



Annual Report

April 2023 – March 2024

© Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland copyright 2024.

This information is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

To view this licence visit: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/



Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to SBNI.Info@hscni.net or phone 028 9536 1810.

Contents

Foreword	4
Introduction	6
Safeguarding Snapshot	10
Meet the Board Members	17
Responding to Domestic Violence and Abuse	19
Responding to the Mental Health Needs of Children and Young People	28
Responding to Online Safety	36
Case Management Reviews	50
Policy and Procedures Committee	61
Child Protection Committee	63
Child Sexual Exploitation Committee	67
Interfaith Committee	77
Trauma Informed Practice Committee	82
Focus on Finance	94
Glossary of Terms 2023-2024	96
Annex 1: SBNI Business Objectives 2023-2024 – Summary Update	99
Annex 2: Case Management Review Legislation	102
Annex 3: Summary of learning and improvements arising from Case Management Reviews	103
Annex 4: How the SBNI is Structured	105

Foreword

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

The SBNI is a partnership organisation consisting of all of the key statutory bodies, the major voluntary agencies and appointed independent persons that manage, operate and resource the safeguarding and child protection system in Northern Ireland. It was set up under the Safeguarding Board Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and is the statutory body responsible for coordinating and ensuring the effectiveness of its 21-member bodies, for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the 440,500 children and young people in Northern Ireland.

Over this last year, we have continued to focus on addressing the key SBNI strategic priorities as outlined in the SBNI strategic plan 2022-2026:

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

Work on all three areas has seen significant achievements, informed by the voices of children and young people. This eleventh annual report will concentrate on how we have approached each of these issues as well as reporting on progress made against each of our strategic objectives and commitments laid out in our 2023-2024 business plan.

We will also focus on the achievements of each of our statutory committees. The report particularly highlights the work of the Case Management Review Panel, with its particular emphasis on improvements in the child protection system. These improvements are identified as a result of the multi-agency in depth reviews we conduct when things go wrong and also through the identification of examples of good practice.

This annual report will provide a further update on the SBNI work on trauma informed practice, detailing progress made in embedding it into member and partner agency policy, procedure and practice. It will also highlight the SBNI commissioned research by Queens University Belfast to update the evidence base of trauma informed practice in Northern Ireland.

It will give a sense of the scale of the work undertaken by all of the member agencies. None of which could be achieved without the commitment and effort of the staff in those organisations. I want to express my sincere thanks to each and every one of them who continue to work to ensure that children and young people in Northern Ireland are safeguarded and protected. They do this in often difficult circumstances.

In particular, I want to acknowledge and thank all of the children and young people who have participated in the work of the SBNI with our staff, members and partners. I have been privileged to meet with many of them and believe that only by listening, hearing and acting on what children and young people tell us, can we hope to make Northern Ireland a better place for them to grow up in. I look forward to your continued support and co-operation in the year ahead.

BERNIE MCNALLY OBE
SBNI INDEPENDENT CHAIR



Introduction

The member organisations that make up the multi-agency partnership that is the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) come from both the statutory and voluntary sectors.

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

They are led by an Independent Chair, appointed through the public appointments process, on the basis of experience, expertise and knowledge of the child protection system as well as extensive experience of corporate governance and executive level decision making. The Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Board is assisted in the task of governance of the partnership through a Governance Committee chaired by one of the SBNI's non-executive lay members. The purpose of the Governance Committee is to oversee the establishment and maintenance of an effective system for governance across the whole of the SBNI's activities and to support the achievement of the SBNI's objectives, minimising the exposure to risk.

Section 2 of the Safeguarding Board Act (Northern Ireland) 2011¹ (the Act) identifies, as a function of the Safeguarding Board, that it must "coordinate and ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children".²

One way in which the Board can assure itself that this is done is through an audit process. The Section 12 duty of the Act³ requires relevant persons or bodies represented on the SBNI to make arrangements to ensure that:

¹ [SBNI Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2011](#)

² [SBNI Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2011 Sec 2](#)

³ [SBNI Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2011 Sec 12](#)

- their functions are exercised having due regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and
- any services provided.... are provided having due regard to that need.

In order to comply with its statutory duties, the SBNI Board undertook a Section 12 Audit, as detailed in the Department of Health (DoH) guidance to the SBNI⁴ over a 6-week period between September-October 2023. There was 100% compliance by the member agencies who are required by the legislation to comply with the Section 12 duty, totalling 38 submissions. The audits provided the requisite level of assurance to the Independent Chair of the SBNI that the Section 12 duty is being complied with.

Learning from the Section 12 audit will be cascaded to member agencies in the next reporting year.

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

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

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

This annual report features the progress made against each of these priorities, as specified in the SBNI Business Plan 2023-2024⁵ (see summary update at Annex 1) and details the work of the statutory panels and committees of the Safeguarding Board which oversee the day to day work of the Board (see Annex 4). These are:

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

⁴ [DoH Guidance to the SBNI \(Amended\) 2014](#)

⁵ [Business Plan 2023-2024](#)

The five Safeguarding Panels that work locally to deliver the key strategic priorities set by the SBNI. They do this by coordinating and utilising their multi-agency/disciplinary expertise and resources. The panels are coterminous with each of the five HSCTs and are chaired by people who are independent of any of the member agencies. The panels also identify new and emerging issues from their local areas, thereby ensuring that the SBNI is fully informed of any concerns emerging from local communities, parents, children and other key stakeholders. Each of the panels met on five occasions throughout the 2023-2024 reporting period, in the week following the SBNI Board meeting to ensure that information from the Board is cascaded to panel members in a timely manner.

The Safeguarding Panels under Regulation 31 of the SBNI (Membership, Procedure, Functions and Committee) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 have five functions as detailed below. These are reported on within the main body of this annual report:

1. Coordinating the implementation of the SBNI Strategic Plan
2. Monitoring the implementation of the SBNI Policies and Procedures
3. Promoting an awareness of the need to safeguard children
4. Implementing any arrangements for sharing the findings of Case Management Reviews (CMRs)
5. Promoting communication between the panels and children and young people.

Mrs Yvonne Adair, Independent Chair of the South Eastern, Southern and Belfast panels, stepped down from her position at the end of the March 2024, following six years of much valued commitment to the SBNI and achieving the best outcomes for children and young people. A recruitment process to fill this position will be undertaken in the next reporting period.

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

The Policy and Procedure Committee whose role is to ensure that agencies have policies and procedures in place to assist them in protecting children and young people. The committee is chaired by a Director of Children's Services in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT).

The Child Sexual Exploitation Committee which was established to develop an understanding of child sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland as experienced by young people. This committee is chaired by a Detective Superintendent from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

The Child Protection Committee which was set up to provide a vehicle for the statutory member agencies of the SBNI to focus on their statutory responsibilities concerning improved protection of children and young people. The committee is chaired by the Director of Children's Services and Executive Director of Social Work in the Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT).

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

The Trauma Informed Practice Committee ensures all the work of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland is underpinned by a trauma informed approach. The SBNI has been leading the way in relation to Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) which will be evident throughout this annual report and is specifically detailed in the chapter on the TIP Committee. The committee is chaired by a non-executive lay member of the Board.

Safeguarding Snapshot

Statistics Snapshot 2023-2024

1,910,500

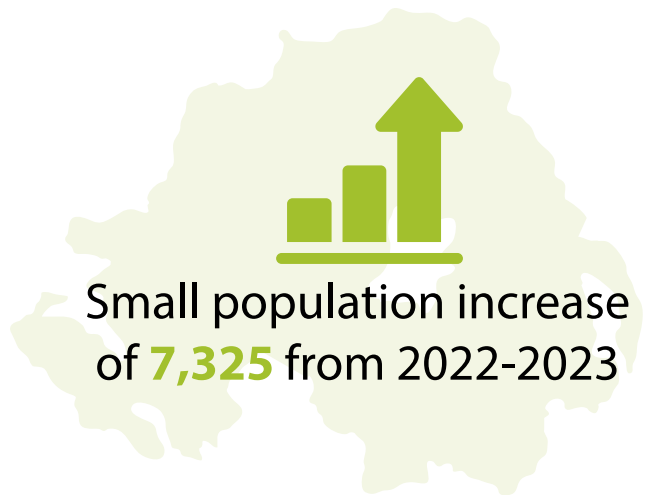
PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND



970,600
50.8% female



939,900
(49.1%) male



434,991

CHILDREN UNDER 18

22.8%
of total population



60,979

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

12.7%
of all children
under 18

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

2 times more likely to be have a chronic disease



6 times more likely to smoke tobacco or E-cigs



3 times more likely to have respiratory disease



11 times more likely to have smoked cannabis



3 times more likely to develop coronary heart disease



16 times more likely to have used crack cocaine or heroin



4 times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes



20 times more likely to have been incarcerated in their life



4 times more likely to be a high risk drinker



Statistics Snapshot 2023-2024

2,334

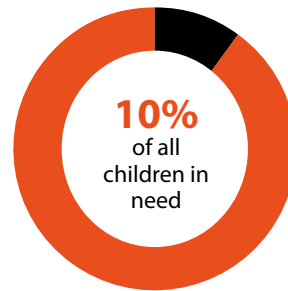
CHILDREN ON THE CHILD PROTECTION REGISTER



1,186 males



1,148 females



neglect only
category

803

physical abuse
only category

536

sexual abuse
only category

121

emotional abuse
only category

203

Multiple Categories recorded

neglect, physical abuse
& sexual abuse category

17

neglect & physical
abuse category

540

neglect & sexual
abuse category

71

physical & sexual
abuse category

43

emotional abuse (main)
and other categories

0

120

CHILDREN ON THE CPR WITH A DISABILITY

3,465

CHILD PROTECTION INVESTIGATIONS CARRIED OUT

1122

by social workers

1416

by police

828

by joint protocol

99

protocol not
appropriate



(an increase of 257
from 2022-2023)

8,208¹

FAMILY SUPPORT REFERRALS REQUIRING A UNOCINI

5,376¹

FAMILY SUPPORT ASSESSMENTS COMPLETED AT GATEWAY

3,268¹

ABOVE ASSESSMENTS CLOSED AT GATEWAY

1,409¹

CHILD PROTECTION ASSESSMENTS COMPLETED AT GATEWAY

1,997¹

COMPLETED FAMILY SUPPORT INITIAL ASSESSMENTS TRANSFERRED TO FIT

1,800¹

CHILD PROTECTION ASSESSMENTS RECEIVED AND REQUIRING A UNOCINI ASSESSMENT

897¹

COMPLETED INITIAL ASSESSMENTS TRANSFERRED TO FIT

408¹

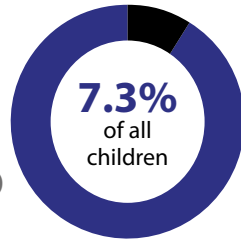
CHILD PROTECTION ASSESSMENTS CLOSED BY GATEWAY

¹ NB: No 2023-2024 figure available due to Action Short of Strike in 2023-2024

Statistics Snapshot 2023-2024

34,969¹

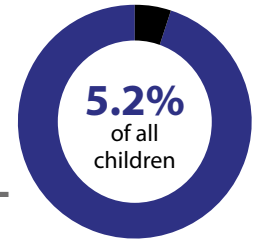
**CHILDREN
WERE REFERRED TO
SOCIAL SERVICES
FOR ASSESSMENT
OF NEED**



22,450

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

(A DECREASE OF 2,095
FROM 2022-2023)

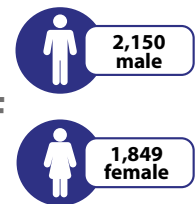


1,414

CHILD PROTECTION REFERRALS
(DECREASE OF 138 FROM 2022-2023)

3,999

**CHILDREN IN CARE OF
HSC TRUSTS (LAC)**
(INCREASE OF 375 ON PREVIOUS YEAR)



1,439

**KINSHIP FOSTER
CARERS**



978

**CHILDREN IN
FOSTERING**

(STRANGER - EXCLUDING RELATIVES)



2,380

CHILDREN IN KINSHIP CARE (INCLUDES INDEPENDENT CARERS)
(INCREASE OF 745 ON PREVIOUS YEAR)

73

**CHILDREN PLACED
FOR ADOPTION**

125

**OTHER
PLACEMENTS**

200

**LOOKED AFTER
CHILDREN ON
CHILDREN
PROTECTION
REGISTER**

866

**CHILDREN
DISCHARGED
FROM CARE
DURING THE
YEAR**

1096

**CHILDREN ADMITTED TO
CARE DURING THE YEAR**

RESIDENTIAL – 52
FOSTERING – 840
PLACED AT HOME WITH PARENTS – 81
PLACED FOR ADOPTION – 0
OTHER – 123

556

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

47

**ADMISSIONS TO
SECURE CARE**

<5 HISTORY OF ABSCONDING AND LIKELY TO SUFFER
SIGNIFICANT HARM
<5 LIKELY TO INJURE HER/HIMSELF OF OTHER
PERSONS
41 MET BOTH CRITERIA
28 OF THESE WERE REPEAT SUBMISSIONS

220 **CHILDREN IN RESIDENTIAL
CARE (STATUTORY/
VOLUNTARY/SECURE)**

223 **CHILDREN PLACED
AT HOME WITH
PARENTS**

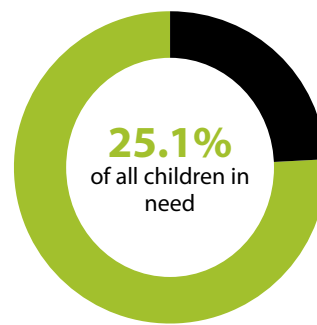
¹ NB: No 2023-2024 figure available due to Action Short of Strike in 2023-2024

Statistics Snapshot 2023-2024

5,636

CHILDREN KNOWN TO SOCIAL SERVICES WITH A DISABILITY

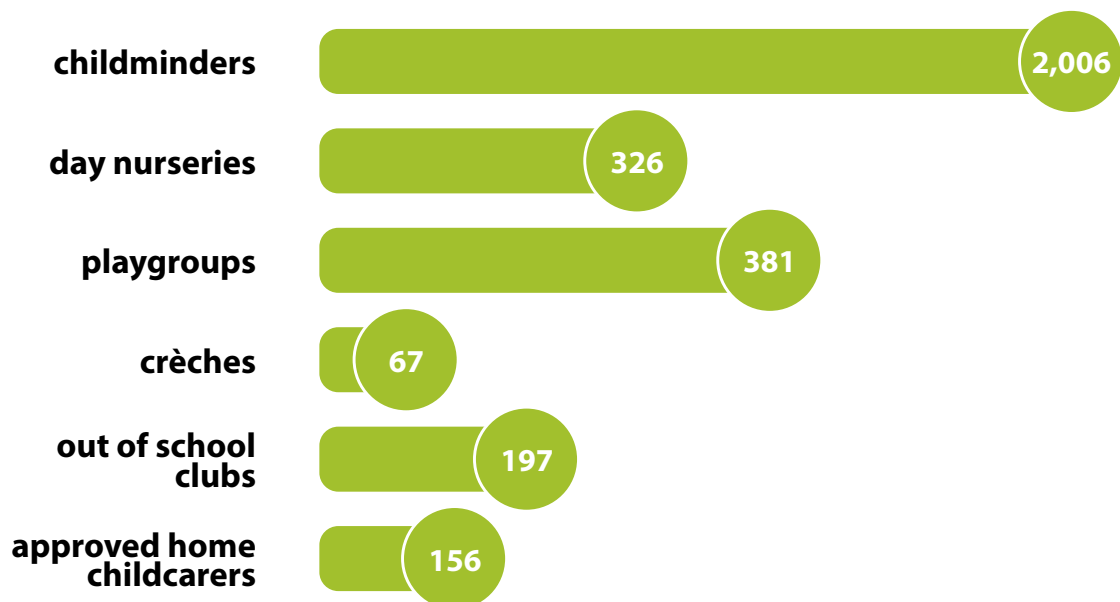
(AN INCREASE OF 1,035 FROM 2022-2023)



3,133

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

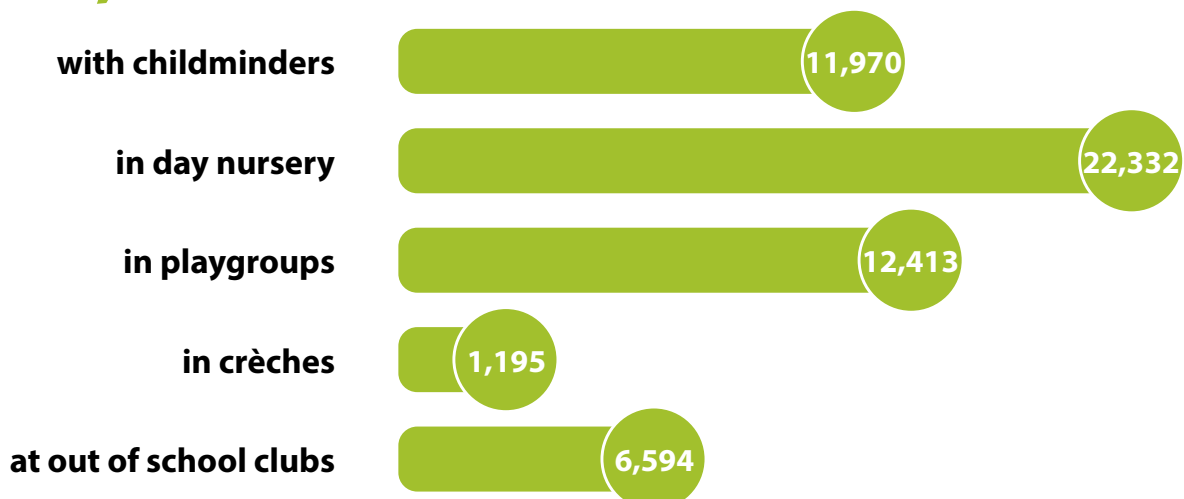
(a decrease of 470 on the previous year)



53,504

PLACES PROVIDED

(a decrease of 5,709 on the previous year)

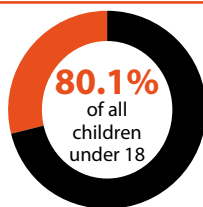


Statistics Snapshot 2023-2024

348,424

**PUPILS IN SCHOOLS
IN NORTHERN
IRELAND**

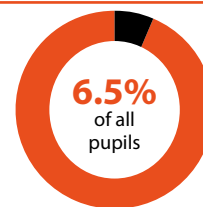
(PRIMARY, POST-PRIMARY & FUNDED PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION)
(SLIGHT INCREASE OF **1,000** SINCE 2022-2023)



22,556

**PUPILS IN FUNDED
PRE-SCHOOLS**

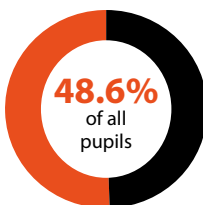
(SLIGHT DECREASE OF **159**
SINCE 2022-2023)



169,465

**PUPILS IN PRIMARY
SCHOOLS**

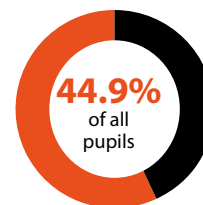
(DECREASE OF **1,734** SINCE 2022-2023)



156,430

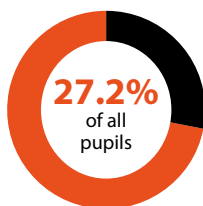
**PUPILS IN POST
PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

(INCREASE OF **2,118** SINCE 2022-2023)



≈95,000

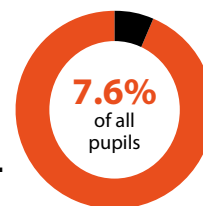
**ARE ENTITLED
TO FREE SCHOOL
MEALS**



26,964

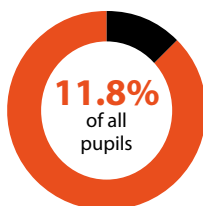
**PUPILS WITH A
STATEMENT OF SPECIAL
EDUCATIONAL NEED**

(INCREASE OF **2,664** SINCE 2022-2023)



41,467

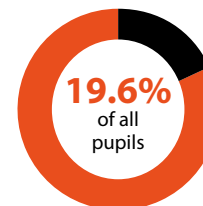
**PUPILS WITH SPECIAL
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
BUT NOT A STATEMENT**



68,240

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

(INCREASE OF **1,840** SINCE 2022-2023)



7,192

(INCREASE OF **292**
SINCE 2022-2023)

**PUPILS ENROLLED
IN 39 DEDICATED
SPECIAL SCHOOLS**

white pupils **333,415⁴**

mixed ethnic group pupils **6,540⁴**

other ethnic group pupils **5,722⁴**

black pupils **3,518⁴**

Indian/
Sri Lankan
pupil. **2,824⁴**

Chinese pupils **1,503⁴**

Irish Traveller pupils **1,086⁴**

Pakistani pupils **569⁴**

3,800

**PUPILS EDUCATED
IN MAINSTREAM
LEARNING SUPPORT
CENTRES**

Protestant pupils

107,018⁴

Catholic pupils

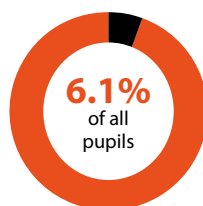
177,401⁴

Other Christian/Non Christian/
no religion/ not recorded pupils

70,737⁴

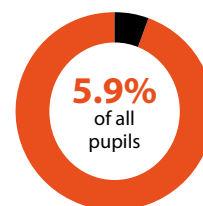
21,800⁴

**PUPILS RECORDED
AS NON-WHITE**



≈21,000²

NEWCOMER PUPILS



516³

PUPILS ENROLLED IN EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL (EOTAS) CENTRES

2. A newcomer pupil is one who has enrolled in a school but does not have the satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum.

3. Just 27 pupils are single registered at EOTAS centres; this means that they no longer have a link to a mainstream school.

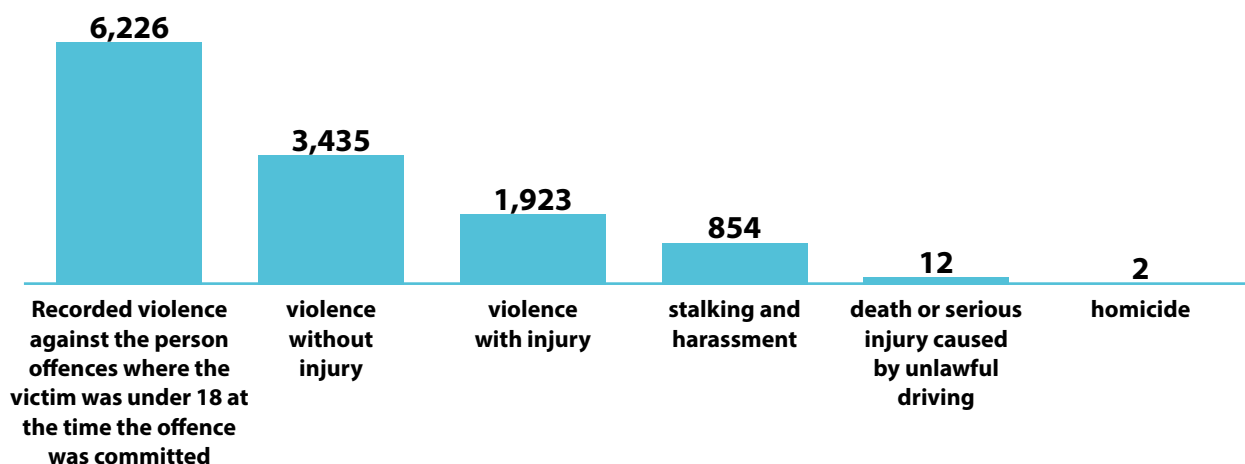
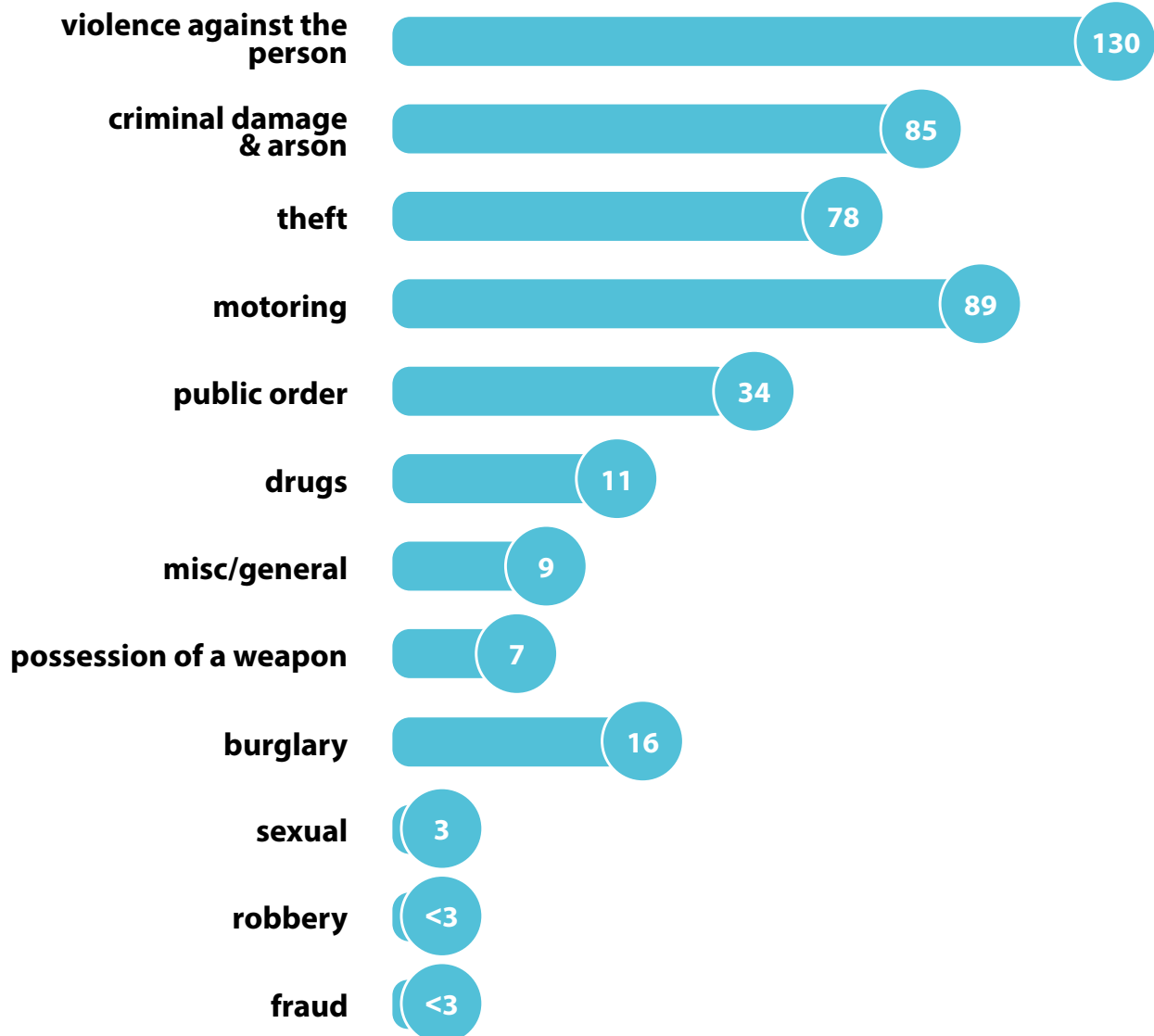
4. No 2023-2024 figures available for ethnicity and religion of pupils by school and management type due to Action Short of Strike (ASOS) by schools in NI, 23-24. The figures relate to 2022-2023 data.

Statistics Snapshot 2023-2024

104 **YOUNG PEOPLE IN CUSTOD**
39 – 17 YO & OVER, 35 – 16 YO, 13 – 15 YO,
14 – 7 YO, 10 – 10-13 YO.

59 **LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN
IN CUSTODY**
57% OF ALL CHILDREN IN CUSTODY

466 convictions at courts for defendants aged under 18 by offence category



Meet the Board Members



Bernie McNally
SBNi Independent
Chair



Amanda Stewart
Chief Executive
Probation Board for
Northern Ireland



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



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



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



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



Heather Reid
Interim Director of
Nursing, Midwifery
and Allied Health
Professions
PHA



Emily Roberts
Designated Nurse for
Safeguarding Children
and Young People
PHA



Brendan Whittle
Director of Hospital,
Community and Social
Services, SPPG



Una Turbitt
Assistant Director of
Pupil Wellbeing and
Protection
EA



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



Jordan Piper
T/Detective
Superintendent, Public
Protection Branch, PSNI



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



Richard Harvey
Acting Director of
Environmental Services,
Lisburn & Castlereagh City
Council



Jacqui Montgomery Devlin
Head of Safeguarding,
Council for Social Witness,
Presbyterian Church in
Ireland and Chair of the
SBNi Interfaith Committee



Bronagh Muldoon
Head of Service for NI
NSPCC



Michele Janes
Director
Barnardo's NI



Lorna Ballard
Director, NI
Action for Children



Diane Hill
CEO, Include Youth



Pauline Leeson
Chief Executive
Children In Northern
Ireland



Paddy Kelly
Director
Children's Law Centre



Mary Aughey
Director, of Woolands
JC, YJA



Joanne McClean
Director of Public
Health, PHA



Gerry Guckian
Non-Executive
(Lay) Member



Simon Rogers
Non-Executive
(Lay) Member



Andrew Thomson
Independent Chair
CMR
Safeguarding Board NI



Mary Rafferty
Independent
Safeguarding Panel Chair
Northern, and Western
Areas
Safeguarding Board NI



Yvonne Adair
Independent
Safeguarding Panel Chair
Belfast, Southern and
South Eastern Areas
Safeguarding Board NI



Naoimh White
GP representative of
the NI General Practice
Committee

Responding to Domestic Violence and Abuse

Strategic Priority 2:

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

SBNI Business Objectives 2023-2024:

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

Domestic Violence continues as a Strategic Priority

The SBNI has, in this business year, continued to respond to issues associated with domestic violence and abuse (DVA) through its DVA Committee alongside the five Safeguarding Panels. All work is underpinned by a trauma informed approach.

Both the committee and the panels have worked to deliver on the objectives arising from the SBNI's strategic commitment, "to hear and respond to the voices of children and young people affected by domestic abuse and violence"¹, with the panels promoting communication with children and young people as per their duties contained within Regulation 31².

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

Stakeholder Assurance Group (SAG)

The SBNI is a member of the cross departmental Stakeholder Assurance Group (SAG) which is co-chaired by the DoH and Department of Justice (DoJ). The SAG provides advice and assurance to the Strategic Development Board (SDB) which is the governance forum overseeing the delivery of the Departments of Justice and Health's 'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland – A Seven Year Strategy (2016)'.

Draft Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2023-2030

In this business year, SAG has maintained its focus on the development of the Draft Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2023-2030. The SBNI DVA Committee has continued to play an active role in the development of the strategy following both the calls for views and contributing to workshops co-chaired by the Departments of Health and Justice to inform strategy development.

1. <https://www.safeguardingni.org/resources/strategic-plan-2022-2026>
2. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2012/324/regulation/31>

The committee has highlighted, through SAG, the need to raise awareness of the harmful impact of domestic abuse on the physical and emotional well-being of children and young people, thus promoting the adoption of a trauma informed approach to this area of work. The SBNI is committed to ensuring that the impact of domestic violence and abuse on children and young people, including those children with increased vulnerability factors, such as learning and physical disability, LGBTQIA+ and children with complex needs, is fully understood.

Safeguarding Panels

At a regional event for all five Safeguarding Panels, convened in May 2023, the panels collectively agreed that they would undertake the following priorities:

- to ensure domestic abuse was a standing agenda item on every panel meeting during the business year, ensuring relevant information and good practice would be identified, shared and cascaded across and within relevant organisations/agencies
- a mapping exercise to be completed to identify existing provision of domestic abuse services in each area. The identification of said services would be used to compile a composite database/guide for local practitioners working in the area of domestic abuse.

The first priority achieved in the current year with the sharing of information and practice in response to children's experiences of domestic abuse, forming a core component of each panel meeting. The second priority is underway. Panel members also collated and returned details of services available within each local panel area. These responses will be collated into a compendium in the next business year.

To ensure that all members and partners represented on the Safeguarding Panels were able to avail of new research, practice developments and multi-agency training, each panel held information sharing sessions and/or events in relation to domestic violence and abuse throughout the year.

In the Southern Safeguarding Panel, Women's Aid Armagh and Down (WAAD) hosted a celebratory breakfast in acknowledgment of their 40th anniversary on 25 April 2023. Safeguarding Panel member, Dr Mary Larkin, GP, addressed this event highlighting the developing role of the GP in relation to domestic abuse over the years.

During this reporting year, all Safeguarding Panels established and strengthened connections with their respective local area Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnerships. For example, the Western Safeguarding Panel marked the 2023 16 Days of Action against Domestic Abuse⁶ by connecting with the local Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership generating awareness of and supporting their social media campaign.

Safeguarding Panels also continued to receive information and be sighted on the regional implementation of Operation Encompass⁷. This included the success of the model and the associated challenges with implementing a new model of intervention.

6 The 16 days of action 2023 campaign ran between 25 November and 10 December 2023

7 Operation Encompass partnership between the Education Authority, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Safeguarding Board of Northern Ireland and schools, and is aimed at supporting children who witness domestic violence or abuse in the home.

Recognising the Impact of Domestic Abuse on Children and Young people – Learning and Development Framework April 2024

Following on from the work undertaken in in the two previous business years, the DVA Committee's Education and Training task and finish group produced a Learning and Development Framework [Recognising the Impact of Domestic Abuse on Children and Young People](#) (DVA LDF) for practitioners across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors who work with children experiencing domestic abuse. Using the [SBNI Learning and Development Strategy and Framework 2020 - 2023](#) as a guide, this work centred on findings from the SBNI's 2020 report [Equally Safeguarded 2020](#), in relation to gaps in available training, specifically concerning recognition, assessment and reporting of the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people.

The DVA LDF will assist member and partner agencies to identify the appropriate level of training required for staff to support them in improving their recognition, assessment and responses to children, young people and families experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

Ensuring the voices of children and young people were heard and acted upon was critical in informing the work on the framework. The SBNI commissioned WAFNI to undertake a bespoke piece of consultation work with children from the Social Action Youth (SAY) Project who experienced domestic abuse in their family life.

The Women's Aid NI SAY Project is a youth led social action initiative. It has funding from Children in Need. The project brought together a diverse group of young people engaged in Women's Aid services across Northern Ireland, providing them with a safe space to have a voice and to use their collective voice to make a difference for other young people.

The project involved a series of regional social action workshops between spring and autumn 2023. It aimed to make three big differences in the lives of the young people participating as represented on the diagram presented.



What children believed would be the benefit of being involved in a social action project.

I felt happy and secure during the SAY Project because everyone there had walked in my shoes, and I didn't have to explain my feelings and thoughts. I was really listened to. I really loved knowing that I was making a positive contribution to changing society and hopefully changing government thinking.

Comment from a SAY participant

Informing professional learning and development

Young people involved in the SAY project considered the importance of professional learning and development and shared their views with the SBNI. The SAY group highlighted that whilst important, professional learning and development is only one area of good support provision. They identified a toolbox for all professionals that would empower and equip them to be Social Action Children's Champions.

The suggested creative Toolbox included:

- **Knowledge** – of domestic abuse
- **A paintbrush** – to paint a brighter future
- **A scraper** – to strip back the trauma
- **A hammer** – to break the silence
- **A spanner** – to turn the mindset from victim to creator
- **Creative pliers** – to pull out the truth (skillfully)
- **A torch** – to shine a light on domestic abuse
- **A measuring tape** – to set goals and measure the road to recovery
- **A balloon** – for fun and enjoyment

- **A padlock** – to create a safe space
- **A first aid kit** – for emergency support as well as long term
- **Tea and a hobnob biscuit** – for calm and comfort
- **A sign!** – to show direction and not to miss the signs of abuse
- **A genuine smile** – to put people at ease
- **A sponge** – to soak it all in.

The toolbox is now being developed into a full animation which WAFNI, supported by the SBNI, will launch as part of an overall training package. This will help to empower and enable professionals to respond to children and young people affected by domestic abuse in a trauma informed and empathetic manner, ensuring best practice and a positive response. The group's feedback on the DVA LDF was collated into a publication, "[Having our Say](#)". This document highlights young people's views on professional support and shares a wealth of tips for professionals in terms of how they can best support young people who have experienced domestic abuse. It is a strong legacy of the project and will have impact well into the future. Sarah Mason, WAFNI CEO stated:

"The production of this document was such a major achievement and far exceeded the original plan of a review of a training and development structure within one of the focus groups. So many inspirational comments and pure common sense and practical approaches that professionals who come into contact with young people affected by domestic abuse can apply and take on board. One of the major elements of the insightful narrative and ideas is that it does not cost anything to apply the key components of the toolbox to your day-to-day work, so no excuse for professionals not to take it on board."

The work of the SAY Project culminated in a celebration event on 23 November 2023 at the Senate Chamber in the Northern Ireland Parliament Buildings, Stormont Estate. This high-profile event, sponsored by the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly and attended by government department representatives and the Head of Civil Service, Dr Jayne Brady, shone a light on young people's voices and ensured they were heard by key decision makers. The 'Having our Say' publication was officially launched at the event by the SBNI Independent Chair, Bernie McNally.



The 'Recognising the Impact of Domestic Abuse upon Children and Young People' Learning and Development Framework is due to be presented to the SBNI Board for approval during the first quarter of the new business year. Once approved, the framework will be disseminated across all member agencies, as a guidance document to assist learning and development teams to target training for practitioners who work with children with lived experience of domestic abuse, as well as other employees who come into contact with these children.

The Women of the World Bus

To celebrate the young people who contributed to the consultation, the SBNI funded the Women of the World (WOW) Bus to travel to Northern Ireland for three days on 23, 24 and 25 November 2023⁸.

The WOW Bus charity facilitated a series of workshops for children and young people at the event in Stormont on 23 November 2023, for local primary schools in Newcastle Co Down on 24 November and in Ulster University on 25 November 2023. The experience was thoroughly enjoyed by all who participated in the events and workshops over the three days of the visit.



The 8 Stage Domestic Homicide Timeline

In March 2024, the DVA Committee and the Northern Safeguarding Panel hosted a training event attended by 250 delegates, at which Professor Jane Monckton-Smith delivered an overview of her extensive research into the eight identifiable stages of perpetrator behaviour which precedes a domestic homicide. She is a criminology expert based at Gloucestershire University and has identified this eight-stage common behavioural pattern from a study of over 400 intimate partner homicides.

⁸ The Women of the World Bus, is a charity funded in partnership with Children in Need, is an interactive space, created within an adapted double decker bus, allowing groups and individuals to participate in activities designed by the charity, to creatively explore issues around gender equality through play, reading, digital experience and a video and recording studio

Professor Monckton-Smith argues that men who kill their partners follow a “homicide timeline” in cases of coercive control and stalking that may be tracked by practitioners, to assess risk and threat and ultimately to help prevent deaths.

The event was attended by:

- policy makers from DoH, DOJ, working on the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) strategy
- practitioners and managers from across all member agencies and associated partners from the five local area safeguarding panels.

The results of the evaluation were exceptionally positive with all attendees reporting an increase in knowledge that will influence and enhance their practice skill base. A sample of comments to highlight this are detailed below:

- be more curious, highlight the importance of listening
- more attention paid to stalking
- importance of breaches
- importance of history
- importance of seeing overall patterns
- importance of greater understanding of what young people may be witnessing
- identification and recognitions of signs earlier.



Recognising Children who are Victims of Domestic Abuse

During the reporting period, the SBNI Independent Chair Bernie McNally was the keynote speaker at two conferences organised by local Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnerships. At these conferences, Ms McNally highlighted the importance of recognising children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right. The conferences were supported by large corporate and local businesses. This afforded the opportunity for the SBNI to raise awareness about children as victims of domestic abuse with a new audience beyond the statutory and community and voluntary sectors. The first of these, hosted by the South Eastern and Southern Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnerships took place in November 2024 to mark the beginning of the '16 Days of Action against Domestic Abuse'. On display were animations and art work illustrating the lived experiences of children and young people which had been commissioned by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT) with funding from the Southern Safeguarding Panel.

Secondly, in March 2024, WAAD celebrated its 40th anniversary year by hosting a conference for businesses, schools, sports organisations, community groups and others to explore the 'bystander model' promoted by Dr Jackson Katz⁹. The SBNI Independent Chair highlighted the work of the SBNI Domestic Violence and Abuse Committee and the importance of recognising children as victims, moving away from a perception and societal narrative of them as passive witnesses or bystanders to this form of abuse.



The Chair addresses the WAAD Conference Delegates.



Keynote Speaker Jackson Katz with delegates.

9 Dr Katz, is internationally renowned for his pioneering scholarship and activism on issues of gender, race, and violence

Responding to the Mental Health Needs of Children and Young People

Strategic Priority 4:

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

SBNi Business Objectives 2023-2024:

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

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

The Mental Health Committee exists as a vehicle to provide a voice for children and young people affected by mental health issues to inform practice, raise awareness and destigmatise mental ill health.

The committee is chaired by an assistant director from SPPG and membership is drawn from EA, Action for Children, CCGANI, YJA, NSPCC, PSNI, Crisis Café Newry, and the Youth, Empowerment, Health & Advocacy services (YEHA) Project as well representatives of the five HSCTs Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Some of the committee are pictured below:



SBNI Mental Health Committee.

Case Management Review Authors and Safeguarding Panel Members Seminar

Following on from the CMR dissemination of learning events in 2023, the committee, in conjunction with the CMR and Safeguarding Panels, held a seminar on child and young peoples' mental health issues on 25 March 2024. The seminar's programme was predicated on learning from CMRs which highlighted both infant and adolescent mental health. Participants were also informed as to the supports available in schools, from the EA Nurture Programme, for middle childhood years wellbeing. The seminar was attended by 40 participants consisting of CMR authors, safeguarding panel members, SBNI Board and committee members. It addressed the SBNI business plan objective 4.1 'to help reduce the incidence of children and young people affected by mental health issues' through presenting examples of:

- emerging and innovative practice
- new collaborative approaches which provided evidence of reducing CAMHS waiting lists
- effective interventions to support children in school, where the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown was still evident in children's presentations.

The interventions and practices covered in the presentations provided examples of mechanisms to help to address a range of need with regard to children and young people. They highlighted the need for the earliest possible intervention e.g. in pregnancy and first weeks of birth and also in preventative adolescent support. They also demonstrated the benefits of offering young people a selection of services and support in deciding what would best meet their needs. Examples were given where group work opportunities had the impact of reducing the need for statutory or therapeutic interventions through offering supportive social connections and activities.



CMR Authors at Mental Health Seminar.

Bernie McNally, the SBNI Independent Chair, opened the seminar outlining the SBNI key strategic priorities and drawing attention to the recently developed SBNI Mental Health Learning and Development Framework - Supporting the Needs of Children and Young People in Northern Ireland¹⁰.



SBNI Independent Chair opening the seminar.

Angelina McNally and Fiona Campbell (NSPCC) presented the Pregnancy in Mind programme, which supports the perinatal mental health of mothers and expectant parents. It is an evidence-based, preventative mental health service which aims to protect against the impact of parental anxiety and depression during pregnancy and in the initial stages of becoming a parent.

The regional manager of the Nurture Advisory and Support Service in Schools, Sean Irving, informed the participants of the principles of nurture, which, although not a new concept to schools, is more key than ever, especially in the 'post lockdown' years. It is a whole school approach that, to date, has that to date has been embraced by staff and has proved effective especially regarding the needs of children who had experienced particular challenges during the pandemic lockdown.



¹⁰ [Learning and development framework: Mental Health](#)

The approach is based on the following principles:



Principles of Nurture



Nurture Room at St Eithne's Bereavement Tree

His presentation also provided examples of effective nurturing environments that some schools have created and which embody these nurture principles. This has resulted in children feeling supported at school and thus reaching their academic and social potential more easily.



The seminar concluded with a presentation on adolescent development. A model of an effective partnership working specifically with adolescents, was presented by BHSC CAMHS assistant service manager Ciaran McKervey and YEHA senior manager Sean Devlin, entitled 'Benefits and Challenges of HSC and Third Sector Collaboration in supporting young people'. The presentation highlighted the benefits of working together for the wellbeing of local young people. It also produced a lively question and answer session considering the possibilities of duplicating a similar model of working.

The evaluations of the seminar were positive and all participants said it would inform both practice and policy development within their organisation.

"As a CMR chair, this information is extremely useful to carry out my role. It is relevant to the CMR review that I am currently involved with."

All attendees confirmed that the seminar had improved their level of awareness and understanding of what impacts children's emotional health.

"Very informative to hear about the services currently being rolled out and to see ways in which trauma informed practice is beginning to trickle into mainstream services with positive results."

"An informative meeting with lots of hope in terms of support for young people and families."

"An important perspective in putting together of CMR Report."

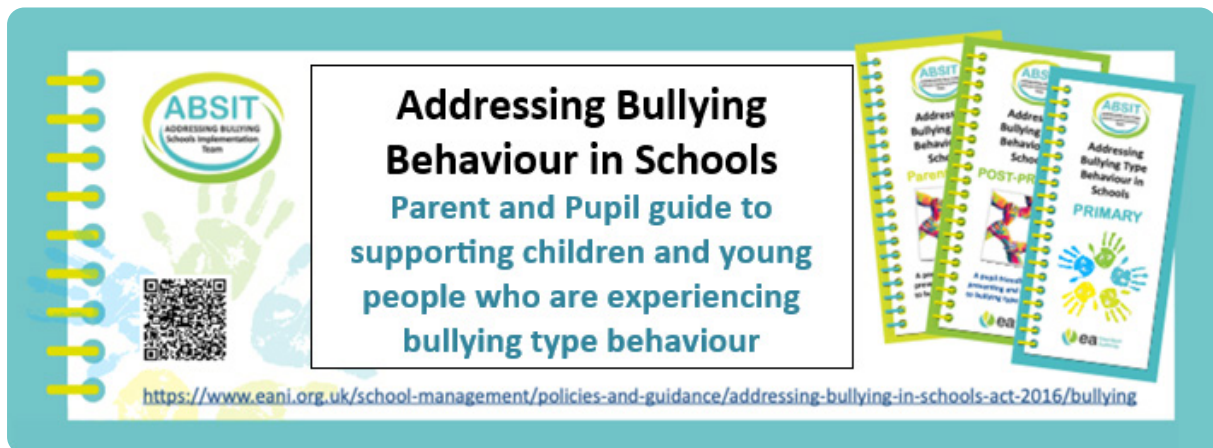
Participants also advised that they had benefited from the knowledge transfer provided by the seminar, particularly that associated with:

- new developments in this area of service provision
- the opportunity to explore successful models of collaborative practice that could potentially be replicated and/or scaled up across other partnerships
- information to inform future committee workplans.

Addressing Bullying Type Behaviours in Schools

In order to support the delivery of the SBNI business plan objectives:

- 4.2 to raise awareness of the impact of poor mental health and associated stigma on children and young people
- 4.3 to promote awareness for children and young people, their parents and carers in how to recognise, respond and seek help in relation to mental health, the SBNI funded the EA Addressing Bullying Type Behaviours Implementation Team (ABSIT) to develop and publish resources which would inform and support the wellbeing of children and young people and their parents if they were concerned about, or were experiencing, bullying.



These resources were designed to complement the ongoing work that ABSIT does within schools which includes raising awareness of the legislation (Addressing Bullying in Schools Act 2016 (NI) introduced in 2021), the individual school's responsibility toward their pupils, and advising on individual cases directly referred to the team. The resources were designed to provide school staff with lesson plans and work sheets to explore and address the issues of bullying in the classroom and in groupwork settings, using a trauma informed and children's rights-based approach. They also include skills and tactics to support the development of resilience and recovery in addressing or recovering from bullying, which could be used by parents and teaching staff as well as young people. The acronym **TRIP** was promoted as an effective way to explore what bullying type behaviour is:

- When the behaviour is **TARGETED** at a specific pupil or group of pupils
- When the behaviour is **REPEATED** over a period of time
- When the behaviour is deliberately **INTENDED** to cause harm
- When the behaviour causes **PSYCHOLOGICAL, EMOTIONAL** and/or **PHYSICAL** harm.

Moving into the next reporting year, the committee will further its work to meet its business plan objective 4.3, to promote awareness for children and young people, their parents and carers in how to recognise, respond and seek help in relation to mental health. Whilst the work done in year has centred on mental health issues associated with bullying, the development of a reporting pathway will be finalised next year.

Mental Health Learning and Development Framework - Supporting the Needs of Children and Young People in Northern Ireland.

In order to address the SBNI business plan objective 4.4, to promote training in how to improve the recognition, assessment and responses to children, young people and families experiencing the impact of mental health issues, the committee established a task and finish group to develop guidance on minimum standards for mental health awareness and training across all workforces.

The group was chaired by a representative of EA and included nominees from YJA, PHA, HSCT CAMHS and Family Support Services, NSPCC, and Action for Children. It produced the Mental Health Learning and Development Framework as a guide for SBNI member agencies and partners to consider the skills and knowledge required of their workforces, regarding mental health issues for children and young people. The framework details what learning is proportionate to the role, responsibility and service that is being offered to specifically address the mental health needs of children and young people in Northern Ireland. It includes:

- an introduction which sets the policy and practice context
- a descriptor of four levels of workforces and associated learning needs
- the learning and development framework itself
- a comprehensive reference section.

This enhances the existing SBNI Child Safeguarding Learning and Development Strategy and Framework and will serve as an appendix to it whilst complementing the other SBNI learning and development frameworks on child sexual exploitation and domestic violence and abuse.

The Mental Health Learning and Development Framework - Supporting the Needs of Children and Young People in Northern Ireland was presented to the SBNI Board in February 2024 and approval was agreed for use across all member agencies.

The committee will continue to develop its work into 2024-2025 through the broadening of the scope of its members. It will ensure that the voices of children and young people are more effectively heard. In addition, members will support the connecting of the mental health system for children, young people and their families, ensuring clarity of reporting pathways are reinforced through their partnership working, their membership of other relevant fora and sharing best practice across the spectrum of services that support the wellbeing of children and young people.

Responding to Online Safety

Strategic Priority 3:

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

SBNi Business Objectives 2023-2024:

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

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

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



SBNI Online Safety Committee.

The SBNI has played a key role in supporting the delivery of actions associated with the [Keeping children and young people safe: an Online Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland](#) (strategy). The strategy and accompanying cross-government [action plan](#) were published in 2021. The funding for implementation commenced in 2022-2023 and continued in this reporting year.

The cross-departmental Child Protection Senior Officials Group (CPSOG), which provides strategic direction on cross-cutting child protection issues, has oversight of the strategy. The SBNI is supporting this group. We collaborate with departments represented on the CPSOG on the implementation of the strategic actions whether in a lead or support capacity and prepare performance and progress reports for the CPSOG to aid its oversight of the strategy.

Within the SBNI structures, governance is provided by an Online Safety Steering Group, formed in summer 2022. The group is accountable to the Board for the overall direction and financial management of the SBNI's assigned strategic actions. The group is chaired by the regional lead Safeguarding Nurse Consultant in PHA, other members include senior leaders from the EA, PHA Finance, NCB, PSNI and SPPG.

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

The strategic action plan sets out 21 actions for different government departments and bodies to lead or support. The SBNI has been assigned 12 lead actions and three supporting actions which cover website design, online safety core messaging, reporting pathways, sample online safety templates and promotion of a good practice audit tool.

Actions are reflected within the SBNI's annual business plan objectives. The committee have successfully progressed all of the SBNI year one and two actions whether in a lead or support capacity. Performance and progress have been routinely reported to the CPSOG and its subgroup.

The actions were completed in a number of different ways:

Creation of online safety infrastructure to prevent children and young people from experiencing harm and abuse online.

As part of the SBNI's business plan objective 3.1 for 2023-2024 the committee has undertaken to ensure a coordinated approach to online safety. It has worked with government departments and their respective agencies to develop an online safety infrastructure and associated standards to prevent children and young people from experiencing harm and abuse online.

As part of our role in coordinating the implementation of the Northern Ireland Executive's Online Safety Strategy Action Plan, we have continued to be active members of the Cross-Departmental Implementation Group (CDIG). The CDIG is chaired by DoH, and other senior officials attend from the DoJ, Department of Education (DE), Department for the Economy (DfE), Department for Communities (DfC), Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), CCEA and the SBNI. The group works to deliver the online safety strategic action plan and meetings are held to share information, explore opportunities and monitor implementation.

The SBNI participation on the [UK Council for Internet Safety](#) (UKCIS) working groups has strengthened links between Northern Ireland and wider UK and global online safety structures and amplified the voice of local stakeholders and service users. The UKCIS is a collaborative forum through which government, the tech community and the charity sector work in partnership to help keep children safe online. The legislative passage of the Online Safety Act 2023 impacted on the frequency of meetings. However, good links have been established with partners and there have been continued efforts to collaborate, share learning and professional development.

Throughout the year, discussions took place with representatives from the independent regulator of online safety, Ofcom, to share practice insight and local research into children's experiences of harm online. In June 2023, the Independent Chair of the SBNI and the Online Safety Coordinator met with Ofcom's Online Safety Group Director to discuss the child safety landscape in Northern Ireland and to get an update on the Online Safety Bill (now Act) and the proposed plans for it to be put into practice.

Ofcom was represented on the [Growing Up Online](#)¹¹ research expert advisory group, which led to valuable changes in the design of the qualitative engagement with children and young people.

The committee assisted DE in reviewing the online safety content in the [Safeguarding and Child Protection in Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools - A Guide for Schools](#). The guide aims to assist school Board of Governors and school staff in fulfilling their responsibilities regarding their safeguarding and child protection role, in order to promote clarity and consistency of approach across all schools.

The Online Safety Hub

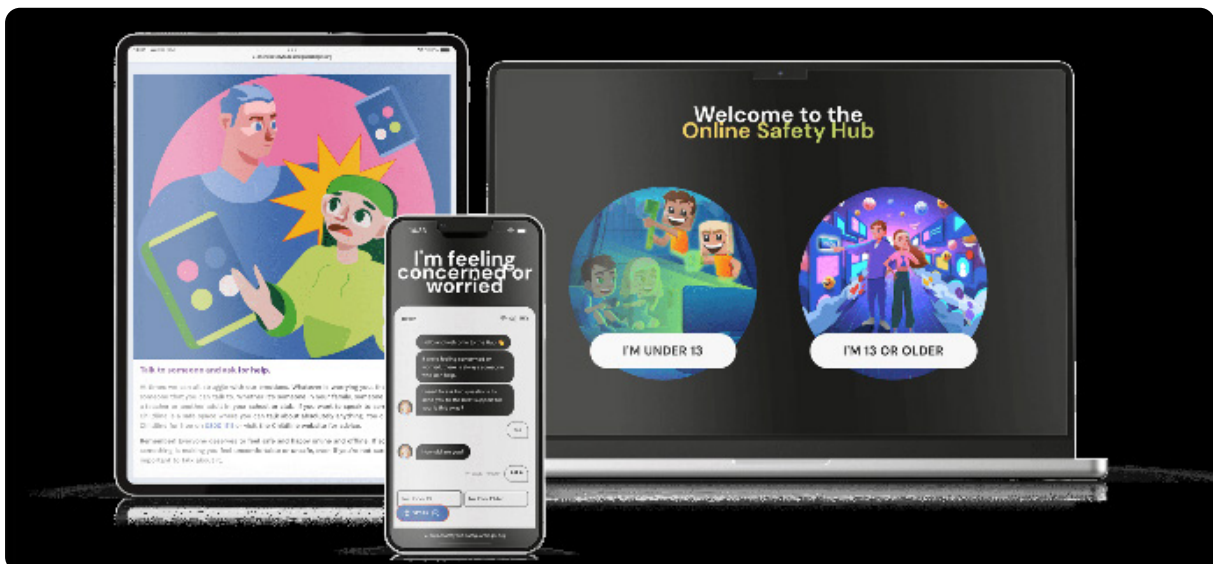
A key deliverable in this business year was in response to action one of the Online Safety Strategy Action Plan. The SBNI created a new digital library repository on the SBNI website to help young people, parents and carers, and professionals access online safety education and support. Developed in partnership with INEQE Safeguarding Group, the [Online Safety Hub](#) is a product of strong partnership working. Extensive consultation took place with the committee, safeguarding panels and wider partners on the planning, design, content creation and curation, testing and delivery.

¹¹ The report was commissioned to inform the delivery of actions associated with the Northern Ireland Executive's five-year [Keeping Children and Young People Safe: An Online Safety Strategy](#) – which is in year two of implementation.



The Hub is in two sections, one for adult users and a separate area for children and young people. The adult section provides advice for carers and professionals on a variety of key topics including social media, online bullying, screen time and online grooming. It is kept up to date with the [latest news](#), a [resource library](#), a [research and evidence bank](#) and signposts users to appropriate support and reporting pathways.

A fundamental aspect of the Hub is helping to empower children and young people to enjoy their online spaces safely and knowledgeably, knowing what to do and where to turn when something doesn't feel right. A separate [Young Person's Hub](#), informed by the views of children and young people, supported through Youth Work Alliance, has been designed to ensure that education and support is tailored to meet their needs. It provides supportive and non-judgemental advice tailored for [under 13s](#) and [13s and older](#), including top tips and reporting pathways tools to help them to manage their online lives safely and responsibly.



For the first time, the new Hub brings together resources from a range of multi-agencies in one central place. Its aim is to add value and promote new and existing resources and services. During the year, 37 member and partner organisations helped us to grow the Hub by [submitting](#) 254 resources to the [resource library](#). To ensure continued learning and improvement, user feedback questions have been integrated throughout the Hub, as well as a [feedback survey](#).

In the forthcoming business year, the SBNI will focus on promoting and evaluating the Hub, celebrate the successes and assess where we can develop further.

"Thank you for everyone involved in the Online Safety Hub so far, it looks like an excellent site that will make my role of supporting young people more efficient and ensured I am up to date across the current guidance for safeguarding issues."

Youth Worker

"A very valuable resource to signpost people to. I know our schools will be running with this - very user friendly." **CCEA representative**



Navigating the online world safely and confidently

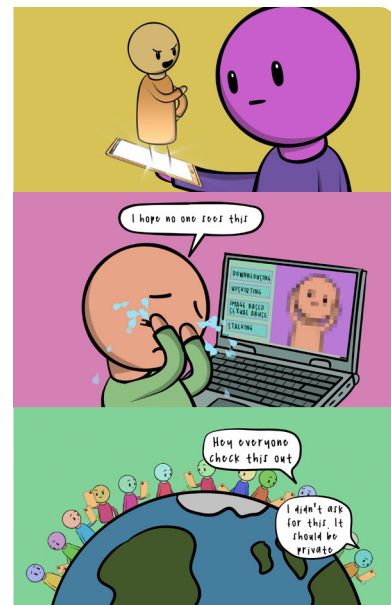
The delivery of the SBNI business plan objective 3.2, saw the committee continue to work with member and partner agencies. Its core purpose is to educate children and young people, their parents and carers and those who work with them to navigate the online world safely and confidently and support them to stay safe and well online. This has been done through the creation of a suite of core online safety messages for the Online Safety Hub (Hub). The messages and topic areas have been tailored for [children under 13](#), [young people 13 and older](#) and [adult users](#).

In April, the committee held a workshop to review and agree current reporting pathways and referral mechanisms to support services when online issues arise. The agreed signposting is accessible in each of the Hub topic area pages, and will be kept under review. The Hub also features three 'reporting pathways tools' to reinforce age and role appropriate messaging on where to contact if help is needed, these include a:

- [reporting pathways tool for young people aged under 13](#)
- [reporting pathways tool for young people aged 13 and older](#)
- [adult's reporting pathways tool for parents, carers and professionals.](#)

To improve the accessibility and reach of the Hub, [ReachDeck](#) software has been added that offers text-to-speech, reading and translation support available in 99 different languages making it easily accessible to different audiences.

To improve education and awareness of technology and domestic abuse, the SBNI collaborated with the South Eastern Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership and North Down and Ards Women's Aid to develop a four-part animation called 'Technology and domestic abuse – where is the line?'. Launched in June, the animation was co-produced with young people who have lived experience of domestic abuse. Aimed at all ages, the animation and [stakeholder briefing](#) helped raise awareness about healthy and harmful behaviour and where to get help. The animation is subtitled to make it more accessible for people with hearing impairment and is available on the [Online Safety Hub](#) in English, Romanian, Polish and Arabic.



Steven McNeill, SEHSCT; Traci Kimber, SE DSVP; Orla O'Hagan, SBNI; Sheila Simons, SEHSCT and Bob Price Neep Pictures.

Throughout the year, the SBNI facilitated several training and development opportunities for the online safety committee and steering group members, SBNI Central Support Team, CMR Authors, Safeguarding Panel members and partners, these included:

- CSE Level One and Level Two training, facilitated by NEXUS and attended by 18 participants. Of those attendees 89% who completed the post training evaluation stated that they strongly agreed/agreed that they feel confident in their understanding of CSE
- Bystander training, facilitated by Nexus and attended by eight participants
- The Understanding Child Sexual Abuse Online Learning Week, facilitated by the Association of Child Protection Professionals and Centre of Expertise of Child Sexual Abuse, attended by 22 committee members
- Online Safety Live events, facilitated by the UK Safer Internet Centre.¹²



The SBNI strategic priority on online safety was the focus of the second development day for the Safeguarding Panels held in November 2023 which centred around:

- a facilitated presentation by the PSNI on the scale and nature of online crime involving under-18s
- the impact of technology within domestic violence led by a Senior Social Work Practitioner from SEHSCT
- in conclusion, a presentation from Professor Noel Purdy, Director of Research and Scholarship, Stranmillis College, on the much anticipated 'Growing Up Online in NI' research findings.

¹² Online safety live event open to the SBNI committees, online safety steering group, online safety cross-departmental implementation team, TEO, CYPSP, NICCY and academics in Stranmillis.

The development day concluded with an opportunity for panel members to further explore the SBNI strategic priorities that had been presented throughout the day with a view to inform and improve agency policy and practice. Feedback from panel members was very positive.

Working alongside DE and EA, the SBNI has promoted the South West Grid for Learning [360 Degree Safe](#) free self-assessment tool to help education settings review their online safety policy and practice. During 2023-2024, 366 schools in Northern Ireland were registered to use the free tool which is promoted in the [Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools - A Guide for Schools](#) (Department of Education, 2023) and on the [Online Safety Hub](#).

In November 2023, the SBNI collaborated with the DoJ to launch a campaign to raise awareness of the new upskirting, downblousing and cyberflashing sexual offences coming into operation. The [Don't Do It, Don't Tolerate It](#) campaign was delivered across social media, and outdoor digital display and panel advertising in public washrooms, shopping centres and on public transport. Developed in conjunction with the committee and key criminal justice and voluntary sector partners, the campaign was supported by the SBNI.

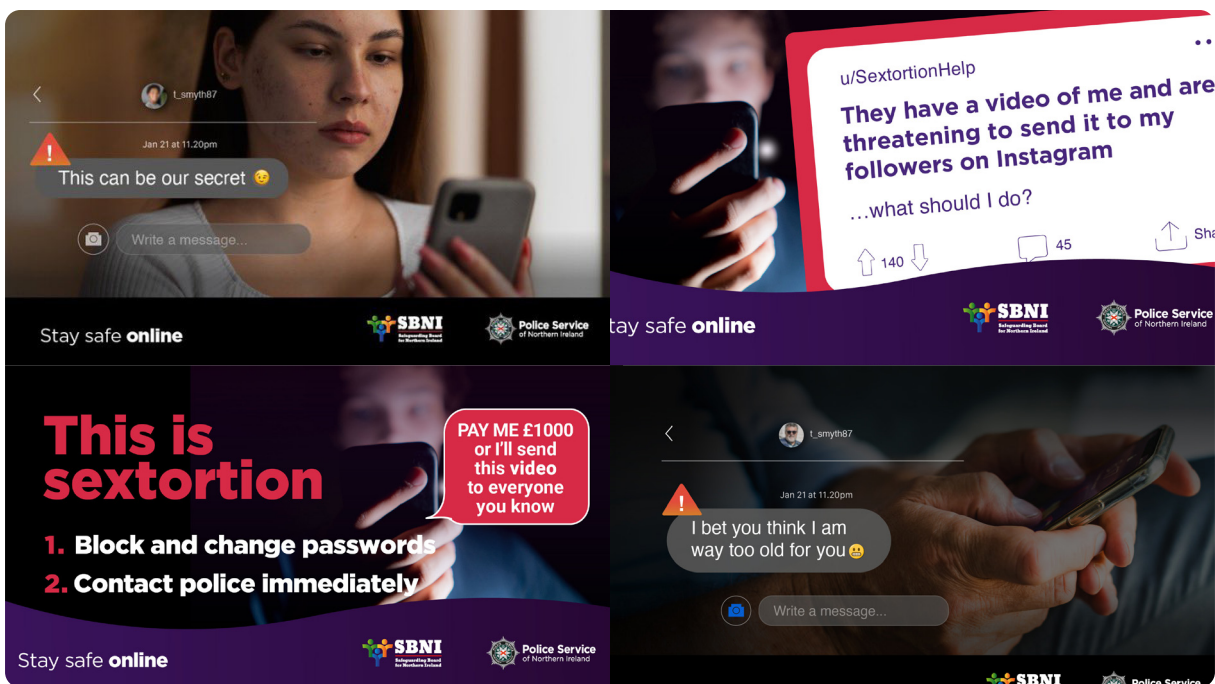


A priority focus in quarter four was working alongside NSPCC, in conjunction with members and partners, on a project to develop a suite of sample policy templates to help embed online safety within organisations. In January, a total of 23 representatives from organisations responded to a stakeholder survey, and virtual interviews were conducted with members and government partners to inform project planning. The draft templates will be reviewed and when finalised in the forthcoming business year will be disseminated and promoted on the Online Safety Hub.

During this period the SBNI also collaborated with PSNI to implement a public awareness campaign on online dangers and reporting pathways. Funded by the SBNI and coordinated through the committee, the three-month campaign focused on harms that disproportionately impact young people, including online blackmail sextortion, online grooming, and the risks around sharing nude imagery. The campaign combined organic messaging for parents and carers, and paid social media adverts for 13-24 year olds on Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram.

Overall, the campaign was well supported by the public, and members and partners, securing extensive [news coverage](#) on Safer Internet Day in February 2024. The strong reach and impressions, combined with the total link clicks on both the organic and paid messaging indicates that the campaign was successful in raising awareness.

- The organic social media posts secured a total reach of 869,351. These posts targeting an audience of parents and carers were published on Facebook, Instagram, X and Nextdoor
- Snapchat ad campaigns performed extremely well throughout the three months, with each ad gaining over 4.5 million impressions. There were a high number of click throughs on the paid social media ads, indicating that young people were interested in learning more about online blackmail sextortion, online grooming and the risks around sharing nude images online. These users now know where to find this information on the PSNI website and are more informed about support that is available to them, including the [Online Safety Hub](#).



To help schools, youth clubs and others deliver engaging and inclusive activities for Safer Internet Day on 6th February, the SBNI partnered with the UK Safer Internet Centre and the Department for Communities Central Translation Hub to make the official annual resources available in English and Irish. This was the first-time the resources have been translated, initiated as a result of the Growing Up Online research [report](#) findings that identified a lack of resources in the Irish language.

Free to download, the [resources](#) are tailored for each key stage for use with 3-7s, 7-11s, 11-14s and 14-18 year olds. They include short interactive stories, worksheets, group discussions and assemblies with supporting material. Activities are also designed for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Additional Learning Needs.



Growing Up Online: Children's online activities, harm and safety in Northern Ireland

In delivery of business plan objective 3.3, the 'Growing Up Online' study brought together the views of children and young people to help inform and influence online policy and practice development.

A highlight of the year was the September 2023 launch of our research report into the lived online experiences of thousands of local children and young people. The 'Growing Up Online: Children's online activities, harm and safety in Northern Ireland' study was undertaken by the Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement (CREU) at Stranmillis University College. It was commissioned by the SBNI to inform and influence the Northern Ireland Executive's Online Safety Strategy Action Plan and in delivery of strategic actions 19 and 20.

Launched by the SBNI Independent Chair, speakers included Professor Noel Purdy, Director of CREU and Principal Investigator of the research project, and Peter Toogood, Deputy Secretary of Social Services Group, DoH and Chair of the CPSOG. Over 130 participants joined the event in Stranmillis University College, including some of the children and young people who participated in the large-scale research. The research launch was well supported by members and partners, and secured extensive [news coverage](#).



Peter Toogood, DoH; Bernie McNally, SBNI; Professor Noel Purdy, Stranmillis University College



Professor Noel Purdy, Stranmillis University College; Emily Roberts, PHA.

The report draws together research from a survey of 6,481 children and young people aged 8-18 and focus groups and interviews with 95 participants including children and young people in mainstream primary and post-primary schools, special schools and youth club settings, as well as parents/carers, teachers/school leaders and professionals working in the field of online safety.

The qualitative engagement included Traveller/Roma children, LGBTQI+ young people, children with severe learning difficulties, young people in a youth club setting in a disadvantaged urban context, and pupils from an Irish-medium school. The study was supported by two children and young people's advisory groups, and an expert advisory group. These groups helped inform the design of the qualitative engagement with children and young people, and made recommendations regarding dissemination.

The study found that:

- Children and young people report a wide range of positive online experience and that being online is not a bolt-on to their lives; it is absolutely integral to how they live almost every aspect of their lives today
- There is clear evidence that around 1 in 5 children and young people (20% of 8-13-year olds and 18% of 14-18-year olds) have experienced something nasty or unpleasant happening to them online over the past couple of months, most commonly on social media apps
- Girls are much more likely to experience something nasty or unpleasant online, both among the younger cohort (23% girls vs 17% boys) and the older cohort (20% girls vs 15% boys)
- Children and young people are spending many hours online each day, on school days but especially at weekends and during holidays. While most internet use is within reasonable limits (2-4 hours per school day), there is evidence that many children and young people are spending much greater amounts of time online (frequently more than 7 hours per day)
- There is a disparity between children and young people's perceptions of their parents' (often low) level of interest in what they were doing online, and the genuine fears and concerns expressed by the primary and post-primary parents who volunteered for the focus groups. For instance, only 17% of 8-13-year olds and just 8% of 14-18-year olds reported that their parents were 'very interested' in what they were doing online, while 20% of 8-13-year olds and 34% of 14-18-year olds felt that their parents were 'not at all interested' in their online activities
- There is a strong need to provide relevant, up-to-date, age-appropriate, supportive and engaging training and resources (in English and Irish) for children and young people, but also for parents and teachers/educators
- There is a need for greater regulation of social media companies by government to help ensure: closer monitoring of online material that is potentially offensive or harmful to children and young people; more transparent, consistent and child-friendly online reporting mechanisms; the timely removal of offensive material; and stricter enforcement of age restrictions on certain apps or sites, where currently it is much too easy for children to enter a false date of birth.

Alongside the [executive summary](#) and [full report](#), a series of spotlight reports have been developed to provide additional focus and analysis on key areas, these include:

- [Spotlight Report on Cyberbullying](#) published in November 2023, highlighting the nature and extent of online bullying behaviours.
- [Spotlight Report on the Screen Time Debate](#) in January 2024, exploring children's screen time duration and the associated benefits and risks.

"Research like this is crucial to understanding how children and young people in Northern Ireland experience the digital world and, as Chair of a cross-government child protection group, I welcome both the research and the report it has produced. It is important that we recognise how integral the online world is to our children and the huge benefits it can provide. We must acknowledge that empowering our children to embrace the digital world while keeping them safe and providing them with the skills to keep themselves safe is a balancing act."

Peter Toogood, Deputy Secretary of Social Services Group, DoH and Chair of the CPSOG.

"This report sheds new light on how our children are growing up online and presents a wide variety of experiences, some encouraging, others disturbing. We hope that the findings presented in this report will provide a strong evidence base to inform future policy and practice around our children's online lives as we seek to provide opportunities for them to enjoy safely all the benefits of their increasingly online lives."

Director of CREU and Principal Investigator of the research project, Professor Noel Purdy.

Next year, additional spotlight reports will be published on parents and carers and the online victimisation of girls.

Case Management Reviews

Learning from practice

Strategic Priority 1:

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

SBNI Business Objective 2023-2024

1.1: To ensure that the Case Management Review, and Safeguarding Panels meet their statutory functions

- Undertake Case Management Reviews as per the SBNI legislation and guidance
- Establish ways in which to disseminate the associated learning from Case Management Reviews across all member bodies.

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

The CMRP is required by statute to meet at least four times per year and is independently chaired. It includes senior representatives of the following SBNI member agencies; EA, five HSCTs, PBNI, PHA (the dedicated nurse for safeguarding children), PSNI, SPPG, YJA and a paediatrician.

The panel's role is to consider notifications (see Annex 2) from member agencies in respect of serious incidents involving children and young people and to identify cases which require further consideration because there may be:

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

The purpose of this process is to enable the child protection system to be strengthened thereby further protecting children and young people in Northern Ireland. The CMRP interrogates the information provided to it by the notifying agency and seeks information from others, before making a recommendation to the SBNI Board as to whether or not it is appropriate to commission a CMR. This recommendation is then considered by the Board which makes a decision whether or not a CMR should be undertaken. Thirty-nine (39) CMRs have been commissioned since the SBNI's inception in 2012.

CMR Notifications received since 2012

Since 2012 to 31 March 2024 the SBNI has received 215 notifications (including a small number of duplicate referrals).

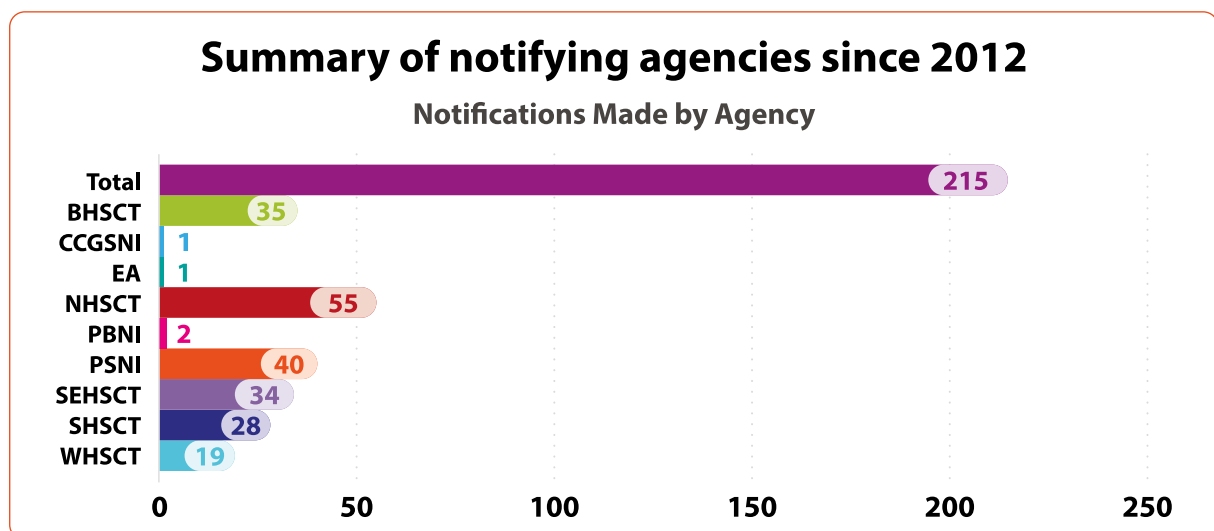


Figure 1 Summary of notifying agencies since 2012

CMR Notifications received during 2023-2024

During 2023-2024, 11 CMR notifications in respect of 11 children were received by the SBNI¹³. Of these notifications 1 CMR was commissioned in respect of 1 female child.

The notifications received, related to 11 children of whom 6 were male and 5 were female. The age range of these children who were notified to the SBNI were as follows:

- 0 – 11 Months - 4 children (3 male & 1 female)
- 1 Year – 5 Years - 0 children
- 6 – 11 Years - 0 children
- 12 – 17 Years - 7 children (3 male & 4 female).

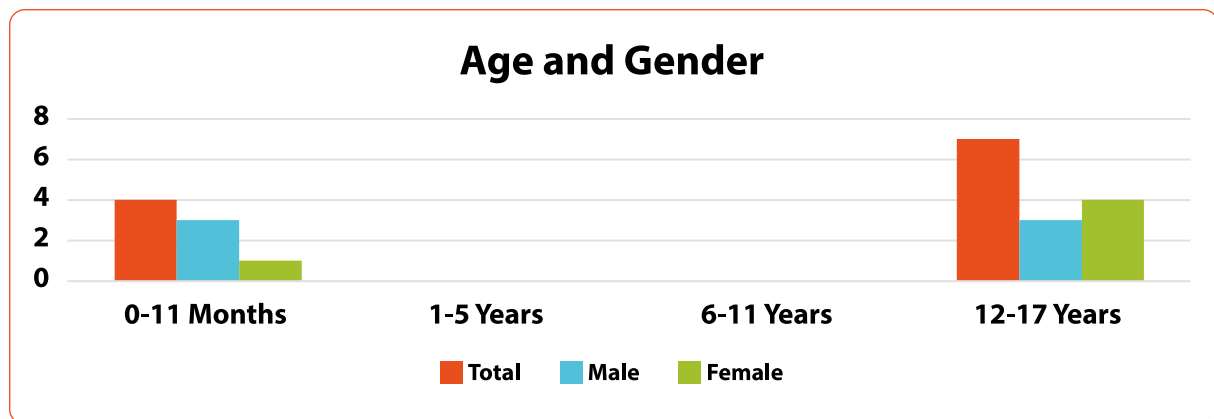


Figure 2 Age range of children subject to CMR Notification

A total of 12 notifications were presented to and considered by the Board in 2023-2024. Of these, 6 were received in the latter part of the previous business year (2022-2023).

The remaining 6 notifications, had been received in the current business year and were considered by the Board in this business year.

Of the 12 notifications considered by the Board in year, the Board concluded that one met the criteria to proceed to a CMR.

The remaining 5 notifications received in this business year will be considered by the Board in the first quarter of 2024-2025.

¹³ Not all 11 proceeded to the SBNI Board for decision in this reporting period 2023-2024.

CMRs Completed since 2012

At 31 March 2024, the total number of CMRs completed was 37, with 2 CMRs underway.

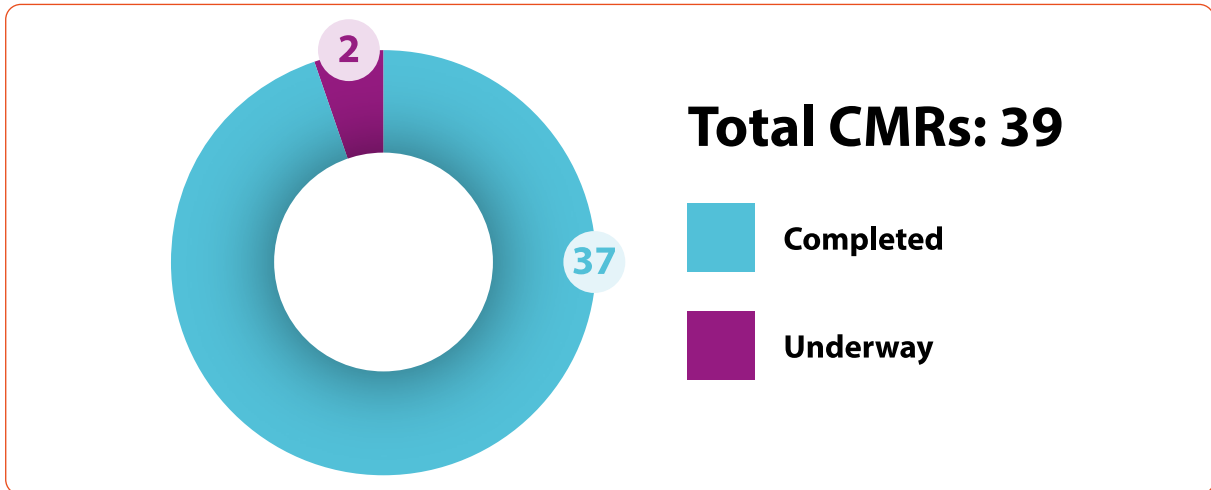


Figure 3 Total number of CMRs completed since 2012

Completed Case Management Reviews

During 2023-2024 two completed CMRs were presented to and approved by the Board. These reviews considered the harm experienced by 3 children (1 male and 2 female).

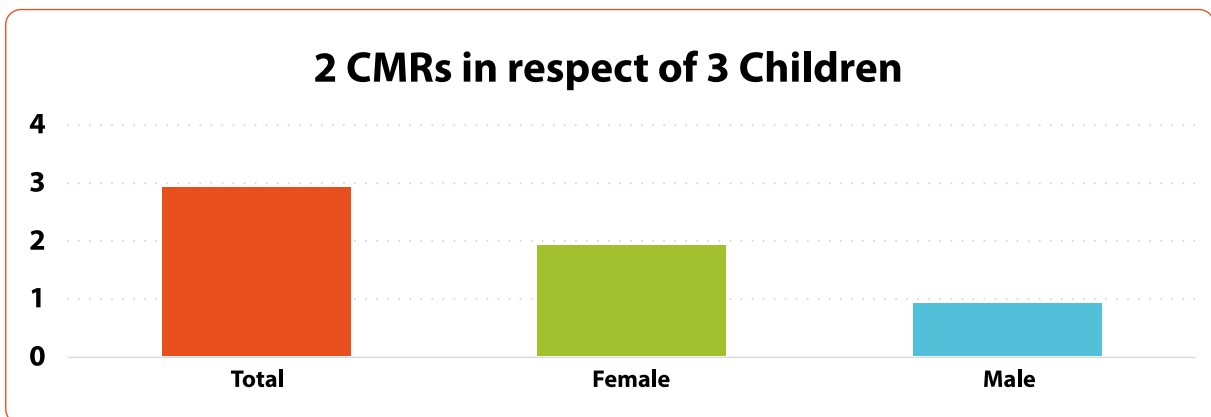


Figure 4 Gender of children involved in completed Reviews

The age range of these children were as follows:

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

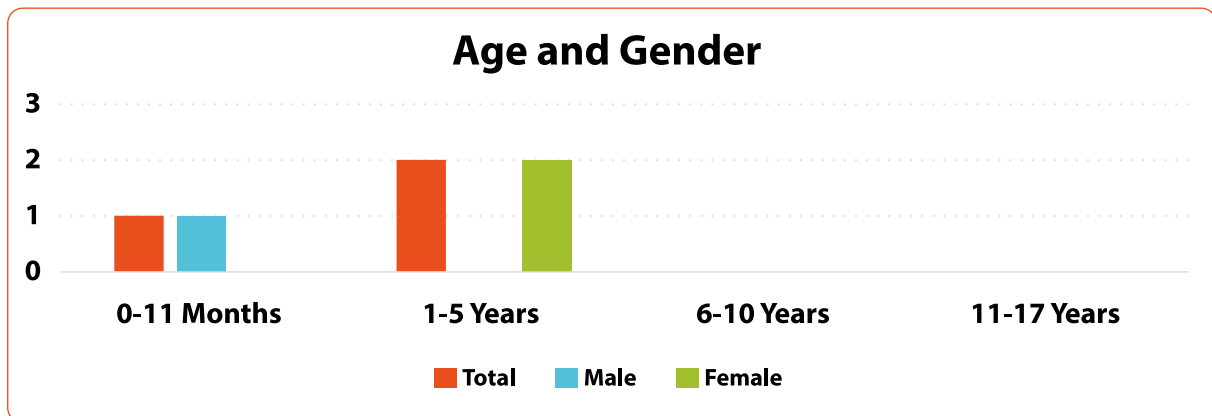


Figure 5 Age range of children involved in completed Reviews

Completion Times for CMRs

The two CMR reviews undertaken within the 2023-2024 reporting period were particularly complex. One case spanned several jurisdictions and three HSCTs as well as involving numerous other agencies.

Staff endeavoured to ensure as timely a response to the completion of reviews as was possible in the difficult and uncharted circumstances.

The average time for completion of the 2 CMRs presented to the Board in 2023-2024 was 12 months.

Summary of learning and improvements arising from these Reviews

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

There were 17 recommendations associated with the completion of the 2 CMRs in 2023-2024.

Learning from these reviews involved:

- domestic abuse
- adult mental health
- physical abuse.

Themed recommendations from both CMRs can be found in Annex 3.

Dissemination of Learning and Key Messages from CMRs

The completed CMR reports, included identified learning and recommendations, and were shared with the organisations involved as well as others who have a role to play in safeguarding and child protection.

In addition, dissemination of learning from CMRs is delivered via regional and local events held regularly across Northern Ireland. This sharing of learning is coordinated and undertaken jointly by the CMRP and the Safeguarding Panels. The events in 2023-2024 were held both in person and via virtual platforms which enabled a wider reach across the multi-agency membership of the SBNI.



Bernie McNally, Sheryl Simms, Trish Higgins, Andy Thomson and Amanda McFadden, SBNI.

During the business year six dissemination of learning events were undertaken by the SBNI. These comprised of one regional event for senior managers and cross government departmental colleagues as well as five Safeguarding Panel events.



The chair addresses the regional audience.



These events were attended by in excess of 700 professionals including managers and practitioners from across 31 agencies and disciplines.



Belfast Area Safeguarding Panel Dissemination Event



Belfast Area Safeguarding Panel Dissemination Event



Yvonne Adair addresses the South Eastern Safeguarding Panel Event Dissemination event.

As in previous years these events were evaluated very highly in the feedback received. However, the SBNI remains keen to continue to explore how it can further disseminate and embed the learning from the completed reviews and will explore additional means of disseminating learning in the next business year.



Delegates at the South Eastern Safeguarding Panel Event Dissemination event.

On-going Training Programme for CMR Authors

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

- the Think Family Model (Mental Health)
- child sexual exploitation
- research into domestic homicide timelines
- perinatal mental health
- adolescent mental health.

CMR Process Review 2023-2024

In October 2021, Professor Ray Jones was commissioned by the Minister of Health to undertake a review of children's social care services.

At the time of his review, Professor Jones noted that the average time taken to complete a CMR in 2021-2022 was 16 months. In reference to the time taken to complete CMRs, Professor Jones recommended that, "the process, as already intended, of undertaking case management reviews, should be speedier and more participative" (2023:19).

In September 2023, in response to this recommendation, the DoH requested that a review of the CMR process be undertaken. The SBNI accepted this request at its Board meeting in September 2023.

The CMR Process Review was duly commissioned and a terms of reference developed in collaboration with member agencies and the DoH. An independent author for the review, Ms Marie Roulston OBE, was appointed and the review commenced immediately following the September Board meeting.

CMR Process Review Methodology

- meeting with the Independent Chair of the SBNI
- meetings with staff from the SBNI considering the existing case management review process
- analysis of CMR notifications 2018-2023, demographics associated with the said notifications and CMR reviews undertaken in this timeframe
- review of current CMR documentation, legislation and attendant guidance
- a workshop with representative members of the CMRP, premised on what is working well, what is working less well and what might be improved
- observation of a CMRP (November 2023)
- attendance at the SBNI Board meeting (December 2023) to follow through the notifications observed at the CMRP in November 2023
- interviews with two SBNI Board members
- meeting with HSCT assistant directors for safeguarding (x5).
- meeting with DoH policy representatives

- desktop review of case management review practice (or equivalent) across the United Kingdom (UK).

Conclusions

Ms Roulston completed the review in March 2024 and concluded that the current system in Northern Ireland is 'not in any way broken'. That the CMR process is very much focused on learning; evidenced in the informed discussion, high quality reports, good information sharing and sound decision making of the CMRP. Ms Roulston's review went on to state that this learning approach is supported by the Board which had matured in its approach to CMRs and modelled good governance. She further observed that the implementation of the improvements made following on from the 2017-2018 review of the CMR process by the Jay Review, had contributed to the current robust process. However, she determined that case management reviews by their nature generate recommendations for improvement and learning and that there is always room for enhancing the existing process. She made the following recommendations for improvement.

Recommendations

1. The Department of Health to consider revisiting the consultation exercise in respect of case management reviews, to arrive at a definitive outcome regarding amendments to legislation.
2. The Department of Health to consider the wording of the current notification criteria in respect of case management reviews, with a view to amending.
3. The SBNI to liaise with the Department of Health in relation to the proposed amendment of Regulation 17 (2) - notification criteria, to ensure children who have a life limiting condition and whose death is expected and abuse or neglect is not suspected as a causal factor, need not be notified to SBNI as a CMR notification.
4. The SBNI to liaise with the Department of Health in relation to the timescales in respect of the establishment of a Child Death Overview Panel.
5. The SBNI Central Support Team to consider the development of guidance to promote a pre-notification discussion with the key member agencies within local safeguarding panels, to ensure robust information sharing and avoid duplication of notifications in respect of the same child.
6. The SBNI to liaise with Department of Health in respect of removing regulation 17(3) and to consider alternative ways of sharing good practice. The SBNI Central Support Team and CMR Panel should assist the department with this recommendation.
7. The SBNI, the Department of Health and Department of Justice should consider the development of a memorandum of understanding to clarify the interface issues between the CMR and Domestic Homicide Review processes.
8. The SBNI should consider the development of guidance to be issued with respect to the Information Known to Agency (IKA) form to ensure consistency of the information required.

9. The SBNI should consider the content of the IKA form to ensure details of 'persons of interest' are noted on the document.
10. The SBNI Central Support Team should review the wording of the Forewarning Letter alongside panel members to ensure the clarity of the intention of the communication is provided.
11. The Department of Health, in conjunction with the SBNI, should give consideration to reviewing whether it is necessary for all five assistant directors to be in attendance at every CMRP meeting to represent the HSCT's.
12. The SBNI should consider whether the management of 'declaration of interests during CMR Panel meetings are appropriate and whether the current arrangements in place sufficiently address this matter.
13. The SBNI should consider increased use of face to face CMR Panel meetings.
14. The SBNI Central Support Team should consider whether the 'Chronolator Tool' is required to be completed by IAR authors when undertaking a review.
15. The SBNI Central Support Team along with CMR Panel members should meet to develop additional effective means for dissemination of learning.
16. The SBNI Central Support Team, in conjunction with the Safeguarding Panel Chairs and membership of the Case Management Review Panel should develop a terms of reference for the Safeguarding Panels CMR Sub Group.
17. The SBNI Central Support Team should consider convening a workshop for the membership of the CMR Panel to address clarity of roles, build upon and enhance working relationships.
18. The SBNI Central Support Team and members of the CMR Panel should explore whether it would be beneficial to introduce Rapid Reviews into Northern Ireland and the SBNI Board should consider said findings.

Ms Roulston will present this review for consideration of its recommendations at the SBNI Board meeting in April 2024.

The SBNI shall, in the forthcoming business year, establish a steering group chaired by the Independent Chair of the CMRP to oversee the governance, implementation and action planning in respect of the above recommendations. The progress will be reported on in the next annual report.

Policy and Procedures Committee

Strategic Priority 1:

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

SBNi Business Objectives 2023-2024:

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

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

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

The committee is chaired by the Director of Children’s Services NHSCT and comprises of senior management representatives from the SBNI member agencies which includes; five HSCTs, PSNI, YJA, SPPG, PHA, PBNI and EA, a General Practitioner (GP) representative, an adult mental health representative and a PHA allied health professional consultant.

The committee chair addressed the Governance Committee during this business year to provide assurance on the areas of work proposed and underway.

The committee met throughout the business year and was supported by several task and finish groups that considered aspects of the Regional Core Policy and Procedures. Following on from learning derived from CMRs, the committee worked on further developing the SBNI Policies and Procedures Manual in respect of:

- child protection registration; case transfer guidance specifically in relation to children who move- to include reference to the inclusion of pre-birth assessments across Northern Ireland and across jurisdictions
- publication of the revised ‘Appeals Process’ which was developed and approved in the previous business year
- development of a regionally consistent ‘Appeals Process Leaflet’ for services users
- categorisation of child protection registration – consideration of the appropriateness of continued use of sub categorisation
- judicial review processes considering the most effective manner to record the outcome of child protection registration appeals on HSCT electronics systems
- amendment of child protection process to include the reference to the need to undertake GP checks on both parents when undertaking an Article 66 investigation
- work to update guidance on pre-birth risk assessment to ensure regional consistency
- work on the development of Regional Guidance to accompany the ‘Pre-Mobile Baby Guidance’ in respect of sub conjunctival haemorrhages
- work to ensure Regional Emergency Social Work Services receive relevant updates in respect of protection plans.

Work on a number of these areas will continue and be carried forward into the new business year and be reported upon in the 2024-2025 annual report.

Child Protection Committee

Strategic Priority 1:

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

SBNi Business Objectives 2023-2024:

- 1.2 To ensure the non-statutory committees fulfil their delivery obligations within their terms of reference**
- **Review and analyse a range of child protection data to inform the child protection system and underpinning process.**

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

The chair of the committee is the Director of Children and Families in the WHSCT. Membership of the group comprises five HSCTs, PHA, EA, YJA, SPPG, PSNI, CCGANI and PBNi.

The Child Protection Committee continued to meet at regular intervals in the business year. Its agreed priorities continued to be in accordance with the strategic and business plans.

Committee work focussed on the following areas:

Continued analysis of the child protection system and underpinning process

Data Analysis

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

The SPPG presented comprehensive data concerning the following:

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

The PSNI presented data for the committee's attention of the following areas;

- government policy on tackling violence against women and girls
- crime trends
- on-line crime
- violence including stalking, harassment, child cruelty and child abduction
- sexual offences including activity between young people under the age of 16 years.

The purpose of the sharing the data is to ensure statutory partners have the opportunity to consider the range of child protection information available and to use this to inform their own agency priorities. It also enables the committee to explore of the effectiveness of the child protection system.

High level exploration of the effectiveness of the child protection system

In the previous business year, the committee had identified the thresholding of multi-agency referrals received by the Social Work Gateway Services within the five HSCTs, as an area requiring further consideration and interrogation. Bespoke audits had been undertaken within the five Trust's Gateway Services to sample the cases which resulted in 'No further action' by social work staff. The purpose was to determine both the appropriateness of the content of the referral and the subsequent thresholding of the referral by social work staff. This work carried over into the current business year.

Informed by the data, the committee particularly focussed upon referrals from PSNI to HSCT's in respect of domestic abuse. A task and finish group was established - chaired by SPPG - to consider the appropriateness and quality of these referrals. This work is on-going.

The emerging issue of children who have been radicalised on-line in respect of 'Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism', was introduced to the committee as an area impacting upon a number of the agencies represented on the committee. The committee recognised this as a concern which required further consideration and committed to continue to monitor this issue when it is taken forward by the newly formed Child Exploitation Committee in the next business year.

Issues emerging from CMRs – the committee took cognisance of issues identified within CMRs particularly in respect of cross -border and inter-jurisdictional working. These issues were brought to the attention of member agencies and the Cross-Border Knowledge Exchange Group¹⁴.

The committee shared information with the Cross-Border Knowledge Exchange Group in respect of the Pre-Mobile Baby Protocol which has been operational across the region for a number of years. This is particularly relevant for agencies who work along the border area and where families frequently move across the border to access medical facilities and other public services.

14 A forum set up to promote and share positive social work practice across the NI and Republic of Ireland Border.

The committee has been mindful of extreme pressures upon the SBNI member agencies – particularly relating to workforce and financial pressures - which have the potential to impact upon service delivery and multi-agency working within the child protection system. To enable the committee to take cognisance of this and endeavour to enhance communication and understanding, each member agency provides an agency update at each committee meeting on service pressures, what the impact on the child protection system is, mitigations that are in place and new developments.

The Child Protection Committee meeting also facilitated information sharing on the progress of the implementation of the Children Services Review¹⁵ to ensure all member agencies were fully apprised of developments.

¹⁵ <https://www.cscsreviewni.net/>

Child Sexual Exploitation Committee

SBNI Strategic Priority 1:

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

SBNI Business Objectives 2023-2024

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

Continue to deliver on the recommendations from the Child Sexual Exploitation Evaluation Report 2020 (Leonard) by:

- **Plan, promote and launch the animations relating to Child Sexual Exploitation and Boys and Young Men**
- **Multi-agency Child Sexual Exploitation training package is cascaded and rolled out via the HYDRA training**
- **Plan, promote and hold continuing professional development days during 2023-2024**
- **Establish a task and finish group to design data collection for CSE.**

The Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Committee was chaired by a Detective Superintendent from PSNI with membership comprised of senior management representation from EA, NSPCC, Barnardos, PBNI, YJA, HSCTs and SPPG. The committee continued to meet regularly throughout the year.

The CSE Committee further developed the previous year's work to finalise the implementation from the CSE Evaluation Report 2020 (Leonard Report)¹⁶ which was published in July 2020 (also available on the SBNI website) and, where relevant, recommendations in the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI)¹⁷ review of CSE in NI, published in June 2020.

Leonard Report recommendations

Effective collaborative working resulted in the final recommendations from the Leonard Report being met and embedded into business as usual for each relevant agency. These were:

Multi-Agency Training:

The publication of the SBNI 'CSE Awareness and Training Framework'¹⁸ aimed to contribute to the improvement of safeguarding children and young people in Northern Ireland. It set out the key minimum learning outcomes to equip staff and volunteers with the skills, knowledge and competence to promote the safety and well-being of children and young people at risk of CSE, within the remit of their roles and responsibilities. It was approved by the SBNI Board in June 2023.

The PSNI, in partnership with other SBNI member agencies, developed a promotional video explaining the purpose of the CSE HYDRA training¹⁹. This supported the roll out of the training, with places being offered across member and partner agencies between April 2023-March 2024. The SBNI provided administrative support ensuring that training places were filled and evenly distributed across EA (schools and youth services), YJA, PBNI, specific voluntary sector organisations and HSCTs. The HYDRA training will be reviewed and updated as appropriate to include the most recent learning from CMRs.

Multi-agency training continued in year with additional inputs being provided by the PSNI, youth work and council partnerships. The SPPG commissioned Nexus to deliver 'Level 2' CSE²⁰ training, which was aimed at residential children's home staff, LAC social workers and others working directly with young people at risk of, or experiencing, CSE.

16 [CSE Evaluation Report 2020](#)

17 [Child Sexual Exploitation in Northern Ireland 2020](#)

18 [CSE Awareness and Training Framework](#)

19 HYDRA is immersive learning technology to use specific skills for scenario-based teaching in areas such as policing, nursing, social work etc. The scenarios created for the multi-agency learning programme have been developed from learning outcomes as a result of case management review reports.

20 [CSE Awareness and Training Framework](#)

Level 1 CSE awareness training was also commissioned for more general HSC staff awareness e.g. student social workers and newly qualified staff in HSC. Training was delivered to relevant staff every month in a different trust area from April to November 2023. The role of technology was widely acknowledged as significant in the sexual exploitation of children and young people and its inclusion was effectively consolidated in both programme content and in delivery.

The PSNI collaborated with EA and SPPG to develop and deliver an online CSE training programme in schools and with youth services. Two live sessions were attended by over 500 education staff with one programme being recorded. This will be released in September 2024, with the intention of continuing to raise awareness and to provide support and information.

An element of CSE awareness has been incorporated into all five HSCT safeguarding training as well as in community and voluntary sector training. The voices of young people who have lived experience of CSE informed the development of training programmes.

Refresher training is regularly updated and provided across the member and partner agencies, including recommendations from CMRs, changes in legislation relevant to CSE and developments in the online world.

Multi-agency training developed by PSNI, HSCT CSE leads and Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI) ensured that CSE remained a focus from both victim and perpetrator (person of concern) perspectives. This was embedded in PPANI practitioner training. Revised documentation also provided prompts for staff to consider if a child or young person may be at risk of CSE, or is experiencing CSE, or whether an offender may be a 'person of concern' relating to CSE. In addition, other justice agencies' staff have been included in training i.e. YJA, PBNi and the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS).

Continued Professional Development (CPD) events were hosted by the SBNI, PSNI and SPPG to continue highlighting complex issues and showcase best practice in relation to CSE.

One such event was hosted by the SBNI CSE Committee in May 2023. Speakers included representatives and experts from PSNI, Youth Action, Barnardos' SEEN Project, Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC), SPPG, NSPCC and the SBNI. Topics addressed were:

- Reflection of work of the SBNI CSE committee
- CSE A Brief History in Time
- 'Say Something if You See Something' campaign
- Missing Person's Protocol
- What makes Childline so different?

- Working with Child and Multiagency Partners
- Persons of Concern Protocol
- Building Digital Resilience
- HYDRA Training
- Launch of the first Boys and Young Men Animation 'Not Just Creepy Old Dudes'.



SBNI CPD May 2023.

The event was attended by representatives from across the health and social care, education, justice, community and voluntary sectors.

A further CPD event was led by PSNI in September 2023 with all SBNI member agencies invited. The event focussed on the adoption of learning from serious case reviews into practice, with a keynote speech from Jim Gamble (Independent Chair of City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership). The PSNI highlighted the use of the HYDRA training model as part of the multi-agency support for professionals and staff in recognising and responding to CSE. Police officers were also introduced to a new CSE toolkit as part of this suite of training resources.

Data Collection:

The committee established a task and finish group to develop a data collection process to meet both the Leonard and CJI NI recommendations. The data to be collected included:

- if a child/young person was being supported within the CSE framework
- if the child/young person is on the child protection register
- if the child/young person has 'Looked after' status

This process of complex data collection has now become business as usual and is aiding effective interventions.

Return to Home Interviews:

A joint SPPG, HSCTs and PSNI Missing Children Protocol was completed and launched in April 2023 and subsequently implemented into business as usual.

The CPSOG oversaw the governance of the implementation of the actions from both reports. However, although all the Leonard Report recommendations were finalised in year, the SBNI CSE Committee acknowledged that there is a requirement to continue developing knowledge, skills and collaborative working to protect children and young people at risk of, or experiencing, child sexual exploitation.

Raising awareness of male experiences of CSE:

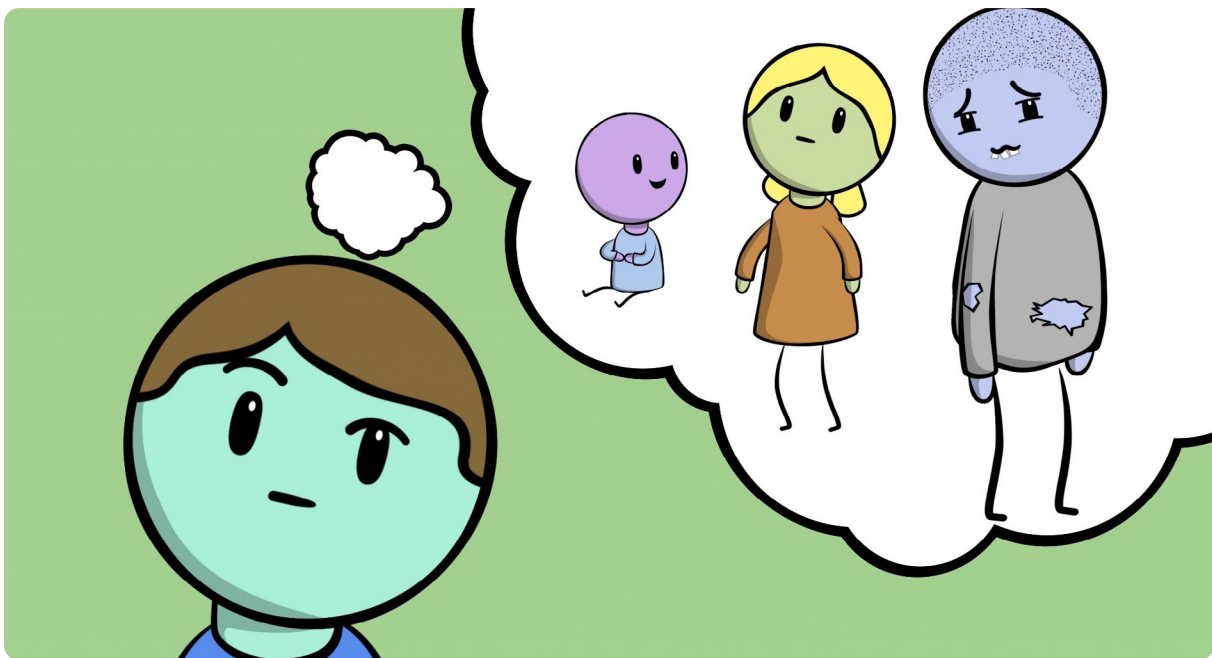
Animations were created by the SBNI, YouthAction NI & VOYPIC to raise awareness of CSE as experienced by [boys and young men](#). Building on the 'Shout Out Speak Out' campaign from 2017, boys and young men from YouthAction NI and VOYPIC developed the animations as a way for them to raise awareness amongst their generation of the risk of sexual exploitation.

The animations were launched on social media and at a celebration event in October 2023. The launch, organised by the boys and young men, was held in YouthAction's theatre space, home to the Rainbow Factory School of Performing Arts. The co-designed animations created in partnership with Neep Pictures were entitled:

- 'Lads it can happen to you': raises awareness in young people that CSE can happen to any young person and challenges stereotypes of who is more likely to be a victim. It uses humour and images to capture young people's attention
- 'Who is Behind the Screen?': raises awareness of online risks from adults who may present as peers and who may use gaming platforms as a means of gaining access to young people. It outlines clearly what can happen and provides guidelines for young people on how to respond to unwanted attention or requests and what to do if nude pictures are shared

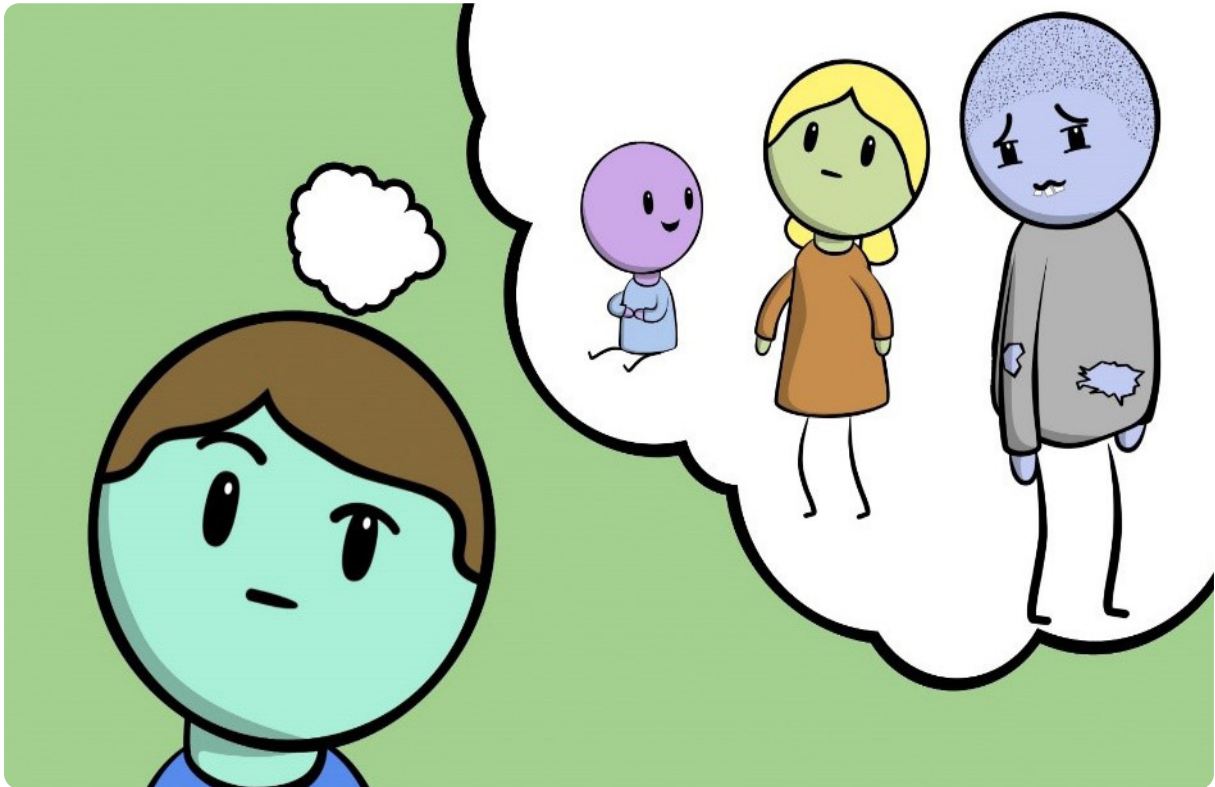
- 'Not Just Creepy Old Dudes': this carries on the themes of the previous two animations and further challenges stereotypes of who may be a risk to young people (ie not just men but women as well), or those who may be at risk (ie not just young children or those who experience other forms of neglect and/or abuse). It uses the language of the young co-producers themselves to transmit a clear message about risk, safety and how to get help.

Both the development process and the final animations that were produced showed the benefits of co-production in creating exemplar age and gender specific awareness raising materials.



"Not just Creepy Old Dudes".

Their objective was to raise awareness specifically for young males, educating them regarding issues of consent, the law and CSE. However, the young people involved also ensured that the language was clear and accessible by their age group/s. The animations are being used as educational resources to raise awareness and as a basis for discussion and personal development in youth and education settings across Northern Ireland. Through the YouthAction NI link with the All-Ireland Men's Health Network the animations will also be used in the Republic of Ireland (ROI), with the addition of ROI helplines and support agencies.



“Lads it could happen to you”.



Boys and Young Men's launch group.

Night time economy engagement continued

A sub-group of the CSE Committee, the Safer Spaces Forum, held two events to raise awareness of CSE within the night-time economy. Attendees included those working in hotels, bars, food retailers and transport sectors. Security Industry Authority (SIA) colleagues, council staff and councillors were also in attendance. The events were held in Derry/Londonderry Town Hall and Newry Leisure Centre, supported by the local Policing Community Safety Partnerships in March 2024. Attendees came from a range of statutory, private and community organisations including those working in hotels, bars, food retailers and transport sectors. Presentations were provided by the CSE leads from each trust area, the SIA and senior youth workers on the shared responsibility of keeping young people safe from harm and abuse.

Feedback for both events was very positive:

"Exemplary seminar – appropriate panel and specialities on this subject. Will encourage members of our practitioner's hub (32 local professionals from both community and voluntary sector) to share with them and look at CSE information to be aware of current issues with children at risk".



Derry Town Hall CSE Awareness Event.



Newry Leisure Centre CSE Awareness Event.

Nexus Conference February 2024

The SBNI was a panel participant at the Nexus Annual Conference '**Sextortion & Exploitation: Hidden Epidemics?**' in February 2024, providing an overview of the implementation plan for the CSE Evaluation Report 2020 (Leonard) recommendations.

The conference was attended by over 300 participants. It provided the SBNI with a significant opportunity to share information on updates, changes and innovations to policy and practice in relation to managing the issues associated with, and support provided for, CSE.



Panel members included the DOH SW Advisor and the NICCY Commissioner pictured here with SBNI staff.

Child Exploitation

Growing awareness from practice and evidence indicates that CSE is a complex and multi-layered form of child abuse that co-exists with other forms of exploitation for some children and young people. Due to the evidence emerging from research, practice and data mining, in February 2024 the SBNI Board approved the CSE Committee to widen its scope to include other forms of exploitation.

The widening of the focus of the committee will enable it to consider criminal exploitation as well as sexual exploitation and, indeed, other forms of exploitation. With the support of DoJ/DoH and the Executive Programme for Tackling Paramilitary Activity and Organised Crime (EPPOC) resourcing will be provided to the SBNI to enable it to deliver the CPSOG child exploitation action plan.

The committee will also consider the complex data that agencies are gathering and work to address the impact of exploitation through collaborative interagency working. The committee will now be entitled the 'Child Exploitation Committee' and its work will be reported on in the next annual report.

Interfaith Committee

SBNI Strategic Priority 1:

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

SBNI Business Objectives 2023-2024:

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

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

The aim of the Interfaith Committee is to enhance the safety and welfare of children and young people within the range of faith group provisions across Northern Ireland.

The committee is chaired by the Head of Safeguarding from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the vice chair is from the Down and Connor Diocese of the Catholic Church in Ireland. The committee membership includes representatives from the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Church of Ireland, NSPCC, PSNI, the Islamic Centre in Belfast and SPPG. New members joined the committee in Quarter 2 from the Moravian Church in Great Britain and Ireland, the Child Evangelism Fellowship Ireland and the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).



SBNI Interfaith Committee.

To meet the committee objectives members shared best practice and worked collaboratively to address any safeguarding issues within their congregations. This was done through a number of different ways.

Support for children and young people who seek asylum or are refugees

Kieran Shields and Colin Reid from EA presented comprehensive information regarding the Intercultural Education Service and drew attention to the complex issues impacting upon the children and families who find themselves seeking asylum or refuge, or are migrants. The implications for the individuals/families of the various immigration statuses were explained, and the role of faith groups in supporting vulnerable children and young people was discussed. The presentation assisted the committee to understand the trauma often experienced by refugees and asylum seekers. This was explained from two perspectives; from within their country of origin (e.g. of war), considering all that they may have lost or experienced (including sexual exploitation, poverty, bereavement, status etc) through to the journey to Northern Ireland and adapting to life in a new country. The system of education, housing and financial support was explained as were the issues particularly of safeguarding e.g. children going missing from education and from housing, especially when moved to permanent housing. The issues for unaccompanied and separated minors were also highlighted. The committee gained insight into the complexities associated with the issues presented and the need to offer trauma informed support to asylum seekers and refugees across their faith organisations.

The Abuse of Position of Trust

Information and an update was provided by the committee member who is the senior policy officer of NSPCC, regarding the offence of 'Abuse of Position of Trust' in religion and sport, which became operational in November 2023 as an extension to the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking of Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. The committee discussed and explored the implications, acknowledging that children and young people in religious settings can be at additional risk of manipulation. The additions to this legislation of new offences: 'up skirting', 'down blousing' and 'cyber flashing', were drawn to the committee's attention. SBNi resources to support awareness raising and responding to incidents have been developed in collaboration with partners and these were shared with committee members for use within their respective congregations.

Offenders Returning to Faith

Committee members shared best practice in terms of the use of "contracts" to support offenders who return to faith. These set clear boundaries and expectations regarding the person's participation in faith activities. The individual's contracts are developed in conjunction with PBNi and PSNI as appropriate. Members acknowledged that this collaborative approach was useful and strengthened the management of offenders who wish to return to faith.

Planning for a workshop regarding 'Offenders Returning to Faith' commenced in year. The provisional date for it to take place is November 2024. The seminar will address the challenges and barriers faith leaders face when managing the process of offenders returning to faith.

Access NI

The committee received an update from Access NI regarding a range of associated topics. These included the processes associated with regulated activity, the disclosure and barring service and enhanced Access NI checks. Some of the faith groups represent congregations across the island of Ireland and as such operate across two safeguarding jurisdictions. Information was provided as to safeguarding checks made in the Republic of Ireland and questions from committee members were addressed. The Access NI representative also outlined to the committee the responsibilities of counter-signatories to ensure the vetting process is as effective and accurate as possible.

Section 12 audit (SBNI)

The SBNI conducted a Section 12 audit of their 21-member agencies in 2023-2024. Section 12 refers to the Safeguarding Board (Northern Ireland) Act 2011 regarding 'arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children' and applies to those organisations listed as member bodies in the SBNI. The DoH requires the SBNI to seek assurance that the section 12 duty is being met by the member agencies. This was not a requirement for all of the Interfaith Committee members as they are not all SBNI member agencies however the Roman Catholic Diocese of Down & Connor completed this audit as an exercise in good practice.

The committee member from the Down & Connor Diocese provided the committee with an overview of the diocese's experience of conducting a self-assessment audit, based on the Section 12 safeguarding standards. The committee member further advised and encouraged the congregations represented to undertake their own self-assessment audit based in the Section 12 standards.

The outcome of the SBNI's Section 12 Audit will be reported on in next year's annual report.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) training for faith groups - pilot

The SBNI conducted a scoping exercise on training for staff and volunteers on CSE across a number of member agencies. As part of this process it was found that within the faith and sports sectors, faith group leaders, youth leaders and volunteers could benefit from additional training.

In conjunction with Nexus, the SBNI was able to support free CSE training places across a range of various faith and sporting groups. The first of three training sessions was delivered in 04 March 2024. One hundred percent (100%) of course participants who completed the evaluation of the training strongly agreed that as a result of this training they now:

- understood the nature of CSE, including the definition and the various models of CSE
- understood the underlying processes that drive CSE, such as grooming, compliance and coercion

- are aware of the impact CSE may have on a young person emotionally, socially and behaviourally.

"All very relevant, good session with more information around the methods being used to exploit children".

Further training sessions will be delivered in the 2024-2025 business year.

Case Management Learning Events

The Interfaith Committee members attended the SBNI CMR learning events held across Northern Ireland in the reporting year, in order to enhance their safeguarding understanding and practice. The events highlight themes and issues emerging from CMRs completed in year. (Details of which can be found in the Case Management Review Chapter, chapter 8).

Trauma Informed Practice Committee

Strategic Priority 1:

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

SBNI Business Objectives 2023-2024:

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

Continuing the development and application to support member and partner agencies to embed a sustainable transformational model of trauma informed practice based on existing knowledge of adverse childhood experiences.

The objectives of the committee were to oversee:

- **The development and promotion of an organisational implementation resource**
- **The application of research to practice through knowledge transfer methodology**
- **Pilot an implementation analytical tool to evaluate organisations' progress on becoming trauma informed.**

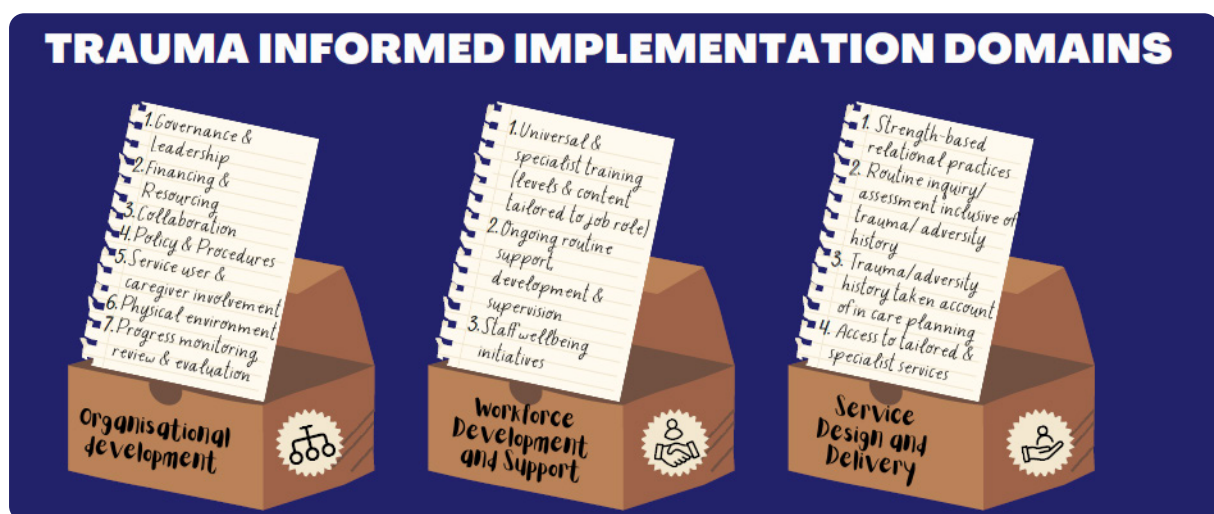
The Committee is chaired by an SBNI non-executive board member. Membership comprises of representatives from the HSCTs and Action for Children, CCGANI, EA Safeguarding Directorate, EA Youth Work Directorate, Include Youth, PSNI, PBNI, PHA, Regional Trauma Network (RTN), SOLACE, SPPG and YJA.

The committee undertook three significant pieces of work this year which were enabled by the funding received from the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC).

Firstly, it commissioned Queens University Belfast (QUB) to undertake a comprehensive piece of research to:

- update the evidence base of trauma informed practice
- map implementation progress
- identify enablers, barriers and challenges to progress
- explore what difference it makes
- make recommendations.

The research included an extensive organisational review of the implementation of trauma informed approaches in Northern Ireland to date. This comprised an international literature review and a bespoke online survey completed by representatives of 53 statutory and voluntary sector organisations in Northern Ireland. An additional element of the study included 52 senior managers and professionals participating in cross sector focus groups to assess progress to date across justice, education, health, community, voluntary and social care. The final part involved sector specific case studies from Fane Street Primary School, the Salvation Army, YJA and the Belfast Health Inclusion Service for homeless people. The research considered the following three implementation domains.



Trauma Informed Implementation Domains.

Entitled: '[We are on a Journey- Implementing Trauma Informed Approaches in Northern Ireland](#)', the research defined how:

*'...the broader term of 'trauma informed' refers to a **whole-systems organisational change framework** that aims to develop coherent cultures, policies and practices across systems of service delivery to enhance service user engagement and provide more effective care.'* (Bunting et al., 2018; De Candia, 2014).



The research also supports individuals and organisations to enhance their understanding of a trauma informed approach:

"Trauma informed approaches recognise that many service users, patients or clients of health, social care, education and justice services will have been impacted by potentially traumatic adverse experiences across their life course, and therefore a more responsive form of service delivery is required²¹."

The committee launched the research on 19 February 2024 at QUB. Speakers at the event included: Professor Daniel Muijs, Head of School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work; Bernie McNally SBNI Independent Chair, and lead researcher Dr Suzanne Mooney, QUB. All four case study participants provided an overview of their specific journeys: Coleen Heaney, YJA, Dawn Richardson, the Salvation Army, Susan Semple, BHSC Inclusion Health Service and Hilary Cunningham, Fane Street Primary School. The event was closed by the Permanent Secretary from the Northern Ireland Office, Dr Julie Harrison. The audience at the launch was joined by a further 228 virtual participants. The event was recorded and is available here: [Latest research \(safeguardingni.org\)](https://safeguardingni.org)

21 [We are on a Journey- Implementing Trauma Informed Approaches in Northern Ireland](#)



QUB Research team, SBNI staff and other guests.

The case studies, the executive summary and full report were published and are all available on the SBNI website [Latest research \(safeguardingni.org\)](https://safeguardingni.org)



Based on the findings, the report concluded with the following recommendations:

- **Recommendation 1:** Trauma Informed Approaches are a useful framework to underpin current policy developments in Northern Ireland
- **Recommendation 2:** A trauma-informed strategy for Northern Ireland is now needed to advance implementation across sectors and settings
- **Recommendation 3:** The development of a regional inter-departmental research and outcomes strategy
- **Recommendation 4:** A regional Northern Ireland trauma informed resource hub or centre required to facilitate organisational leadership and networking
- **Recommendation 5:** A regional training framework should be developed.

These recommendations will inform future work of the committee.



Research poster



Adele brown, EPOC and Bernie McNally and Helen McKenzie McKenzie, SBNI.

Representatives from the Northern Ireland Executive's Tackling Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme's Political Advisory Group, comprising Sinn Féin, DUP, Alliance, UUP and SDLP issued a collective statement in support of the research paper launch:



“

We welcome this important research paper on implementing trauma informed approaches in Northern Ireland. People in our society experience adversity and trauma in a range of ways, so it is important that we adopt a trauma informed approach across our system if we want to support those who need it most. By doing so, we will improve the life chances for all of society and create the conditions for children, and adults to thrive.

”



Collective statement from representatives from the NI Executive's Tackling Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme's Political Advisory Group

(comprising Sinn Féin, DUP, Alliance, UUP and SDLP)



Collective statement from politicians.

“ Early adversity and trauma can negatively impact on individuals and communities and their ability to feel safe and to develop trusting relationships. We all deserve to live in a society that prioritises trauma responsive environments, policies, systems and services, that can benefit local people and communities. ”

Bernie McNally

Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Board for NI



Statement from SBNI Independent Chair.

Toolkit

The second extensive piece of work undertaken by the TIP Committee was the completion of phase one of an online organisational toolkit. This was developed with assistance from member agencies and a task and finish group and also took account of the QUB research. The online interactive organisational toolkit illustrates how trauma informed approaches can be embedded across Northern Ireland. It includes case studies and evidence. The toolkit was developed to meet the objectives of the committee to support SBNI member agencies and partners to develop their trauma informed practice and embed a trauma informed approach across their organisations. It can be used by any organisation, team or service across the statutory, community or voluntary sectors. It was designed specifically for Northern Ireland, with its own unique structure and history.



The toolkit aims to:

- illustrate how trauma informed approaches can be embedded across organisations
- build awareness of what the six trauma informed principles are and how to apply them.



Trauma Informed principles.

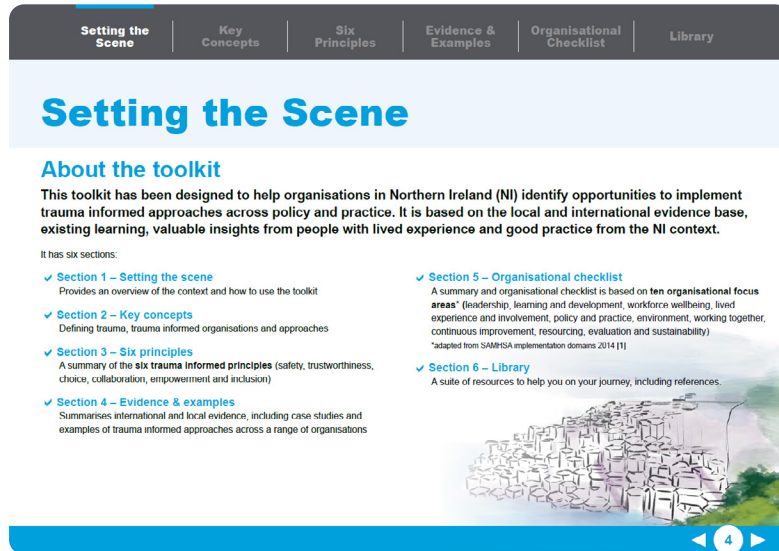
A range of new graphics for organisational use, including the above, have been developed to:

- highlight the evidence base as to the benefits, barriers and enablers to adopting a trauma informed approach
- showcase case studies and examples from across Northern Ireland
- include a practical self-assessment checklist, structured on the ten organisational focus areas
- support organisations to embed a trauma informed approach into their policies and practices.

The toolkit supports leaders, workforces, services and organisations to identify and reflect on progress, strengths and opportunities for embedding a trauma informed approach across policy and practice. It is designed to complement existing organisational priorities, driving improvement, innovation and sustainable change.

Various organisations contributed case studies and examples, sharing learning from their trauma informed journey. Lived experience focus groups (e.g. Thorndale Family Services, South East Fermanagh Foundation and Sharing Known Experiences to Change Health and Social Care (SKETCH) contributed their insights and time generously in the development of the toolkit. The Trauma Informed Practice Committee, its task and finish working group and various partners supported the design process, helping shape the toolkit and ensuring cross sectoral participation.

At the end of this business year, the development process moved into its user testing phase and the final toolkit, its launch and use by member and partner agencies, will be detailed in the next reporting period.



Toolkit Extract.

Trauma Informed Assessment Pilots

The third substantial piece of work related to the application of evidence-based research to inform strategic development. The committee commissioned and supported the piloting of two distinct external organisational assessment processes. The purpose of this was to gauge the benefit of these assessment tools for organisations in tracking their progress and enabling them to make impactful changes to support their trauma-informed journey.

Firstly, pilots with Trauma Informed Oregon (TIO)/Portland State University (a public and private collaborative approach, uniquely providing implementation audit tools to measure progress of trauma informed implementation in an organisation) were commenced in year. They will provide an external baseline assessment with recommendations for future direction when completed. Ongoing feedback from the pilot organisations, regarding the TIO implementation tool, has highlighted that it was a positive experience in terms of the standard of service and support received and in terms of the process.

Several organisations are currently at various stages of participation in these pilots: the YJA, PBNI, SHSCT, WHSCT and PHA. Completion of these pilots is expected later in 2024.

Secondly, through an organisation called One Small Thing, the process of gaining a trauma informed quality mark was explored and funded. The Victim and Survivor Service (VSS), an umbrella organisation that supports and funds trauma-specific service providers, participated in the quality mark pilot.

VSS submitted its portfolio of evidence and was successful in achieving silver accreditation for the “Trauma Informed Working with Trauma Quality Mark” in March 2023. A further pilot is planned with Youthwork Alliance with completion later in 2024.

Evaluation of the impact of these pilots is continuing, with learning shared across organisations and consideration given to such processes being developed within the Northern Ireland context.

Workshops

The SBNI TIP Implementation Managers receive ongoing requests to present at a range of events. Participation in these events has helped the SBNI to share the developments within trauma informed approaches. These have also increased understanding of the evidence base and collaborative approaches required to embed trauma informed practice. Some examples this year have included delivering workshops for member and partners agencies across the Northern Ireland Civil Service, government departments, QUB and UU social work programmes, justice and health and social care sectors.

A one-day workshop was co-delivered with staff from the Regional Trauma Network to the Truth Recovery Programme Team. The aim was to ensure that the approaches taken by staff were appropriately trauma informed in order to support recovery and resilience building and to avoid further re-traumatisation of the people involved. The SBNI Implementation Managers also assisted EPPOC in commissioning a Northern Ireland prevalence study on adverse childhood experiences to include community-based violence, to better understand the associated impacts on levels of trauma.



**Steven McCourt and Jenny McAlarney, DoJ;
Orla Connolly, SBNI and Coleen Heaney, YJA.**

In addition to existing SBNI training resources, the committee funded a practitioner licence for a range of [Solihull](#) modules to offer further workforce insight into the practice of a trauma informed approach. These online modules are entitled 'Understanding Trauma'; 'Understanding Attachment' and 'Understanding Brain Development'. The license includes modules which emphasise the necessity of self-care: 'Understanding your Wellbeing in High Pressure Environments' and include modules for police, firefighters, social care, health care and ambulance staff.

Cultural Kitchen Project – Building Resilience

In partnership with Barnardo's NI, the TIP Committee supported, 'The Cultural Kitchen Project'. It ran between November 2023 until the end of March 2024. The aim of the project was to directly support refugee and asylum seeker families living in repurposed hotel accommodation to be able to cook cultural, palatable food for them and their children. Living in hotel accommodation meant families had no personal choice or means to decide what they and their children eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner, giving families no agency, contributing to an increasing sense of despair and some children becoming malnourished.

Many of the families involved in the projects had experienced trauma and adversities through war, oppression, and famine in other countries resulting in them seeking refuge and asylum in Northern Ireland.

Through the project, families were able to use the facilities of Barnardo's Children's House where women could come together to cook for their families in the kitchen with food that was culturally appropriate and familiar to them. While mothers cooked, the children were supported to play outside with project staff. The project supported the women to have autonomy and choice through the purchase and preparation of traditional foods, supporting their wellbeing and their ability to directly provide for their children and take pride in their cultural food traditions.

The Cultural Kitchen Team Leader presented an overview of the project to the SBNI Board, sharing evidence of the positive impact participation in the project had upon the families. She informed the members that 18 sessions were delivered weekly, with a total of 58 parents and 47 children.

Across the project, the following nationalities were represented: Syrian, Eritrean, Yemini, Somali, Ethiopian, Palestinian and Mixed Middle Eastern.

Feedback from parents and children was consistently positive and engagement was high. New friendships and connections were formed by children and adults alike. Benefits of outdoor play in terms of socialisation, decision making, physical activity and brain development were observed in the children who took part, all of which contribute to individual resilience and well-being.

Salem - *'My Child stayed on the swing for about twenty minutes. He normally runs around a lot, but he was very relaxed and calm in the swing. I always enjoy it when I can cook my own food. It makes me happy. Thank you.'*

Sweeta - *'This is so good to cook again. Today I didn't think of anything else except cooking! Not the hotel not getting a house. I would like to come again!'*

Filimon - *'It is less stressful here than in the hotel. It helps me to relax. It is good for Amen. I like to see him playing. This was a great opportunity to cook our own food, I haven't cooked in two years.'*

Samrawit - *'In the hotel the children are inside a lot of the time, so it was good to see them playing outside. I'm pleased because my child was eating, and she usually does not eat in the hotel.'*

Cultural Kitchen participants' Comments.

The work of the SBNI TIP Committee and, in particular, the EPPOC funded TIP Implementation Manager posts will continue in the next business year.

Focus on Finance

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

For 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, this was **£796,578**.

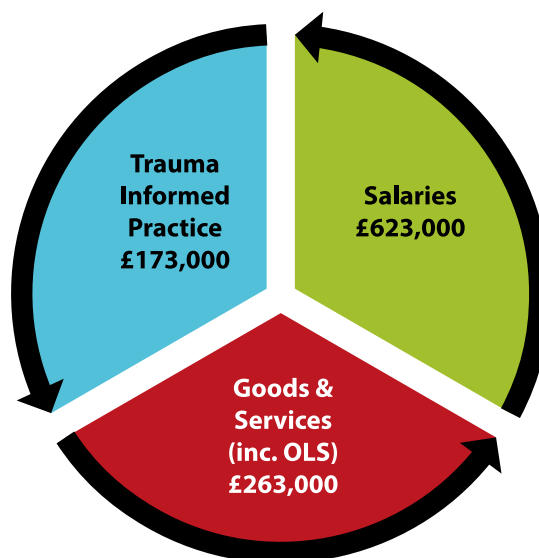
In addition to the recurrent budget the SBNI was also allocated a budget of:

- **£173,000 (ringfenced)** by the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC), to continue the work of embedding Trauma Informed Practice across member and partner agencies and departments; and
- **£83,494 by the DoH** to support delivery of the Executive's Online Safety Strategy (OLS) and Action Plan

The total budget for the SBNI for April 2023–March 2024 was: **£1,053,072.00**

How our money was spent by 31 March 2024:

- Salaries: £623,000
- Goods and Services (inc. OLS): £263,000
- Trauma Informed Practice: £173,000



Significant Goods and Services Spend in Year across all cost centres:

- SBNI Operational Running Costs: **£111,048.**
- Case Management Reviews – including reports and training: **£68,665**
- Online Safety – maintenance of online safety hub and associated resources: **£18,604.**
- Online Safety - Partnership contribution to PSNI/SBNI Online Safety Campaign on online blackmail sextortion, grooming and sharing nudes: **£7,000**
- Legal fees for Counsel associated with Judicial Review and solicitor fees for CMRs, HSC Leadership Centre Associates support for Independent Review of Case Management Review Process: **£20,000**
- Domestic Abuse - SBNI partnership contribution to the DoJ communication and promotion strategy to ensure awareness, consistent messaging and reporting pathways for new online related provisions in the Justice Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims Act coming into force. Provisions include, upskirting, downblousing, cyberflashing, and the 'threat' to share indecent imagery: **£9,500**
- Domestic Abuse – Consultation and engagement with children and young people, SAY animation and Domestic Homicide Timeline Training: **£10,960**
- Mental Health – SBNI partnership contribution to the Education Authority's Anti-Bullying in Schools Act Implementation Team to produce co-designed preventative and responsive resources to address bullying type behaviour in education settings in line with the statutory requirement: **£9,999**
- Policy and procedure – development of sample online safety templates for associated online polices and procedures: **£9,680**
- Child Sexual Exploitation – awareness raising resources and multi agency training: **£3,261**
- Trauma Informed Practice pilots and resources: **£69,000**

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

Glossary of Terms 2023-2024

ABSIT	Addressing Bullying Type Behaviours Implementation Team
Access NI	a body within the Department of Justice that checks whether people applying to work with children have a criminal record
ACE/s	Adverse Childhood Experience/s
App	Application
CCGANI	Children's Court Guardian Agency Northern Ireland
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CCEA	Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
CEC	Clinical Education Centre
Child In Need	a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development without the provision of services
CiNI	Children in Northern Ireland
CJINI	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
CMR/s	Case Management Review/s
CMRP	Case Management Review Panel
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPSOG	Child Protection Senior Officials Group
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CVS	Community and Voluntary Sector
CYPSP	Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership
DE	Department of Education

DfC	Department for Communities
DfE	Department for the Economy
DoH	Department of Health
DoJ	Department of Justice
DVA	Domestic Violence and Abuse
EA	Education Authority
EPPOC	Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime
EVAWG	Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
Gateway/GW	the first point of contact for all new referrals to children's social work services
GP/s	General Practitioner/s
Hub	Online Safety Hub
HSC	Health and Social Care
HSCT/s	Health and Social Care Trust/s
IAR/s	Individual Agency Review/s
IKA	Information Known to Agency
LAC	Looked After Child
NCA	National Crime Agency
NCB	National Children's Bureau (in Northern Ireland)
NI	Northern Ireland
PHA	Public Health Agency
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
QUB	Queen's University Belfast
ROI	Republic of Ireland
SAG	Stakeholders Assurance Group

SAY	Social Action Youth
SBNI	Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland
SEEN	Sexual Exploitation Ends Now
SDB	Strategic Delivery Board
SIA	Security Industry Authority
SPPG	Strategic Planning and Performance Group
TI	Trauma Informed
TIP	Trauma Informed Practice
ToR	Terms of Reference
UK	United Kingdom
UKCIS	United Kingdom Council for Internet Safety
UU	Ulster University
VOYPIC	Voice of Young People in Care
VSS	Victim and Survivor Service
WAAD	Women's Aid Armagh and Down
WOW	Wellness On Wheels
YEHA	Youth, Empowerment Health and Advocacy
YJA	Youth Justice Agency

Annex 1

SBNI Business Objectives 2023-2024 – Summary Update

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

Objective 1.1: To ensure that the Case Management Review and Safeguarding Panels meet their statutory functions.

Summary Update:

All of the statutory panels of the SBNI have continued to meet and fulfil their statutory duties and functions.

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

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

Summary Update:

The SBNI has 9 non-statutory committees; including three which respond to the strategic priorities of Domestic Violence and Abuse, Mental Health and Online Safety, and they have continued throughout this reporting period to deliver their obligations as detailed in their committee terms of reference.

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

Summary Update:

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

- DoJ/DoH – Domestic and Sexual Abuse - Stakeholders Assurance Group.
- UK Council for Internet Safety working groups
- Child Protection Senior Officials Group sub group
- Child Criminal Exploitation Implementation Group
- Multi Agency Support Hub Steering Group.
- Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC) Programme Board
- EPPOC 'Protective Factors' Benefits Realisation Group.
- The Executive Office sub group on contingency accommodation for asylum seekers.
- Department for Communities Safeguarding Forum.
- Safeguarding in Sport Forum.

Strategic Priority 2: To hear and respond to the voices of children and young people affected by domestic violence and abuse.

Objective 2.1: Work with government departments and their agencies to prevent domestic violence and abuse (DVA) from occurring.

Objective 2.2: To work with member and partner agencies engaged in the DVA arena to raise awareness among parents/carers and professionals of the impact of DVA on children and young people.

Objective 2.3: To work with member and partner agencies to provide training resources and expertise in how to improve the recognition, assessment, and responses to children, young people and families experiencing domestic violence and abuse

Summary Update:

All of the aforementioned objectives have been undertaken, the details of which are noted in the Domestic Violence and Abuse chapter of the annual report.

Strategic Priority 3: To support children and young people in exercising their rights to enjoy the benefits of the online world free from harm, fear and abuse.

Objective 3.1: To work with government departments and their agencies to develop an online infrastructure and associated standards to prevent children and young people from experiencing harm and abuse online.

Objective 3.2: To work with member and partner agencies to educate children and young people, their parents and carers and those who work with them to navigate the online world safely and confidently and support them to stay safe and well online.

Objective 3.3: To ensure the views of children and young people inform and influence online policy and practice development.

Summary Update:

All of the aforementioned objectives have been undertaken, the details of which are noted in the Online Safety chapter of the annual report

Strategic Priority 4: To provide a voice for children and young people affected by mental health issues

Objective 4.1: To work with government departments and agencies to help reduce the incidence of children and young people affected by mental health issues

Objective 4.2: To work with member and partner agencies to raise awareness among parents, carers and professionals of the impact of poor mental health and any associated stigma, on children and young people.

Objective 4.3: To work with member and partner agencies to promote awareness for children and young people, their parents and carers in how to recognise, respond and seek help in relation to mental health.

Outcome 4.4: To work with partners to promote training in how to improve the recognition, assessment, and responses to children, young people and families experiencing the impact of mental health issues.

Summary Update:

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

Annex 2

Case Management Review Legislation

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

17 (2) where -

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

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

Annex 3

Summary of learning and improvements arising from Case Management Reviews

CMRs by their very nature generate recommendations for improvement. Learning across the reviews primarily focused on:

- Physical Abuse
- Adult Mental Health interface with Children Services and
- HSCT interface with PSNI

Physical abuse

- The SBNI Policy and Procedures Committee are further developing the SBNI Policies and Procedures Manual in respect of 'The Child Protection Register', Point 8; 'Children/ Young People and Families Who Move', which provides guidance in respect of the transfer of child protection cases, to include pre-birth child protection cases, across the HSCT's and across jurisdictions. This transfer guidance will provide clarity with regard to the roles and responsibilities of all professionals involved with parents, and families, including the parents of unborn children, in terms of information sharing and escalation of concerns in order to promote collaborative working.
- The SPPG and PSNI are working together to review current guidance, procedure and practice in respect of the interface between HSCTs and PSNI, specifically in respect of Domestic Abuse referrals. It is anticipated that any revisions to the current guidance emerging from this exercise will be reflected in an appropriate suite of training events and resources.
- The PSNI have undertaken to audit samples of police officer's communication and interviews with victims of Domestic Abuse.
- The PSNI have undertaken to review the training made available to officers and supervisors in respect of circumstances where it is necessary to escalate concerns in respect of children and young people at risk of significant harm.
- The HSCT's are ensuring the 'Encompass' Information system will be built to ensure necessary domains exist to enable;
 - early identification of adults associated with a child;
 - and whether interpreting services for a family are required.
- SPPG are working alongside the 'Signs of Safety' Principal Practitioners cohort to develop a robust and consistent approach to Safety Planning across the Region. Within the context of this work, opportunities will be realised to share learning and practice developments with relevant agencies including the Regional Emergency Social Work Service.

- The SPPG and PSNI are developing improved awareness raising for practitioners working in Child Protection on the Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI).
- All HSCT's have promoted further awareness raising across their Children's Services Social Work staff teams in respect of the Protocol Between Northern Ireland and Ireland for Handling Inter-jurisdictional Children's Cases.
- All HSCT's have undertaken to raise awareness of 'Guidance on Information Sharing for Child Protection Purposes' (August 2021, reviewed in 2024).

Annex 4

How the SBNI is Structured

