorities.

Our administrative priority in 2025/26 will be to look at how the Partnership is supported by the Children's Safeguarding Business Unit, and we know that we need to be creative to ensure that we are prioritising the most important areas that need strengthening.

We will also review our communications, and engagement approaches to ensure that Barking and Dagenham residents, businesses, and visitors are aware of what we do to ensure we are making the most of 'making safeguarding everyone's business'

Our work in 2025/26:

During the next 12 months we will continue to focus on Child Sexual Abuse, Child Exploitation and Neglect.

Specifically, we will be working to

- Respond to the Home Office renewed focus on Child Exploitation
- Launch Risks Outside the Home Conferences
- Develop an agreed set of outcomes-focussed performance indicators for our Child Sexual Abuse work within a new CSA Strategy
- Implement our Family First Partnership Programme to deliver Children's Social Care Reforms
- Improving information sharing across our Neglect work
- Embed a Think Family approach within our work – creating the necessary joint protocols to formalise this and take advantage of opportunities to create new ways of working across children's and adults' services
- Embedding and strengthening our approach to Performance and Quality Assurance and work to agree common datasets for use within North East London
- Continue to improve our Business Management Unit and look at improvements that can be made to our staffing structure
- Work system-wide to undertake audits and self-assessments and ensure we are ready for external multi-agency inspections
- Take part in a peer review of our partnership and welcome colleagues from other London Boroughs to bring a critical challenge to our work

Independent Scrutiny

Working Together 2023 required all partnerships to appoint an Independent Scrutineer to act as a critical friend and advisor who is separate to the Statutory partners.

Key Aspects of the Independent Scrutineer's Work:

- **Assurance:** Provides confidence to the entire safeguarding system that local arrangements are working effectively to protect children.
- **Scrutiny:** Reviews the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, ensuring that statutory duties are fulfilled.

- **Critical Friend Role:** Works collaboratively with agencies to provide two-way discussions and reflection, identifying areas for improvement.
- **Child and Family Voice:** Considers the experiences and perspectives of children and families within the safeguarding process.
- **Learning and Improvement:** Supports the embedding of learning from case reviews and national serious case reviews to improve practice across all services.

In March 2025 we were very pleased to appoint John Clements as our Independent Scrutineer. John has extensive experience of Children's safeguarding after a successful policing career. John has started to observe our work before officially starting his role in the summer.

'As the recently appointed Independent Scrutineer for the partnership I do not have any direct insight into the period reporting on, and my comments come from my observations over my initial two months.

From what I have seen, in the early stages of my appointment, the partnership is making good progress and in strong position to move forward. The partnership structures are solid and appropriate, there is good representation from local statutory and non-statutory partners, the partnership's priorities are relevant to local issues and there are promising plans within thematic subgroups to advance child safeguarding across the borough.

The priorities of the partnership; responding to childhood neglect, child exploitation and child sexual abuse, have been focused upon for some time, and I have seen already, evidence of the effective use of recognised neglect tools, effective learning in respect of child sexual abuse, and good understanding of child sexual and criminal exploitation. The plans to further develop in these priority areas are comprehensive and pragmatic, and I look forward to reporting on how this work unfolds.

Thorough and well-structured planning is evident in respect of the Families First Partnership Programme (FFPP) activity, and this has clearly been developing since the period reported on. There is significant amount of time and effort allocated to consulting with children, families and staff across the partnership, reassuring me of the partnership's commitment to co-production. I have witnessed knowledgeable practitioners, managers and leaders participating actively in Families First Partnership Programme, demonstrating their commitment to developing a local offer to meet the needs of our communities.

There has a substantial amount of effort put into learning from events, and I am confident there is a positive learning culture across the partnership with involvement from all relevant partners. The partnership has a well-developed learning offer, but I

need to undertake further work to understand how the learning has improved outcomes for our children and families.

One area the partnership has recognised as needing further development is quality assurance, and I have been involved with two meetings where this aspect is being advanced. I am convinced of the commitment of partners, their energy and that effective processes will be put in place.

The annual report provides an accurate overview of how the partnership is developing, the advances it has made and its capability for further improvements. I am enthusiastic about working with the partnership, confident on the foundations that have been put in place'.