

Annual Report 2020-2021



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Foreword

As the Independent Chair of the SBNI I am delighted to present our eighth annual report.

The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland has 27 members whose common purpose is to help safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Northern Ireland and protect them from all forms of neglect and abuse.

2020-2021 has been one of the most difficult on record for all citizens across the globe as the world struggled to deal with the COVID-19 Pandemic. Although children tend not to get seriously ill from COVID-19 it would appear that they may well have been disproportionately impacted upon by the frequent 'lockdowns', social isolation and prolonged periods of time away from school and day care services.

Vulnerable and at risk children were particularly disadvantaged as the 'stay at home' message resulted in less social contact and a reduction in vital family support services. As the child protection agencies attempted to continue to provide essential child protection services, police and social workers were reporting higher levels of domestic violence and abuse. Gateway teams initially were reporting a drop in child protection referrals, partly due to schools being closed but also because concerned citizens may not have wanted to add any further pressures onto the system. Following the end of the first 'lockdown' period the child protection referrals rose again significantly with some initial indications of a rise in the number of children becoming 'looked after'.

The SBNI member agencies worked hard throughout the pandemic to meet the unique challenges that it presented, working collaboratively across organisations and government departments to provide collective leadership to support the most vulnerable children in our society.

The SBNI is now moving into the fourth and final year of the SBNI Strategic Plan 2018-2022. During this year we will take stock of all the achievements of our member agencies in tackling not only the challenges of the pandemic but also the enormous amount of work that has been done during the last four years to tackle the SBNI strategic priorities of:

- Domestic Violence and Abuse
- Child and parental mental health
- Neglect

This eighth 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 2020-2021 business plan.

This report will also focus on the achievements of each of our statutory committees, particularly highlighting the work of the five SBNI Safeguarding Panels which are working locally to ensure a consistent approach to safeguarding across all of Northern Ireland. The work of the Case Management Review Panel will also be highlighted with a particular emphasis on the improvements in the child protection system identified as a result of a multi-agency in depth analysis when things go wrong.

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

BERNIE MCNALLY OBE
SBNI INDEPENDENT CHAIR



The Role of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland

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

They are led by an Independent Chair, 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 Safeguarding Board members collectively agree the strategic priorities for safeguarding and child protection in Northern Ireland and commit to work collaboratively to achieve progress against each of these priorities. The Business Plan 2020-2021 (at Annex 1) lists these priorities and their progress is detailed within this annual report.

Working collaboratively across organisations and sectors is not a new concept in child protection work and happens regularly on a day to day basis, the formation of the SBNI in 2012 brought a formality and structure to that collaboration in the form of a number of statutory committees and short term working groups.

Governance Committee

The Governance Committee is chaired by one of the lay members of the Board, with membership reflective of the statutory committees of the SBNI, and the statutory, community and voluntary Board representation. The Committee meets at least three times a year to review 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.

Safeguarding Panels

The statutory committees which effectively drive forward child protection collaboration at local level are the five local Safeguarding Panels. These local Panels are coterminous with each of the five health and social care trusts and are independently chaired by people from outside the member organisations. Each Independent Chair (there are two chairs covering the five Panels) has been appointed on the basis of their previous operational management experience within the child protection and safeguarding system and are members of the Board. The role of the Safeguarding Panels is to take forward collaborative work locally to deliver the key strategic priorities set by the SBNI. The Panels also identify new and emerging issues from the ground, thereby ensuring that the SBNI is fully informed of any concerns emerging from local communities, parents, children and other key stakeholders.

Case Management Review Panel

The next important statutory committee which is crucial to the effective functioning of the SBNI is the Case Management Review (CMR) Panel. The CMR Panel is also independently chaired and 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 either that 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.

The chair of this committee is a member of the Board and reports directly to the SBNI. The learning from each case management review is disseminated to relevant agencies via the local Safeguarding Panels.

Child Sexual Exploitation Sub-Group

The Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Sub-Group was established to develop an understanding of CSE in Northern Ireland as experienced by young people through a collaborative approach to raise awareness and further develop agency and community understanding of CSE in Northern Ireland.

Online Safety Forum

The SBNI Online Safety Forum was set up to help keep children and young people and their families safe in the online world. This forum aims to provide parents, children and families with advice and guidance on how to deal with the threats posed by an ever-changing technological/online world. It also aims to provide professionals from the various agencies with a range of tools and knowledge which they can use while working with young people, trying to help keep them safe. The Online Safety Strategy and Action Plan was published by the Department of Health on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive in February 2021. The SBNI is tasked with the coordination role in the strategy and the Online Safety Forum shall take forward a number of the actions associated with this strategy over the forthcoming three business years.

Child Protection Sub-Group

The Child Protection Sub-Group was established in 2017, to provide a vehicle for the statutory partners within the SBNI to focus on their statutory responsibilities concerning improved protection of children.

The priorities of the Child Protection Sub-Group for 2020-2021 were to work on measuring outcomes for children in the child protection system, to reform the child protection arrangements by the introduction of the 'Signs of Safety' approach and to address intergenerational abuse by introducing an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) informed approach across statutory partners. The Sub-Group is chaired by the Director of Children's Services and Executive Director of Social Work in the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

Neglect Sub-Group

The SBNI Neglect Sub-Group was first established in 2016 to tackle the issue of Neglect in Northern Ireland. The purpose of the Sub-Group is to provide strategic leadership to ensure safeguarding practice in relation to neglect and particularly vulnerable children is effective. Sub-Group members include representation from multi-agency statutory and voluntary partner organisations and a parent representative.

Domestic Violence and Abuse Sub-Group

The SBNI Domestic Violence and Abuse Sub-Group was established in 2018. The Sub-Group is chaired by an Assistant Director of Children's Social Services from the Southern Health and Social Care Trust. Membership comprises of member and partner agencies. The Sub-Group facilitates connectivity with local and regional initiatives. The overall focus of the Sub-Group is to ensure the child is recognised as a victim in his/her own right in a situation where domestic violence is a feature.

Interfaith Sub-Group

Faith groups in Northern Ireland are represented on the SBNI and work in collaboration with other SBNI committees to encourage effective communication and engagement in key safeguarding initiatives. The SBNI Interfaith Sub-Group facilitates co-operation between various faith groups and the SBNI. Membership of the group is derived from the Catholic Church Diocese of Down and Connor, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church and the Salvation Army. The Sub-Group is attended by representatives from the NSPCC, the PSNI, and the HSCB and supported by a Professional Officer from SBNI. The Chair of the Interfaith Sub-Group is a member of the SBNI Board.

Child Death Overview Panel

A 'Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)' is as a statutory committee of the SBNI under Article 7 (1) of the SBNI Act. However, the relevant articles of the legislation have not been commenced at this time. Consequently a CDOP has not yet been established.

The Department of Health (DoH) had previously engaged with the Public Health Agency on arrangements to establish a Child Death Overview Panel for Northern Ireland. In this reporting year it required the SBNI to further progress this work to provide the DoH with the appropriate expert opinion as to how the CDOP can be established in Northern Ireland and fulfil the SBNI's obligations as outlined in the SBNI Act 2011.

This work is on-going.

Reporting on Progress

Each of these groups meets regularly and reports directly to the SBNI on progress against agreed terms of reference.

Communication and Engagement

During this reporting period the SBNI Website has been updated. This will assist in the dissemination of learning, resources and training events across all of the work of the SBNI.

The Communications Strategy was completed in year as was the development of the SBNI Engagement with Children and Young People Strategy 2021-2023. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the complexities of engaging with children and young people to develop the strategy further, engagement is planned in the first quarter of the next business year.

This Engagement Strategy will provide advice, direction and guidance on how the SBNI member organisations (at Board, Area Safeguarding Panel and Sub-Panel levels) will engage with children and young people and reflect their voices, views and needs in SBNI related work.

The work of each of the groups mentioned above is outlined in the pages that follow in this annual report.

Governance Committee

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

The Governance Committee met quarterly throughout the 2020-2021 reporting period and continues to be chaired by one of the SBNI's lay members. In addition to the Chair, the Committee is made up of:

- four SBNI members including a member with Case Management Review (CMR) experience
- one member of SBNI Central Support Team with a governance remit
- one Safeguarding Panel Chair
- the Committee may also invite to attend as required any other members who can provide relevant information and assistance.

The Governance Committee continues to deliver on its purpose which is to:

- review 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.

The Committee has achieved this through application of an Assurance Framework which assures that the SBNI operates in accordance with its statutory objectives, duties and functions. This Assurance Framework further identifies the principal risks to the attainment and fulfilment of those objectives, duties and functions together with measures and controls to manage these principal risks. The SBNI Risk Register has been updated, with risks managed appropriately and is regularly reviewed by the SBNI.

The work of the Governance Committee supports the learning culture across the SBNI in response to lessons learned, for example from Case Management Reviews, independent evaluations and reviews. It also furthers the SBNI's objective to coordinate and ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

The Governance Committee keeps under review the effectiveness of the SBNI's structures and working arrangements, including the inter-relationship and accountabilities of the various committees and groups that undertake the work of the SBNI to ensure that at all times the SBNI operates to the highest standards of public sector governance. The Committee had oversight of the development of the 2019-2020 Annual Report and also the 2020-2021 Business Plan, prior to commending to the Board for its review and subsequent approval.

The Governance Committee provides assistance and support to the Independent Chair in the preparation of the SBNI's Annual Declaration of Assurance, with the Chair of the Committee participating in the SBNI Assurance and Accountability meetings with the Department of Health. It also has regard to the Memorandum of Understanding between the SBNI, the PHA and the Department of Health whilst recognising that each member body of the SBNI is also required to operate within its own governance arrangements.

Safeguarding Snapshot



Statistics Snapshot 2020-2021

1,895,500

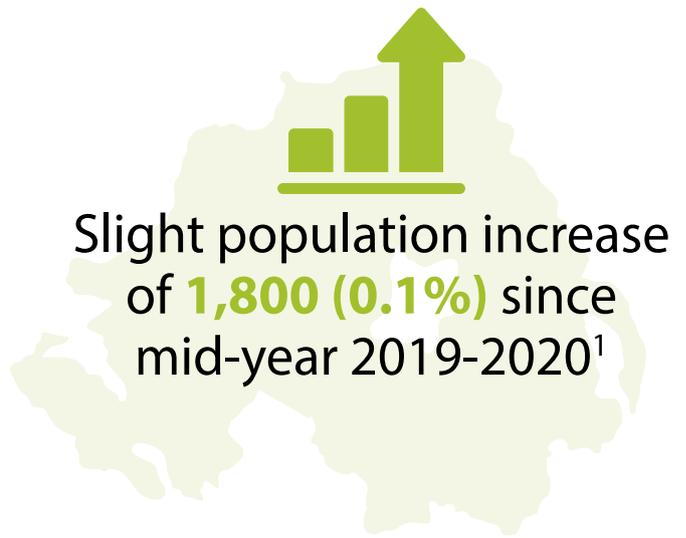
PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND¹



961,400
(50.7%) female¹



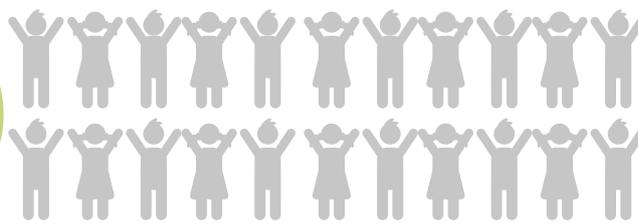
934,200
(49.3%) male¹



395,800

CHILDREN UNDER 15¹

20.9%
of total population¹



440,705

CHILDREN UNDER 18²

23.2%
of total population¹



60,979

CHILDREN UNDER 18 WHO WILL HAVE EXPERIENCED FOUR OR MORE ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)⁶

14%
of all children under 18

COMPARED WITH PEOPLE WITH NO ACES THOSE WITH 4 OR MORE ACES ARE⁷

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



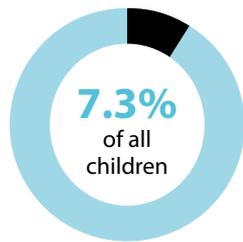
4 times more likely to be a high risk drinker



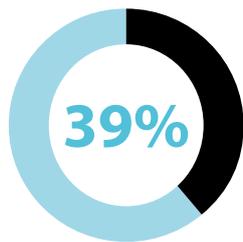
Statistics Snapshot 2020-2021

32,070

**CHILDREN
WERE REFERRED
TO SOCIAL
SERVICES FOR
ASSESSMENT
OF NEED²**



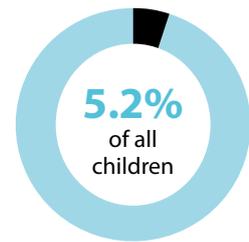
(decrease of 2,500
from 2019-2020)



12,408
PSNI REFERRALS

23,095

**CHILDREN
KNOWN
TO SOCIAL
SERVICES AS
A CHILD IN
NEED²**



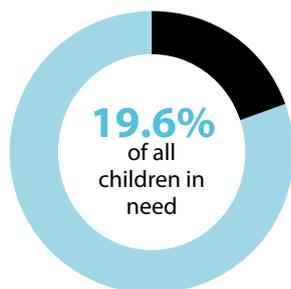
(an increase of 681
from 2018-2019)



81 **YOUNG PEOPLE
PRESENTED AS
HOMELESS**

4,545

**CHILDREN
KNOWN TO
SOCIAL
SERVICES WITH
A DISABILITY²**



Learning

1,947

Autism

1,887

Physical

431

Sensory

205

Other

75

1,921

**CHILD
PROTECTION
REFERRALS
RECEIVED BY
HSC TRUSTS**

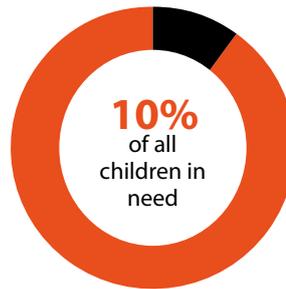
(decrease of 1,137
from 2019-2020)



Statistics Snapshot 2020-2021

2,298
CHILDREN ON
THE CHILD
PROTECTION
REGISTER²

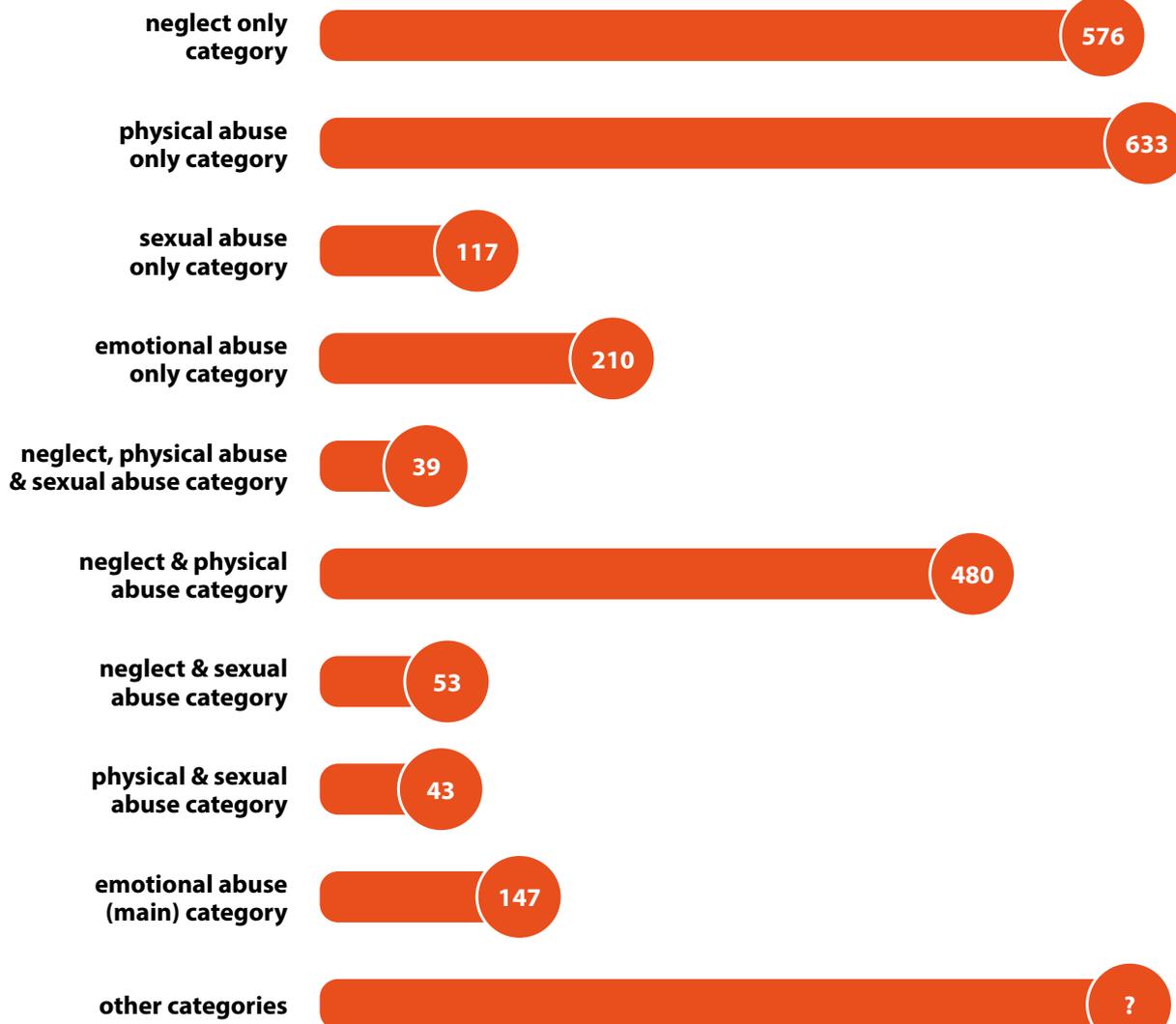
1,343
POTENTIAL
244
SUSPECTED
711
CONFIRMED



51.6%
males



48.4%
females



52
CHILDREN
ON THE
CPR WITH A
DISABILITY

1,921
CHILD
PROTECTION
REFERRALS²
(a decrease of
1,137 from 19-20) ↓

2,963
CHILD
PROTECTION
INVESTIGATIONS
CARRIED OUT²

2,177 by social workers

708 by joint protocol

60 by police

Statistics Snapshot 2020-2021

3,530

CHILDREN IN CARE OF HSC TRUSTS (LAC)

(increase of **254** on previous year and the highest number recorded since the introduction of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995)



1873
males



1657
females

1,128

KINSHIP FOSTER CARERS



1,729

CHILDREN IN KINSHIP CARE



199

CHILDREN IN RESIDENTIAL CARE²



317

CHILDREN PLACED AT HOME WITH PARENTS



66

CHILDREN PLACED FOR ADOPTION



92

OTHER PLACEMENTS



444

CHILDREN IN CARE RECORDED AS HAVING A DISABILITY



229

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN ON CHILDREN PROTECTION REGISTER



726

CHILDREN DISCHARGED FROM CARE DURING THE YEAR²



893

CHILDREN ADMITTED TO CARE DURING THE YEAR

63 residential

696 fostering

72 placed at home with parents

0 placed for adoption

62 other

Statistics Snapshot 2020-2021

49 ADMISSIONS TO SECURE CARE

3

history of absconding and likely to suffer significant harm

7

likely to injure her/himself or other persons

39

met both criteria

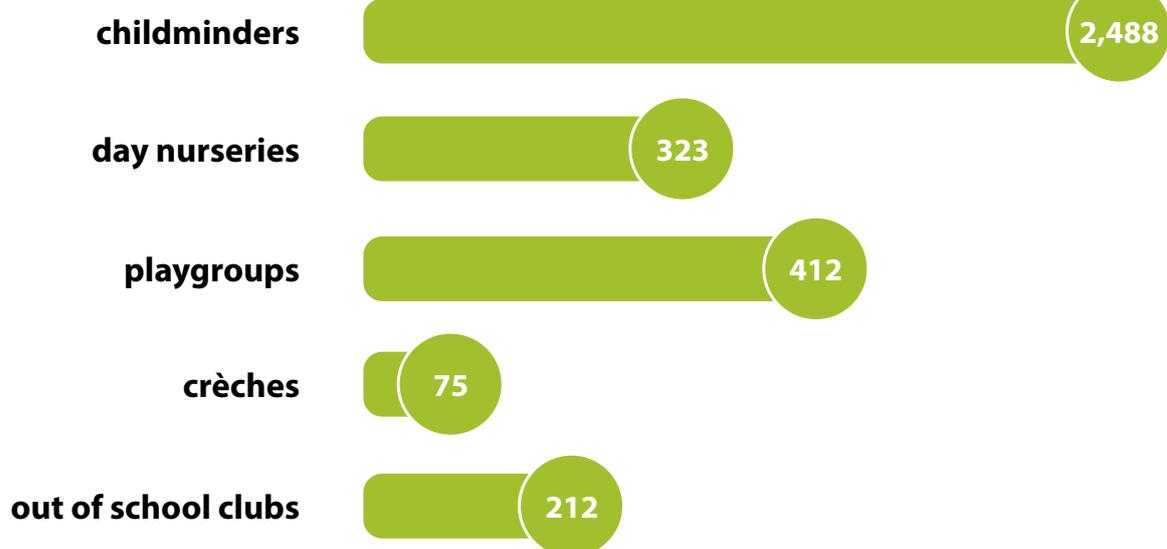
23 OF THESE WERE REPEAT SUBMISSIONS²

(a decrease of 8 on the previous year)

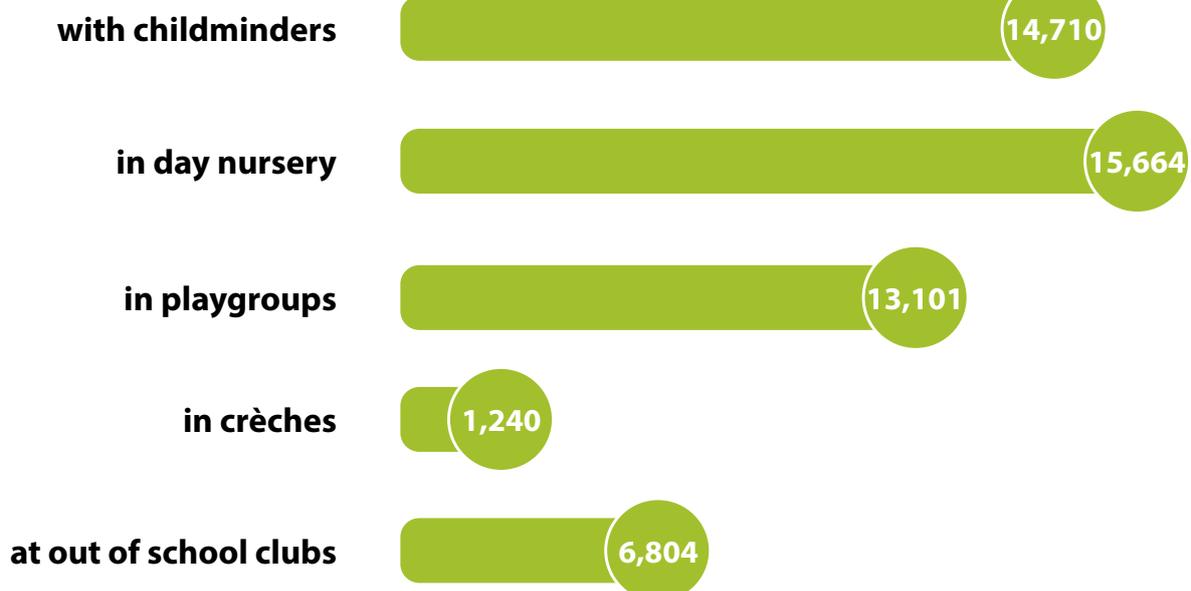


3,686 PEOPLE OR FACILITIES REGISTERED FOR THE PROVISION OF DAY CARE FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 12

(a decrease of 71 on the previous year)



59,618 PLACES PROVIDED



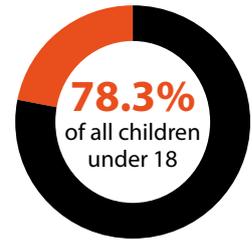
Statistics Snapshot 2020-2021

344,900

PUPILS IN SCHOOLS IN NORTHERN IRELAND



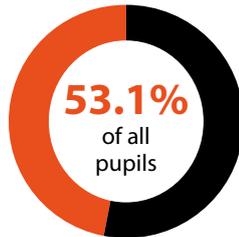
(slight increase of 2,200 since 2019-2020)



183,079

PUPILS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS³

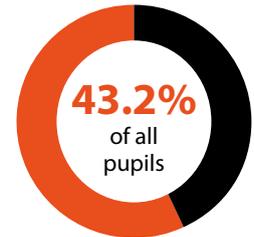
↑ (increase of 9,233 pupils since 2019-2020)



148,918

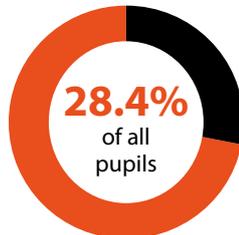
PUPILS IN POST PRIMARY SCHOOL³

↑ (increase of 3,833 since 2019-2020)



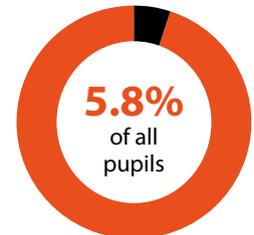
97,631

ARE ENTITLED TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS³



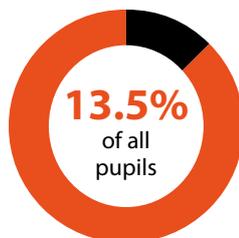
20,505

PUPILS WITH A STATEMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS



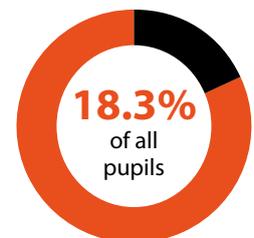
47,319

PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS BUT NOT A STATEMENT

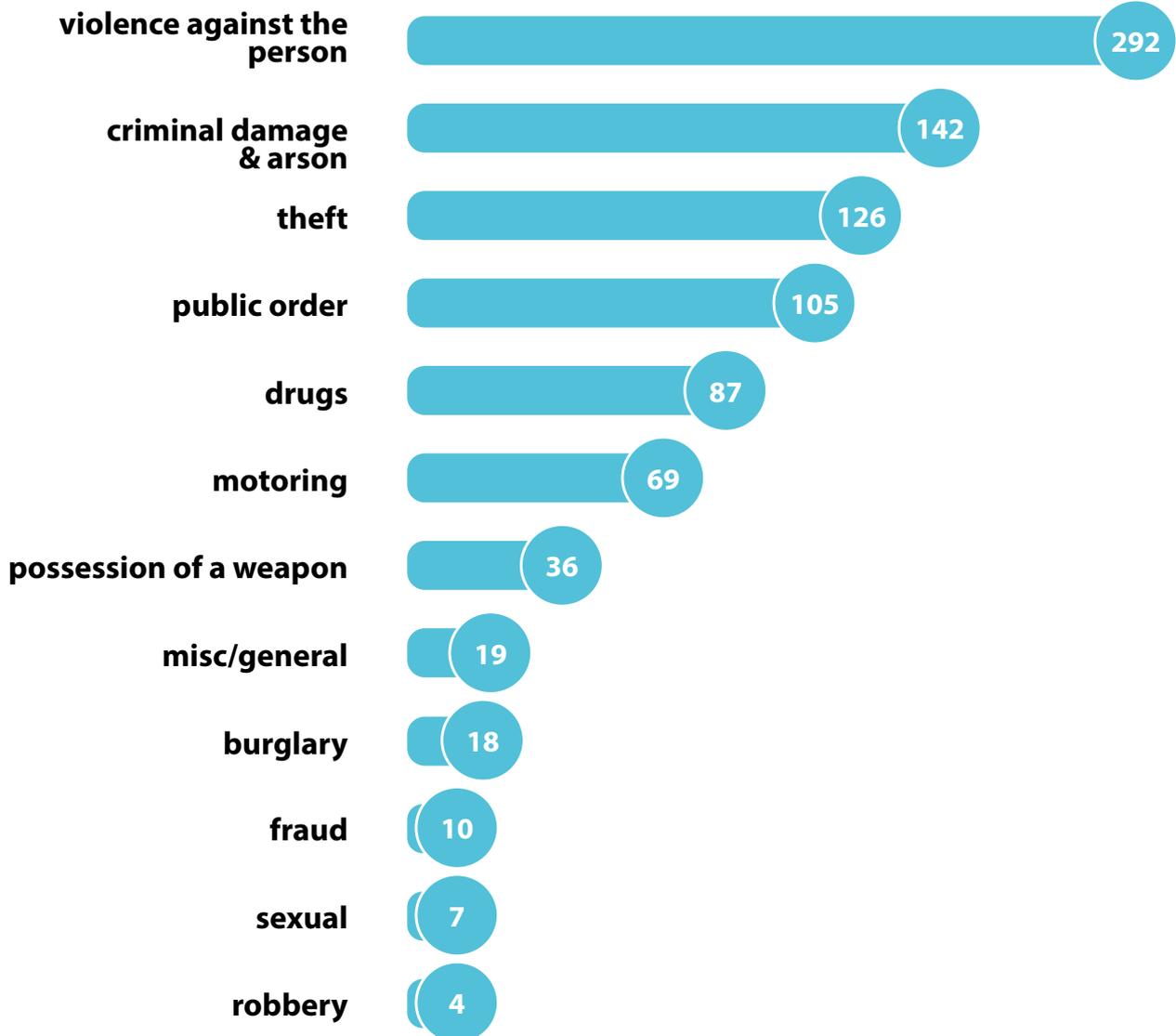


67,824

ALL PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS



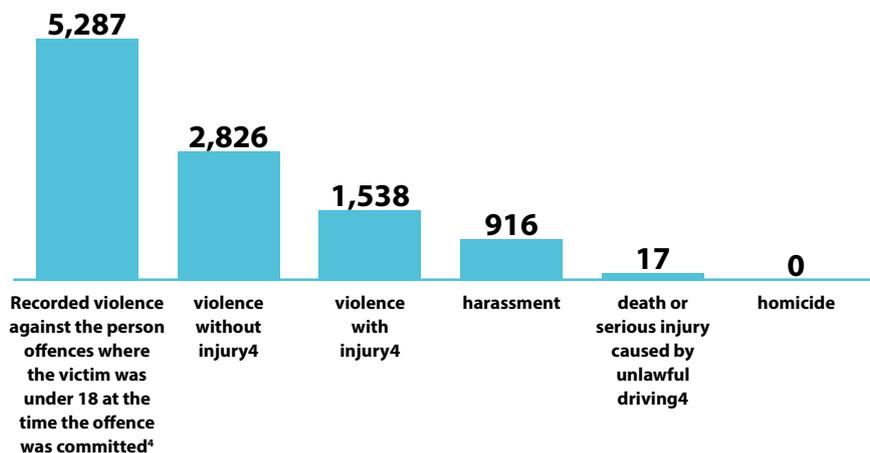
916 STATUTORY REFERRALS (INCLUDES DIVERSIONARY, COURT ORDERED, COMMUNITY ORDERS AND OTHER [JJCO, PROBATION AND BAIL]) WHERE THE DEFENDANT WAS UNDER 18 (10 TO 17) AT THE TIME



108 YOUNG PEOPLE IN CUSTODY

89 15-17 year olds

9 10-13 year olds



Sources

NISRA 2019 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland 25 June 2021 release
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/MYE20-Bulletin.pdf> NISRA
Statistical Bulletin 2020 Mid-year Population Estimates 25 June 2021

Bellis, M.A. et al (2015): Adverse childhood experiences and their impact on health-harming behaviours

[http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/PRIDDocs_nsf/7c21215d6d0c613e80256f490030c05a/d488a3852491bc1d80257f370038919e/\\$FILE/ACE%20Report%20FINAL%20\(E\).pdf](http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/PRIDDocs_nsf/7c21215d6d0c613e80256f490030c05a/d488a3852491bc1d80257f370038919e/$FILE/ACE%20Report%20FINAL%20(E).pdf)

Department of Health Children's Social Care Statistics for Northern Ireland 2020/2021

Health and Social Care Board: Directorate of Social Care and Children – Delegated Statutory Functions (Interim Corporate Parenting Report) Statistical Report 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021

School enrolments - overview | Department of Education (education-ni.gov.uk) & Department of Education Key Statistics 2020/21.pdf (education-ni.gov.uk) & <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-enrolments-northern-ireland-summary-data> date published 22 March 2021

Police Service of Northern Ireland

<https://www.psni.police.uk/inside-psni/Statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics/>

Youth Justice Agency Workload Statistics 2020/21 (justice-ni.gov.uk)

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/ni-prison-service-statistics>

Meet the Board Members



Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland
Annual Report 2020-2021



Marie Roulston
Director
Social Care and Children
Health and Social Care
Board



Paul Morgan
Director
Children and Young
People Services
Southern Health and
Social Care Trust



Deirdre Mahon
Director of Children's
and Women's Services
and Social Work
Western Health and
Social Care Trust



Carol Diffin
Director of Children's
Services and Social Work
Belfast Health and Social
Care Trust



Barbara Campbell
Director Children's
Service's and Executive
Director of Social Work
South Eastern Health
and Social Care Trust



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



Rodney Morton
Director of Nursing
and Allied Health
Professional
PHA



Emily Roberts
Safeguarding Nurse
Consultant
PHA



**Dr Martin
Cunningham**
GP Representative
Queens University
Belfast



Una Turbitt
Director
Education Authority



Cheryl Lamont
Chief Executive and
Accounting Officer
Probation Board for
Northern Ireland



Anthony McNally
D/Chief Superintendent,
PSNI



Declan McGeown
Chief Executive
Youth Justice Agency



Peter Reynolds
Chief Executive Officer
NIGALA



David Burns
Chief Executive
Officer of Lisburn and
Castlereagh Council
Solace Representative



Bronagh Muldoon
National Head of Service
for Northern Ireland
NSPCC



Michele Janes
Director
Barnardo's NI



Lorna Ballard
Director
Action for Children
Northern Ireland



Paddy Mooney
Director
Include Youth



Pauline Leeson
Chief Executive
Children In Northern
Ireland



Paddy Kelly
Director
Children's Law Centre
Ireland



Mr Lindsay Conway
Secretary to the Board of
Education NI
Director & Secretary to the
Council for Social Witness
Presbyterian Church



Gerry Guckian
Independent Lay
Member



Simon Rogers
Independent Lay
Member



Andrew Thomson
Independent Chair
CMR
Safeguarding Board NI



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



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

Focus on Finance



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

For 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, this was **£659,182**.

In addition to this, the Health and Social Care Board supplemented this amount with an extra **£75,636** to fund the Case Management Review process.

The total budget for the SBNI for April 2020-March 2021 was: **£734,818**

How our money was spent by 31 March 2021:

- Salaries: £406,000
- Goods and Services: £328,818
- Total: **£734,818**

At 31 March 2021 the SBNI had spent its entire allocated budget.



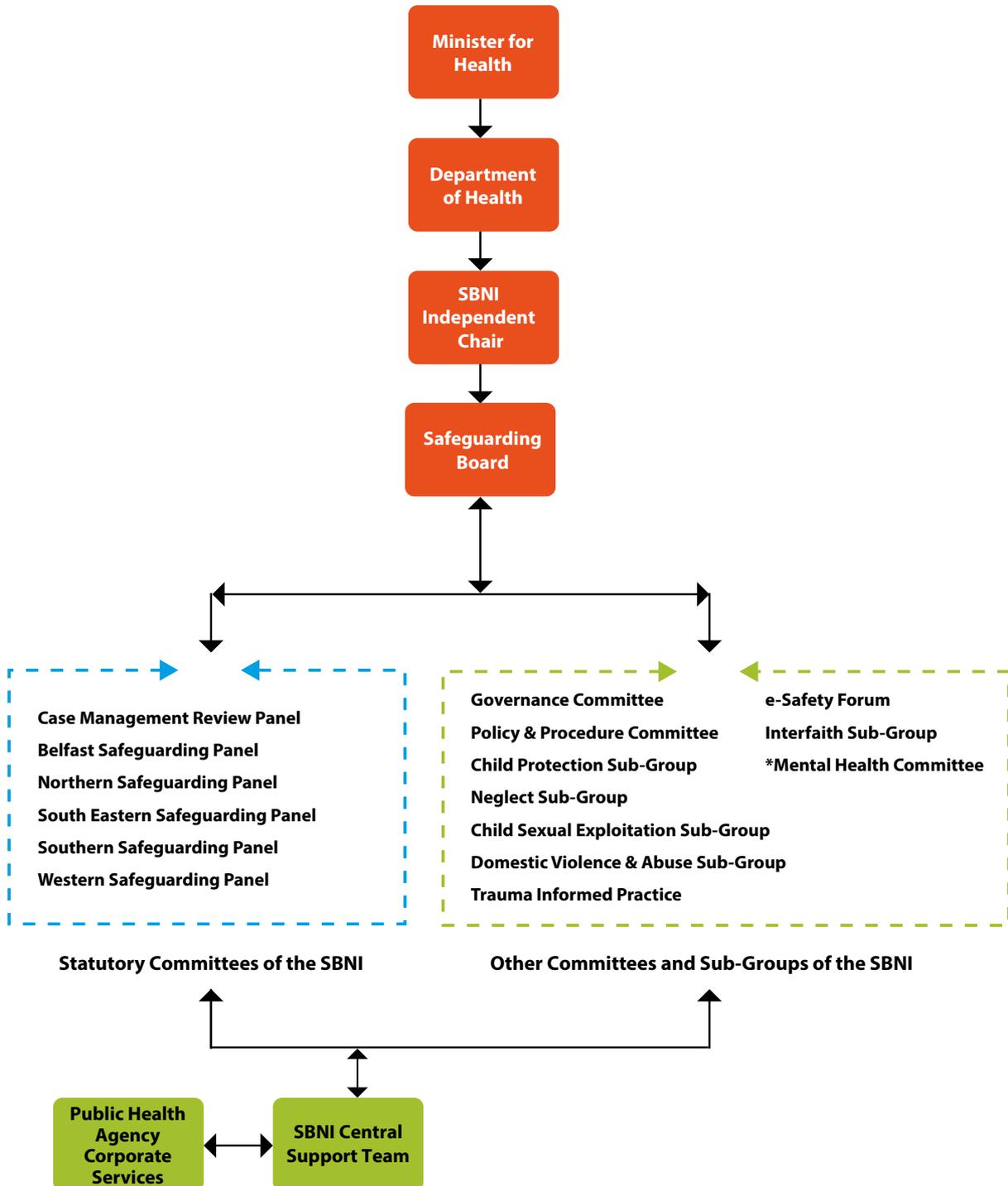
Major Significant Goods and Services Spend In Year:

- SBNI Operational Running Costs: **£110,000**
- Development of an Engagement Strategy: **£7,000**
- Policies and Procedures: e-Platform management of Regional Core Policy and Procedures and associated guidance development: **£6,000**
- Support for a youth training programme for young people to help with literacy, numeracy and ICT skills development as part of a mental health and social inclusion initiative: **£6,000**
- Domestic Violence and Abuse – awareness resources, training and recognition: **£14,757**
- Case Management Reviews – learning from practice: **£83,916**
(NB £8,280 from Goods and Services allocation).
- Staff substitution for CDOP review: **£9,000**
- SBNI Website Refresh and Update: **£23,360**
- Safeguarding Panels – the SBNI at work locally: **£15,000**
- Online Safety and Inclusion Activity: **£9,800**
- Mental Health Resources: **£11,324**

How the SBNI is structured



SBNI Organisational Structure (April 2020 – March 2021)



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 Objectives 2020-2021

1.5: Statutory partners consider the range of child protection information available and use this to agree priorities which can be actioned through an Outcome Based Accountability Framework

- **Review and evaluate the revised Case Management Review process**
- **Undertake an analysis and review of the themes emanating from CMRs**

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

The CMR Panel meets on a monthly basis, is independently chaired by Mr Andrew Thomson who is a Board Member and includes membership from senior representatives of agencies represented on the Board. The Panel's role is to consider notifications in respect of serious incidents involving children and young people to identify;

- where there have been positive outcomes for children and young people or
- where things have not gone well and there is significant learning,

The purpose of this is to improve the child protection system through learning from experience thereby further protecting children and young people in Northern Ireland. The CMR Panel interrogates the information provided to it by the notifying agency and makes a recommendation to the Board as to whether or not to commission a CMR. The recommendation is considered by the Board which makes a decision whether or not a CMR should be undertaken.

During the Business Year, as a consequence of the onset of COVID-19, the Case Management Review Panel 'paused' meetings between April and July 2020. CMR Panel meetings resumed in August 2020. Meetings assumed a 'virtual' blended format utilising a virtual platform. CMR Panel meetings continued monthly during the remainder of the business year.

During this period of 'pause' the SBNI continued to receive notifications and processed them as far as possible.

Consideration of CMR Notifications

During the reporting year 2020-2021, 23 CMR notifications were received by the SBNI in respect of 23 children and young people. One child was subject to a notification by more than one agency. Of these notifications, only two met the criteria for Case Management Reviews to be commissioned.

A total of two completed CMR reports were presented to and approved by the SBNI during the reporting period. From these, 15 recommendations were identified.

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the average time taken to undertake CMRs was nine and a half months. Direct work on CMRs was interrupted as a consequence of the aforementioned 'pause'. This allowed member agencies to focus on service delivery at the initial stages of the public health emergency. Direct work on CMRs was also impacted because some staff members from member agencies were unable to complete Individual Agency Reviews (IARs). In some cases CMR review teams were depleted due to COVID-19 illness, isolation or shielding. Timelines were required to be amended as a consequence of this. Despite these interruptions staff endeavoured to ensure as timely a response to the completion of reviews as possible in the difficult and uncharted circumstances.

Improvements made as a result of CMRs

The core purpose of CMRs is to help improve the child protection system in Northern Ireland. Below are some of the improvements which have been made or are being made as a result of the CMR process:

- a Review of the Information Sharing Agreement (November 2019) between PSNI and HSCT's is currently underway
- the Resolution of Professional Differences Protocol has been developed and approved ([Resolution of Professional Differences Protocol](#))
- HSCTs have agreed that Children/Young People who experience CSE will be managed within the existing Child Protection Framework
- a Review of the 'Protecting Looked After Children' (PLAC) Guidance is underway
- joint work between PSNI and HSCTs regarding the 'Return to Home interviews for Children who have been Missing is underway
- renewed development of Interagency work considering Training for Practitioners working with children who experience CSE is underway
- work on the development of a consistent and co-ordinated multi-agency approach in Northern Ireland, in relation to young people who display Harmful Sexual Behaviours and to individuals who cause concern in the context of families
- the Pre-Mobile Baby Protocol for bruising/marks has been further revised and published in the Core Policy and Procedures manual
- the SBNI Neglect Strategy, designed to improve outcomes for children and young people by ensuring that prevention, early recognition and agency responses to children, young people and families affected or potentially affected by neglect are appropriate and effective
- increased awareness training for staff has been provided regarding the devastating impact of neglect on children and how work on this particular area of concern can be improved to help address its impact on children's lives
- the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) has implemented a number of measures to address the learning from a recent CMR. For example, a new file monitoring system has been introduced which includes a requirement on Area Managers to monitor files which are randomly selected
- the PBNI Practice Standards have been amended to include a standard stipulating that if the supervising probation officer is aware a service user has children, or caring responsibilities for children, or regular access to children, he/she shall contact social services within 10 working days of the case being allocated to ascertain if the Service User or their partner are known to social services and in what capacity
- the PBNI has implemented a new system to ensure all cases where there are concerns in respect of domestic violence and/or potential child protection, are discussed during formal supervision.

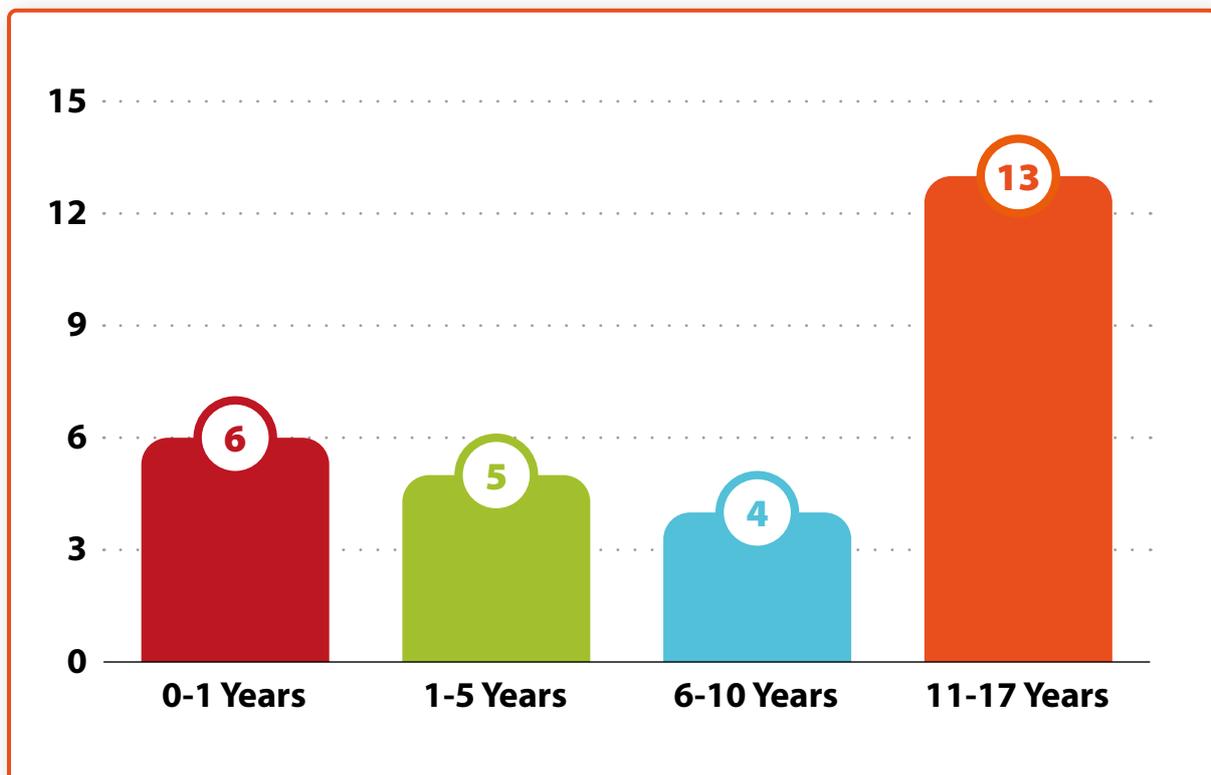


Review of the CMR Process

The CMR process is subject to on-going review and monitoring to ensure each review is conducted in a timely manner and produces a high quality report which will lead to improvements in the child protection system in Northern Ireland. During the reporting period of 2020-2021 a number of changes introduced in the previous business year continued to be implemented. Report templates had been refined to ensure CMR reports were more focused on the relevant issues, i.e. what happened, why it happened and where there is learning what can be done to reduce potential of recurrence. Continued work on refining and improving the Terms of Reference (ToR), which form the foundation of a review, was also undertaken. The aim is to ensure that they ToR address the pertinent facts and encourage the production of a report which provides analysis, learning and relevant recommendations. Early consultation with senior staff from the referral agency has been introduced to the process to assist in the drafting of terms of reference to identify and agree the relevant issues for examination and inclusion in the ToR, as well as endeavouring to create a relationship of joint enterprise.

CMR Evaluation

During the reporting year, work on a review of 19 CMRs undertaken up to and including November 2020 was completed. Emphasis was placed on data analysis and theme identification with a view to delivery of the report to the SBNI Board in the next business year.



On-going Training Programme

Induction Training for new CMR Authors and Chairs was provided. This involved the mentoring of newly appointed authors more those more experienced.

Dissemination of Key Messages/Learning from CMRs

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the SBNI's schedule of annual and regional dissemination events. Events planned for the autumn 2020 were unable to proceed as a consequence of respective surges in the prevalence of the virus. Member agencies were wholly focussed on service delivery with significantly reduced staff during these unprecedented times and the SBNI took the decision to postpone events. The Western Area Safeguarding Panel dissemination event is planned to take place in May 2021

The success of the delivery of this event and the learning achieved shall be reported upon in the next annual report.

Planning is underway for virtual delivery of both the regional and local learning events for business year 2021-2022.



CMR Action Plans

Each agency identified in a case management review recommendation is responsible for producing an action plan as to how they intend to undertake/implement the recommendation, including the timescales involved. These action plans are reviewed by the relevant local Statutory Safeguarding Panel.

Safeguarding Panels

Regulation 31: Functions of Safeguarding Panels

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

The emergence of COVID-19 in mid-March 2020 resulted in disruption to the planned schedule of panel meetings, leading to the cancellation of those organised for April and June 2020.

Those planned through the remainder of 2020-2021 were facilitated virtually. Additional efforts were made to maintain communication via telephone and e-mail to support the alignment and continuing engagement with the SBNI Board, the SBNI Central Support Team and the SBNI Committees and Sub-Groups. A planned five panels' development day to focus collectively on the identification of priorities and development of work plans also had to be postponed. (A virtual event is planned for September 2021). Attendance at the virtual panel meetings was good and despite the limitations, the meetings were constructive and progressive.

As in years past, the focus of the panel meetings was aligned to the SBNI Board strategic and business plans and to each panel's specific work plan for that year. To support new and refresh existing panel members, an induction booklet was developed and shared with members. This was well received and was acknowledged as a useful resource that provides all relevant information for new members, inclusive of the member's agreement.

Co-ordinating the Implementation of the SBNI Strategic Plan

Neglect

As a strategic priority of the SBNI, work on this important issue continued within the panels with great success. Thirteen webinars aimed at raising awareness of neglect and its impact on the health and wellbeing of children and families were delivered between October 2020 and March 2021. They were well attended by a total of 763 staff across organisations and agencies such as health and social care staff inclusive of health visitors, allied health professionals, social workers; council members; education; probation services; environmental health and the community/voluntary sector. The webinars were facilitated by the NSPCC representative on the Neglect Sub-Group with delivery supported by panel members who have knowledge and experience within this field of work.

In addition, a regional Graded Care Profile for the assessment of neglect was endorsed by the SBNI and 'Train the Trainer' training was provided to support the roll out in panel areas.

Domestic and Sexual Violence

This strategic priority has continued in this year to be an active issue within the panels. Unfortunately, as a consequence of the pandemic the production of a video by young people who have benefitted from support from Armagh/Down Women's Aid, funded by the Southern Panel had to be postponed. It is anticipated that this work will be completed within 2021-2022. In recognition of the impact of domestic abuse on children and to support frontline practitioners when identifying risks, each panel has provided funding for the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment for Children (DARAC) training in each trust area.

A further consequence of the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns was the postponement of the planned pilot 'Operation Encompass'. This partnership between the PSNI, the SBNI, the Education Authority and schools within the south eastern area initially, is aimed at supporting children who witness domestic abuse within the home. It is planned to commence the pilot in September 2021 and to progress to a regional roll out in all panel areas.

Within the area of sexual violence, all panels have continued this year to make progress with the Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework, with some of the panels completing their training needs analysis.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) remains a matter of significant importance to all safeguarding panel members and is a standing item for discussion at each meeting. This supports the early identification of any concerns within local areas and/or deficits in relation to training or available supportive information.

With the publication of the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) Report and the CSE Evaluation Report in year, the Safeguarding Panels have considered and discussed the recommendations with a view to progress in local areas.

It was pleasing to be able, particularly at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, to encourage and support the virtual delivery of the AlterEgo plays, 'In the Net' and 'Invictus' to all primary and post primary schools, respectively, in Northern Ireland. Education representatives on panels welcomed this innovative approach as it facilitated access to a wider audience. A report on this access will be available in the 2021-2022 annual report, including the number of schools participating and the impact of the pandemic on access by pupils.

The document 'Good Practice Service Delivery Standards for the Management of Children Referred for Child Protection Medical Assessments' (October 2020) was shared with panels, for discussion and feedback. This was useful in bringing focus to the importance of medical assessments being delivered in a timely and appropriate manner.

Mental Health

Presentations facilitated at the Northern and Western Panel meetings informed members of the services available to support children and young people with mental ill health and/or addictions. Resilience programmes have also been provided with the Northern Panel area to support the development of a trauma informed workforce who will be better equipped to understand and support children and young people.

Monitor the implementation of SBNI's Policies and Procedures

All five panels continued work to ensure that members are kept informed of core policies and procedures with respect to safeguarding children. In this year, this has included, the Resolution – Escalation Policy and the Pre-Mobile Baby Policy. Additionally, each panel contributed to the review of the Child Protection Appeals process.

The SBNI's Child Safeguarding Learning and Development Strategy and Framework (2020-2023) was shared with panels and feedback both elicited and actioned.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) of the review into the Child Death Overview Process also was shared with panels, for discussion, with views and suggestions returned. Within the South Eastern Panel, the doctor with responsibility for safeguarding delivered a presentation on 'managing the reporting of child deaths within the hospital and community paediatric settings'.

Promote an awareness of the need to safeguard children

Panels receive and review the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) child protection data and activity specific to their Trust. This enables the identification of trends, consideration of potential responses and encouragement of multi-agency collaboration.

In the Northern Panel area, a School Nursing Transformation Programme co-production initiative was developed with a post primary school and feeder schools. A presentation was provided by a senior nursing manager to the Northern Safeguarding Panel and informed members on the detail and outcomes of this initiative which placed a Trust nurse within a post primary school. It was reported that this approach supported the development of a trusting relationship with young people within the school (who were subject to child protection processes or who were 'looked after'). This initiative evidenced successful outcomes and it was reported that plans are being considered to replicate this initiative in each Trust.

In addition a Text-a-Nurse service has been launched in each of the panel areas to provide young people (11-19yrs) with a secure and confidential text messaging service to the school nurse for advice and support in all matters of concern.

Implement arrangements for sharing the findings of CMRs

Each Panel is responsible for ensuring that the key learning from Case Management Reviews (CMRs) is disseminated. Due to the pandemic and the resulting lockdown the Western Area Panel's CMR learning event, planned for March 2020, was postponed. This event was delivered virtually via Zoom and facilitated by the HSC Leadership Centre in May 2021: a report on the outcome of this innovation will be available for the 2021-2022 report. During this reporting year, due to the onset of the pandemic no CMR learning events were held in the early part of 2021. However, in consideration of public health advice, it is anticipated that virtual CMR events are being planned for the later part of 2021. The position of CMRs and their action plans remain a vital and substantial part of the confidential section of each panel meeting.

In this reporting year, the revised CMR process was agreed and shared with panel members. Panel Chairs additionally, contributed to the thematic review of CMRs.

Promote communication between the Panels and Children and Young People

Communication with children and young people to ascertain their views remains a standing item at each panel meeting. To give weight to the importance of this commitment, the SBNI commissioned Barnardo's to develop an engagement strategy, to which panel members have contributed.

Child Protection Sub-Group

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

Business Priority 1.5 Statutory partners consider the range of child protection information available and use this to agree priorities moving forward which can be actioned through an Outcome Based Accountability framework.

Additional priorities of the Child Protection Sub-Group for 2020-2021 were:

- **To undertake an analysis of child protection data to inform the child protection system.**
- **To reform the child protection arrangements by the introduction of the 'Signs of Safety' approach.**
- **To address intergenerational abuse by introducing an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) informed approach across statutory partners.**

Child Protection Sub-Group

The Child Protection Sub-Group was established to provide a vehicle for the statutory partners within the SBNI to focus on their statutory responsibilities concerning improved protection of children.¹

The SBNI Child Protection Sub-Group meet at least five times per year to consider the range of child protection information available and to use this to agree priorities which can be actioned through an outcomes based accountability framework. As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for member agencies to focus upon and deliver front line services, Sub-Group meetings in April and June 2020 were postponed. The Sub-Group reconvened in September 2020 and resumed its normal cycle of scheduled meetings for the remainder of the business year, despite on-going COVID-19 surges which led to further periods of lockdown and increased governmental regulation.

The Chair of the Sub-Group is a Director of Children's Services from one of the Health and Social Care Trusts. Currently the Chair of the group is held by the Director of Women's and Children's Services within the Western Health and Social Care Trust. Membership of the group comprises all five Health and Social Care Trusts, the Public Health Agency, the Education Authority Northern Ireland, the Youth Justice Agency, the Health and Social Care Board, the Police Service Northern Ireland, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and the Probation Board NI. The Child Protection Sub-Group has focussed work plans on the following areas:

- Early Intervention Transformation Programme Work stream 4 Trauma Informed Practice Project
- to reform the child protection arrangements by the introduction of the 'Signs of Safety' approach
- commissioning and delivery of 'Invictus' Theatrical Performance in the COVID-19 Environment
- Peer Mentoring in Child Protection Services

¹ Alexis Jay, Independent Review of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI), 2016.
Available at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/independent-review-safeguarding-board-northern-ireland-sbni>

The Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) project is an SBNI workforce development project that has been funded through the cross departmental Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP) the DoH Social Work Strategy and the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme. It was launched in 2018 and the aims are to ensure that the SBNI member organisations have:

1. an awareness of the adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) which may cause trauma in a child's life
2. an awareness of the potential impact of these adversities on the development of a child
3. an ability to identify what creates resilience to cope with adversity
4. an ability to develop policies and practices to embed trauma informed practice in their work.



In Years 1 and 2, the project was focused on the first three objectives. It delivered widespread training of the workforce to increase awareness and knowledge of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)/Trauma principles and concepts. Between April 2020 and March 2021 the project team within the SBNI has been working with SBNI member agencies primarily to implement the fourth aim above. This aim is being delivered, through the following objectives;

- **Deepen collaboration:** SBNI will support cross-sectoral collaborative working and coordination to generate trauma informed (TI) systemic approaches for those impacted by childhood adversity through the application of the Sequential Intercept Model (SIM – see below)
- **Embed ACES/TI knowledge:** Organisations will embed ACEs and TI practice knowledge within their operations across the system to improve outcomes for children, families and adults who have been impacted by adversity
- **Develop organisational practice:** SBNI will work alongside organisations to translate knowledge and learning into strategic planning and governance for organisations and the system
- **Sustain workforce development:** SBNI will assist organisations and government departments to continue to develop their workforces to raise awareness of childhood adversity and trauma sensitive approaches to practice through leadership, policy and practice.

It is important to note that this work was delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic resulted in significant system-wide pressures within organisations which had to respond rapidly to the changing needs of the public. This led to the re-deployment of staff in some organisations and the adoption of online methods for engagement.

Notwithstanding the challenges, the SBNI continued to work to embed an ACE/Trauma Informed culture and practices using the Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) and Universal Service Design process (USD) across member agencies. The SIM model is a community strategic planning tool to assess available resources, determine gaps in services, and plan for community change, in order to support individuals and families at the earliest stage. It has been used by stakeholders that cross over multiple systems including health, social care, education, justice, housing, services users and the community and voluntary sector. The Universal Service Delivery (USD) process underpins the SIM model and enables organisations to comprehensively assess what is working well within current service provision and areas that could be enhanced or improved. The process enabled organisations to identify desired outcomes in relation to the service user journey from a trauma informed perspective and the barriers that needed to be addressed in order to meet them.

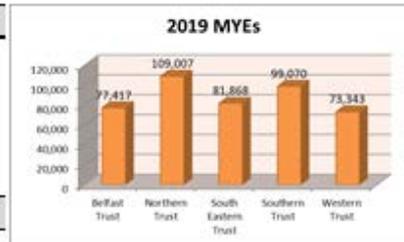
The SBNI Implementation Managers have worked extensively with a number of member and partner agencies to pilot the approach across five sectors. These sectors were community and voluntary, education, health, social care and justice. In addition, the project team has also been working with organisations in housing, local government and the faith sectors.

A wide range of activities were undertaken throughout 2020-2021 to support the continued implementation and embedding of trauma-informed practice (TIP). A total of 5,364 individuals took part in the workforce development activities including 2,631 who participated in facilitator-led training and support workshops/meetings via online delivery methods. In addition online learning accounted for over one-half of those who participated in workforce development activity with 2,733 participants completing an SBNI/TIP online e-learning course/module, hosted on their own organisations electronic platform.

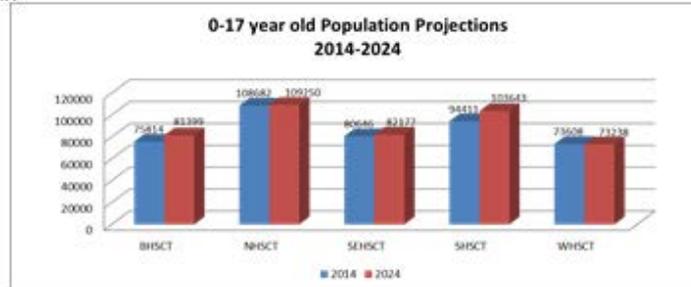
Project team support shifted significantly away from delivery of the Level 1, Level 2 and Train-the-Trainer and towards SIM/USD implementation support with ACE/TIP exploratory sessions and SIM/USD Implementation meetings/workshops meetings accounting for 92% of all participants. In addition to the formal training and support sessions regarding SIM/USD, 23 project briefings and strategic meetings were undertaken with 341 individuals attending.

Population Changes (2019 MYEs)

Trust	2019 MYEs	% Share
Belfast Trust	77,417	18%
Northern Trust	109,007	25%
South Eastern Trust	81,868	19%
Southern Trust	99,070	22%
Western Trust	73,343	17%
NI	440,705	100%



- Growing population of children
- Variances across Trusts
- Increasing Numbers in
- BHSCT and SHSCT



As well as the formal training and support, a range of resources were produced to assist learning and development including:

- a generic SIM-USD presentation - Applying a trauma (re)view across the system through the application of SIM/USD Processes
- SIM-USD Case Study Material for a systemic approach
- availability of a SIM/USD awareness raising webinar recording
- TIP Train the Trainer Programme: Appendix on Additional/Complex Needs
- TIP Train the Trainer Programme: Appendix on The impact of trauma for Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- TIP Train the Trainer Programme: Appendix - Georgie's Wall of Need (Education sector)
- Open University Video input to support awareness of ACEs and their impact among the student population
- EA Special Education Needs Guidance and Resources
- schools booklet
- Integrated Family Approaches Booklet for electronic version Click [HERE](#)
- Parent's Guide: COVID-19 What Just Happened? For Electronic version Click [HERE](#) COVID - 19 What Just Happened?
- Play Connects recording on ACEs, Trauma informed practice and system change for Ulster University
- a live recorded seminar for Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC)



From October 2020 to March 2021 the TIP Project Team hosted 141 SIM/USD implementation meetings/workshops across the five sectors to facilitate an understanding of the application of the SIM/USD models as part of a trauma review) process within organisations and across the system. A summary of some of the main project areas is set out below.

PROJECT PILOTS

Belfast HSC Trust - Key priority areas

- workforce development and training across all service directorates
- understanding and strengthening cross sector collaborations to support those with a vulnerability
- enabling trauma sensitive responses within Human Resources and OD (organisational development), Homeless Health Service; senior management, policy screening, collaboration with Belfast Recovery College
- development of a pilot for newly qualified nurses with QUB/Clinical Education Centre (CEC) HSC.

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE –TOWARDS ZERO SUICIDE KEY PRIORITY AREAS

Across all HSC Trusts

- promote via the regional forum application of the USD process to all restrictive practice within psychiatric acute inpatient care underpinned with a trauma aware/sensitive response
- progress further Towards Zero Suicide – SE Trust Pilot.
- governance and leadership - Service Lead for Acute Care
- review acute inpatient service delivery of acute inpatient ward via application of USD Process
- establish baseline (assessment tool)
- agree implementation plan inclusive of measurable data and outcomes for evaluation of pilot
- workforce development SBNI Levels 1 and 2 across acute inpatient care
- evaluation
- implement best practice into all mental health service provision (SE Trust).

Northern HSC Trust - Key priority areas

- workforce development strategy and training plan across all service directorates
- develop trauma sensitive policy and guidelines across NHSCT; including communication strategy.

Education Sector - Key priority areas;

- enhancing existing and new staff emotional health and wellbeing policies and practice
- workforce development & training to sustain ACE/TIP within the education sector
- policy development to enable trauma informed whole school approaches
- enhance current monitoring, assessment and interventions through quality improvement frameworks
- three pilots developing trauma informed schools are underway using the SIM/USD approach and involving advisory groups consisting of representation from HSC Education community and voluntary sector and councils
- one pilot developing a trauma informed FE college is underway
- roll out of training strategy for all schools in NI.

Community and Voluntary Sector - Trauma Informed Communities

- Salvation Army – trauma sensitive service delivery approaches within Centenary House homeless people’s services and Thorndale Family Services including workforce development and wellbeing, policy screening, physical environment
- faith sectors-inclusion of trauma sensitive approaches within strategic plans, workforce development, and specialist services
- East Belfast Community Development Association – trauma sensitive approaches to practice within East Belfast Resilience Strategy
- Bogside and Brandywell Health Forum – understanding trauma sensitive approaches within practice through application of SIM/USD processes.

JUSTICE SECTOR

Youth Justice Agency -Key priority areas

- continue to progress areas identified through SIM/USD. Process mapping for YJA Woodlands Residential and YJA Community Services staff
- address key issues re: referral/entry interfaces/cross sector collaboration.
- continue to trauma proof/policy/procedure/service delivery
- business plan identified outlining alternative evidenced based, effective ways of working
- workforce development SBNI Level 2 – complete for YJA staff.

Support Hubs - Key priority areas

- SIM/USD process mapped to PSNI operational delivery
- alignment of DoJ/NISRA Support Hub evaluation to further support assessment/review of entry to exit of support hub service delivery
- continue promotion of multi-agency workforce training & development of ACE/TIP
- recognise/clarify/ promote good practice re referral/entry/service interface
- implementation of recommendations from DoJ Support Hub Evaluation & mapping exercise of SIM/USD process through co-chairs of pilot areas multi-agency support hubs NW/Mid Antrim
- agreed standardised multi-agency implementation plan to monitor progress
- evaluation.

Department of Justice – Key priority areas

- DoJ departmental commitment to further embed a trauma informed/ACEs approach across the justice system, referenced in 2021-2022 Departmental Business Plan
- workforce development - influence further departmental workforce development through SBNI Levels 1 and 2
- establish baseline (assessment tool) of progress of individual justice agencies re: application of SIM/USD Process across all justice agencies (including court services) emphasis on justice agency service interfaces
- agree implementation plan inclusive of measurable data and outcomes for evaluation
- evaluation.

Local Government - Key priority areas

This work is being undertaken in; Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Belfast City Council and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

- Workforce Development & Training
 - Staff safety and wellbeing through compassionate leadership models
- Physical Environment: Creating physical and psychological safety.

Evaluation of Year 3 – 2020-2021

An assessment of the project's work in 2020-2021 including the activity set out above and this activity is detailed in an independent evaluation of year 3 of the project undertaken by the National Children's Bureau NI which can be accessed [HERE](#)

The evaluation highlighted the considerable amount of work undertaken and the significant progress made notwithstanding the pandemic. It pointed, however, to a continuing need for support in certain areas; namely, research, training and associated resources and the implementation of the SIM/USD model.



The SBNI TIP project is continuing in 2021-2022 with a focus on the delivery of the SIM/USD models. It is recognised that successful implementation requires a long-term commitment and that change is an incremental process especially in large organisations.

	£'000
Funding:	
DoJ Tackling Paramilitarism Programme	100
DoH EITP Programme – carried forward from 2019-20	93
DoH Social Work Strategy	50
SBNI funding	32
Total budget for 2020-21	275
Expenditure:	
Staff costs	243
Other programme expenditure	32
Total expenditure for 2020-21	275
Surplus / (Deficit)	-

To reform the child protection arrangements by the introduction of the 'Signs of Safety' approach

The introduction of the Signs of Safety (SoS) framework in Children's Services social work in Northern Ireland commenced in 2017. The implementation of Signs of Safety across Northern Ireland has borne witness to an intense period of awareness raising, training, staged introduction and consolidation within the broader social work community. Some three years into this transformative project, an opportunity presents to embark upon a critical evaluation of how Signs of Safety has been established within social work programmes of care across the region. The Health and Social Care Board shall lead on this evaluation and the outcomes shall be reported upon in the next business year.





The Northern Ireland Leaders Day was held on 24 June 2020 and considered:

- where are we at now in the implementation?
- implementation priorities for Year 3
- proposed Elia deliverables plan for Year 3
- the staff and parent survey messages.

The seven priorities agreed for Year 3 were:

1. Practice
2. Learning
3. Leadership
4. Alignment
5. Meaningful measures
6. Consideration of the following complicating factors:
 - a. Virtual options to cope with social distancing
 - b. Responding to deprivation
 - c. Protecting front line resources
7. Proposed all Ireland gathering.

Since March 2020 a number of training opportunities have been delivered including;

- substantial awareness raising training delivered to partner disciplines and agencies
- two online introductory training sessions for 30 people across the region alongside each Trust delivering this training in each individual Trust using in house trainers
- two online advanced training sessions for 60 people
- Elia (The company commissioned to support introduction and implementation of the model) has also delivered training in March and May 2021 for SBNI. This training offered 60 places per day
- there are currently 2302 users on the Signs of Safety Knowledge Bank across the region.

Elia has also delivered four two-day workshops on Words and Pictures (each 60 places), a further workshop will be delivered in June 2021.

As part of the evaluation of Signs of Safety, an annual staff and parent survey was undertaken in 2019 and 2020. A further follow up survey is scheduled for September 2021. In addition an OBA framework is being piloted across all five Trusts to comprehensively consider both quantitative and qualitative measures. This will be supported by further application of the Gain Audit Tool alongside integration of the Collaborative Case Review Matrix to strengthen reflective practice. The learning from recent research conducted within English local authorities has also been incorporated in the OBA framework design.

There are a number of outstanding areas regarding implementation:

- IT systems Alignment of UNOCINI
- Signs of Safety frameworks
- completion of SBNI guidance for staff.

Focus upon 'Signs of Safety' partner agency awareness training

During the business years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 the Child Protection Sub-Group agreed to place specific emphasis on ensuring partner agencies were sufficiently equipped to understand the Signs of Safety model and the language associated with it. This was to enable them to participate effectively in child protection meetings where the model was being used for example a child protection case conference. The SBNI co-ordinated the delivery of these training sessions to member and partner agencies. These were designed to complement trust-based training events hosted by the Signs of Safety Implementation Leads in each of the five trust areas.

The training provided an overview of the Signs of Safety model including an outline of the purpose and conduct of "Network meetings", the role of "Safety Planning" and parental participation in child protection case conferences.

Two scheduled training days were postponed in 2019-2020 as a consequence of the onset of the pandemic. These days were re-scheduled and took place on 24 and 25 February 2021. The response from partner agencies to the invite for training was so overwhelming that we decided to host two further days training in the forthcoming business year 2021-2022. These events are scheduled for May 2021.

The February 2021 training was undertaken by virtual platform. The training was delivered to 132 professionals from 22 different agencies and disciplines.

The training received exceptionally positive feedback.

Data Collation

The Child Protection Sub-Group has re-focussed efforts on sharing member agency data sets across the statutory agencies to inform strategic planning in respect of Child Protection priorities.

A member's representative working group was established in business year 2019-2020 chaired by the Assistant Director of Children's Services in HSCB to agree the most relevant data to be shared by each member agency. In February 2021 the Child Protection Sub-Group hosted a series of data sharing workshops. Data sets shared by member organisations were interrogated by the membership of the group.

These workshops have provided a platform for future work in the next business year 2021-2022 to assist the membership of the Sub-Group to better understand the overall cross-agency child protection system and assist the SBNI Board to provide leadership and set direction in the safeguarding and child protection system of children and young people in Northern Ireland.

Work on measuring outcomes for children in the child protection system

This was an area of work which transferred from business year 2019-2020 into the current year. In an attempt to begin to develop measurements in respect of outcomes for children within the child protection system, the Sub-Group originally established a task and finish group in 2018 to develop outcomes based indicators. The task and finish group identified the "Outcomes Family Star Plus" system² as the most suitable process with which to quantify the movement families and children make towards better outcomes.

The Sub-Group determined that the best approach was to focus first on the implementation of the Signs of Safety Model and awareness raising across member agencies in respect of the model. The aim is to seek to embed this before integrating the Outcomes Star approach into practice.

2 Outcomes Star is a family of evidence-based tools for measuring and supporting change when working with people.

Commissioning and Delivery of 'Invictus' Theatrical Performance in the COVID-19 Environment

The SBNI Strategic Plan 2018-2022 has placed particular emphasis on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and their influence and impact upon the life of the child and his/her family. In particular the three ACEs of mental health, domestic abuse and neglect have been identified as key issues facing the childhood population in Northern Ireland.

To endeavour to bring these themes together, as reported in the 2019-2020 Annual Report, the SBNI commissioned a theatrical performance, 'Invictus', addressing all three areas whilst highlighting that adversity can be overcome. In light of COVID-19 lockdowns and their disproportionate negative impact on children and young people the SBNI again commissioned 'AlterEgo' to deliver 'Invictus' to schools in 2021.

The business year 2020-2021 heralded school closures across two academic years; 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, on an unprecedented scale. This combined with restrictions in social distancing and schools requirements to adopt a 'bubble' approach to student on site management meant the theatrical performance could not be delivered to the cohort of pupils in the live performance format as had been done in previous years.

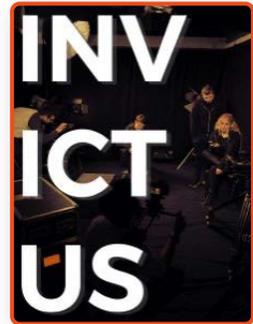
The SBNI worked with AlterEgo to deliver the performance of Invictus in a manner compliant with all COVID-19 regulations. The play was filmed with Northern Ireland actors assuming the three monologue roles within the play.

The SBNI worked with colleagues in the Education Authority and C2K to ensure this filmed performance was then made available to all post primary schools in Northern Ireland from March 2021 to the end of term June 2021. The target audience of the performance is students in Years 9 and above (12 years of age plus), parents, carers, teachers and professionals working with young people

The play highlighted how core skills and behaviours can be nurtured to help young people overcome and mitigate against the damage of toxic stress helping them to manage and navigate a number of critical life moments.

The play:

- raises awareness of the differing forms of childhood adversity
- identifies core skills to be nurtured to mitigate against the damage of toxic stress
- highlights core skills to manage and navigate critical life moments
- seeks to inspire hope and resilience amongst young people who may be experiencing adversity in their lives
- sign-posts young people to organisations etc. where they can receive support.



Whilst the optimal delivery of this performance to achieve a best outcome would be for the performance to be delivered 'in person' to a cohort of students, COVID-19 restrictions required all involved to work creatively across a different medium to ensure Safeguarding messages continued to be delivered during a very difficult time

Peer Mentoring in Child Protection Services

During 2019-2020, the SBNI commissioned the Centre for Effective Services (CES) to conduct a scoping exercise to ascertain if a Peer Mentoring Service for families involved within the child protection process, which is used in other countries, could be relevant in Northern Ireland. The work undertaken by CES involved a review of extensive global research into peer mentoring projects, the nature of these, the strengths and challenges of the various projects and the outcomes associated with them. The report was concluded and presented to the SBNI Board during the 2020 – 2021 business year. The SBNI Board welcomed this report and it has now been forwarded to DoH for consideration as to whether further work on this area should be taken forward.



Neglect Sub-Group

Strategic Priority 3: To improve outcomes for children and young people affected or potentially affected by Neglect through promoting the early recognition and improvement of agency responses.

SBNI Business Objectives 2020-2021

- 3.1: Promote early intervention with the aim of preventing children and young people experiencing Neglect.**
- 3.2: Raise awareness of Neglect with children/young people, parents/carers and staff.**
- 3.3: The Child Protection and Safeguarding system will be improved by hearing the views of Children and Young People, Parents, Carers and Staff through engagement with the SBNI Safeguarding Panels in relation to Neglect.**
- 3.4: Work with partner agencies to provide training in how to improve the recognition, assessment, and responses to children, young people and families experiencing Neglect.**

Neglect Sub-Group

Neglect continues to be a major focus for the SBNI, constituting one of the SBNI Strategic Priorities for 2018-2022. The issue is addressed by the SBNI through the work of the multi-agency Neglect Sub-Group. Within Northern Ireland, neglect continues to affect large numbers of children. This is reflected in the number of children on the Child Protection Register in Northern Ireland (March 2021) who were registered solely under the category of Neglect 617 children, (27% of the total Child Protection Registrations). In addition, the registration category of Neglect is included along with other forms of abuse in respect of 593 children. In total therefore, as of 31 March 2021, there are 1193 children where there are significant concerns in respect of neglect (53% of children with a child protection plan are deemed to be at significant risk of Neglect)

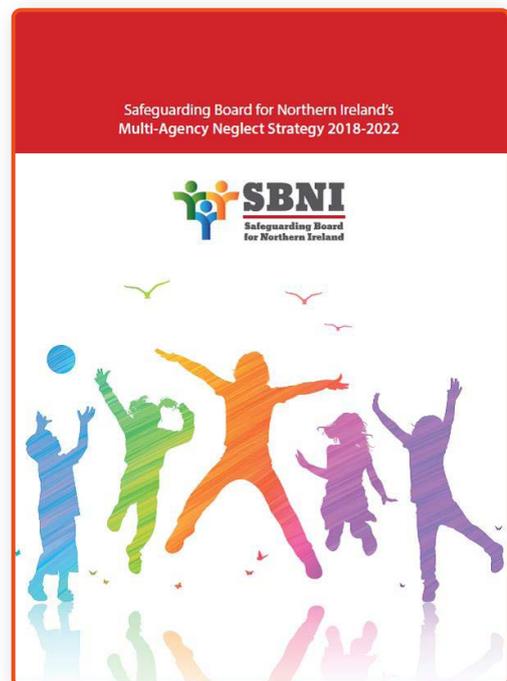


The single category of Neglect therefore represents the second highest category of children on the register. The highest single category on the register relates to physical abuse constituting 683 children. Neglect and Physical Abuse is the highest combined category with 500 children.

The SBNI Neglect Strategy

The work of the Neglect Sub-Group during the reporting year 2020-2021 has continued to focus on the implementation of the SBNI Neglect Strategy. The Strategy aims to assist agencies in Northern Ireland involved with children, young people and parents to take action to prevent, reduce and manage effects of neglect on children and families. The work of the Sub-Group works alongside the SBNI Early Intervention Transformation Programme work on Adverse Childhood Experiences.

The focus of the Sub-Group during 2020-2021 has been on ensuring the issue of Neglect continues to be addressed at local level through the Safeguarding Panels. Each panel has neglect as a standing agenda item and discussions centre on how agencies are now working together through their individual agency Neglect Action Plans.



'Graded Care 2' Assessment tool to measure neglect.

During the business year, member agencies of the Children's Services Improvement Board, considered and analysed a regional options appraisal to assist in identifying a consistent assessment tool for utilisation by practitioners to measure gradations of neglect. The tool agreed by this forum was the NSPCC Graded Care 2 Assessment Model.

Following liaison with the SBNI, the HSCB purchased two x two day training sessions for up to 40 Trainers to deliver the training on the use of this tool within their professional domains.

The HSCB also purchased the licence for the use of the tool to be used by multi-disciplinary professionals as required within local trust boundaries

The Train the Trainer package shall be delivered in the next business year.

Awareness Raising and Training

Awareness raising sessions regarding neglect have continued to take place at local Safeguarding Panel level supported by members of the Neglect Sub-Group.

During the reporting year members of the Sub-Group and the Safeguarding Panel Independent Chairs delivered 13 Level 1 and 2 awareness raising webinars for member and partner agencies of the SBNI between October 2020 and April 2021. These sessions delivered awareness raising to a total of 763 attendees to inform their practice and raise awareness of neglect amongst their service users and their associated public awareness initiatives. There were 234 evaluations completed and feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Unlike previous years when these were delivered in a face to face environment, delivery of the sessions moved to a virtual platform as a consequence of the COVID-19 restrictions.

One of the unintended benefits of this was the ability to reach a much wider audience. These attendees came from a range of professional groupings. Feedback from the sessions as in the previous business year was extremely positive as highlighted below:

- 'Good to have a refresher on this topic as it's very important'
- 'Enjoyed the session, great refresher for practice'
- 'I found this training/update to be more beneficial than anything previous'
- 'Thank you for a brilliant session look forward to more in-depth training in the futures from webinars delivered'

Participants of the sessions highlighted areas wherein they believed they could benefit from further input. Examples of these are as follows:

- Educational neglect
- Medical and Dental Neglect
- Disability and Neglect
- Adolescent Neglect
- Poverty and Neglect
- Affluent Neglect
- Hidden Harm and Neglect
- Criminal Justice System/Policing and Neglect
- Ethnic Inequalities and Neglect.

The realisation of some of these shall be undertaken in the next business year.

Views of Children/Young People, Parents/Carers and Practitioners

A task and finish group was re-established in this business year to explore how awareness raising amongst children and young people about neglect could be enhanced and their views sought.

The group was mindful of the on-going development of the SBNI Engagement Strategy 2021-2023 and was keen to utilise information contained in this Strategy to inform planning.

In the interim however, the group, albeit constrained by the COVID-19 regulations, supported the delivery of the Invictus theatrical performance to schools via video. This performance specifically highlights the area of emotional neglect and how to build resilience in respect of same.

Focus on Outcomes

A task and finish group has been established by the Neglect Sub-Group to measure the impact of the Neglect Strategy.

It is hoped, however, that the following indicators, will, over time show whether increased awareness/training through implementation of the Neglect Strategy has made a positive impact in the numbers of children/young people affected by neglect. It is anticipated that referral and child protection registration figures may increase in the initial stages. The key indicators agreed by the Neglect Sub-Group to measure the outcomes detailed in the strategy are as follows:

- attendance of children at school who are subject to a child protection plan under the category of neglect
- the number of re-registrations (within three years of original deregistration) on the child protection register under the category of neglect
- the number of dental registrations in respect of children per Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) for children aged 0-2 years and 3-5 years
- the number of children who have had dental caries extractions per HSCT by age group
- number of children escalated to Gateway from Early Intervention Support Service and the reason
- % of children under the category of neglect registered on the child protection register by HSCT
- number of NSPCC Helpline referrals that relate to the issue of neglect.

Data mining in the above areas was delayed in this business year and shall be taken forward in the next business year.

Domestic Violence and Abuse Sub-Group

Strategic Priority 2: To provide a voice to children and young people affected by domestic violence and abuse.

SBNI Business Objectives 2020-2021

- 2.1 SBNI will work with government departments and their agencies to prevent Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) from occurring.**
- 2.2 SBNI will work with partners engaged in the DVA arena to raise awareness among parents/carers and professionals of the effect of DVA on children and young people.**
- 2.3 SBNI will work with partners engaged in the DVA arena to promote education for children and young people in how to recognise, respond and seek help in relation to DVA.**



Domestic Violence and Abuse Sub-Group

The SBNI has adopted a strength-based, trauma-informed approach to safeguarding children and young people, underpinned by research relating to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). As part of this, the SBNI in its Strategic Plan 2018-2022 has placed specific focus on three of the most significant ACEs for children and young people living in Northern Ireland: neglect, mental health and domestic violence.

The SBNI Domestic Violence and Abuse Sub-Group was established in 2018. The Sub-Group is chaired by an Assistant Director of Children's Social Services from the Southern Health and Social Care Trust. Membership comprises representatives from the five Health and Social Care Trusts, Police Service of Northern Ireland, Probation Board of Northern Ireland, Public Health Agency, Youth Justice Agency, Include Youth, Barnardo's NI Women's Aid Federation NI, NSPCC, Education Authority Northern Ireland and NEXUS. The representatives from the five Health and Social Care Trusts also chair the five local Domestic Violence Partnerships. Their presence on the SBNI Sub-Group therefore facilitates connectivity with local and regional initiatives.

The focus of the Sub-Group is to ensure the child is recognised as a victim in his/her own right in a situation where domestic violence is a feature. The group endeavors to progress this via a number of work streams as follows;

Working with government departments and their agencies to prevent Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) from occurring.

The SBNI participates in two domestic violence forums to promote the voice of the child as a victim of domestic abuse in his/her own right.

1. The Stakeholders Assurance Group (SAG) co-chaired by the Department of Health and Department of Justice
2. The PSNI Independent Advisory Group (IAG) chaired by a PSNI Chief Inspector with responsibility for Domestic Violence and Abuse.

1. Strategic Delivery Board (SDB) and the Stakeholders Assurance Group (SAG)

The cross departmental Strategic Delivery Board (SDB) is responsible for delivering the twenty priorities contained within the *'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy'* (March 2016). The SDB comprises of senior officials from the government departments of Health, Justice, Education, Communities and Finance. The Stakeholder Assurance Group (SAG) was established with a remit to provide advice and quality assurance to the SDB as required.

SBNI members of the Domestic Violence and Abuse Sub-Group participate in the regional Stakeholder Assurance Group ensuring the voice of children and young people is represented to policy makers and influencers. The SAG is co-chaired by Senior Civil Servants from DoH and DoJ. It also involves key domestic violence stakeholders. The group meets quarterly and exchanges information on policy developments and planning.

The Chair of the SBNI Domestic Violence and Abuse Sub-Group has a primary role within this group which includes providing leadership to twice yearly workshops to consider specific areas of domestic violence particularly as they relate to the impact of domestic violence on children. The SBNI Sub-Group Chair keeps the SAG informed of any developments in respect of children.

During this reporting year the SAG focused on its mid-term strategy review as well as developing plans for year six of the Strategy. The SAG also endorsed the [Equally Safeguarded Report](#). In year, the SAG reviewed the 'Promoting Positive Relationships' Evaluation. This programme was commissioned as a pilot to work with perpetrators of abuse and address their domestically abusive behaviours. The group considered the on-going training available across the multidisciplinary groups in terms of domestic violence and promoted the annual public media campaign 'Sixteen Days of Action'. This is a regional campaign highlighting Domestic Abuse. The group very positively received a presentation from Caroline Holloway NSPCC on the development of its Sexual Abuse Strategy.

2. Independent Advisory Group (IAG)

The SBNI participates in the Domestic Violence Independent Advisory Group (IAG). This group was set up, and is chaired, by a Chief Inspector within the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The group acts as a 'critical friend' to the Police Service. Its main aim is to increase trust and confidence with the public in policing in respect of its response to domestic abuse. The IAG also provides constructive advice to the PSNI in improving the quality of service delivery to victims of domestic abuse, stalking, harassment and honour based violence, across all communities.

Membership of the IAG comprises a PSNI chair, representation from the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), PSNI Rape Crime Unit, the Northern Ireland Policing Board, Women's Aid Federation of Northern Ireland, Men's Advisory Project, Public Prosecution Service, Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service, Victim Support, Action on Elder Abuse and NSPCC. This forum previously was 'adult – focused'. The presence of SBNI representation on the group has encouraged consideration of the child as a victim in his/her own right and promotes the child's voice in police management of domestic abuse. The group shared information across each professional group on individual, joint and collective responses to domestic violence and the potential for this abuse to become even more 'unseen' given the 'Stay at Home' requirements.

Working with partners engaged in the DVA arena to raise awareness among parents/ carers and professionals of the impact of DVA on children and young people

During this period SBNI member agencies recognised the 'lockdown' experience would be difficult for many families and the attendant stress could potentially lead to an increase in domestic abuse incidents. The SBNI worked collaboratively with member agencies and particularly the PSNI to ensure both emergency and support contact details were easily available and accessible for victims of domestic abuse via a range of media and social media platforms.

The Domestic Violence and Abuse Sub-Group moved its meetings onto an online platform and met throughout the reporting year. The continuance of these meetings provided an excellent platform for the sharing of data and information across the multi-disciplinary group on how agencies were responding individually and collectively to the increase in domestic abuse calls to the PSNI.

The commitment to the Sub-Group in year resulted in a connectedness of agencies which has allowed for an increased ease in respect of joint innovative working - outside of the Sub-Group despite the challenges of the pandemic. This is exemplified by the e learning package developed and delivered by the Women's Aid Federation – funded by DoJ.

Domestic Abuse Assessment Tool

Members of the Sub-Group revisited the availability of a consistent assessment tool available for social work practitioners who are assessing domestic abuse and its impact upon families. Regional work had previously taken place between the five HSCT's and Barnardo's NI to explore, develop and pilot the implementation of a consistent tool. It was agreed during this reporting business year it was appropriate to revisit this work.



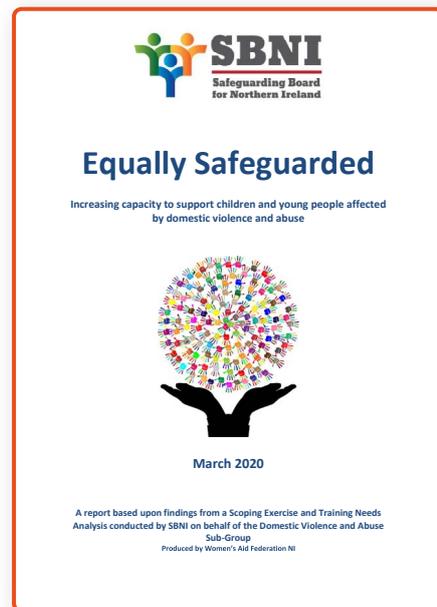
In 2017, Barnardo's developed the Domestic Violence Risk Assessment for Children (DVRAC). The DVRAC manual was developed to support practitioners working with families experiencing domestic abuse by a male perpetrator to: identify risks to children from domestic violence and begin the risk assessment process; decide whether a case needs a safeguarding response or family support; and identify appropriate interventions for the children, the non-abusing parents and the abusive father/ father figure. Barnardo's have recently changed the title of this assessment tool and it is now known as Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment for Children (DARAC).

Funding was provided by the SBNI to enable Barnardo's to train 12 representatives from each HSCT and to brief the multi-disciplinary member agencies at the five local Safeguarding Panels upon the implementation of the model. This work shall be reported upon in the next business year.

At the commencement of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SBNI worked alongside the Women's Aid Federation to provide financial support to assist children who were leaving their home on an emergency basis as a consequence of domestic violence. Given the prevalence and transmission rate of the virus, families could not immediately access refuge provision and had to undergo a period of 'quarantine' to mitigate against transmission of the virus in the residential communal setting. Financial support assisted in offsetting costs associated with this period of quarantine for children.

Working with partners engaged in the DVA arena to promote education for children and young people in how to recognise, respond to and seek help in relation to DVA

In 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, the SBNI undertook a scoping exercise of the current service provision for children and young people affected by domestic violence and abuse. The exercise aimed to scope the nature and location of services available to children and families who experience this form of abuse. The exercise also sought to determine the extent of awareness of the impact of domestic violence upon children. The scoping exercise involved all member agencies of the SBNI Domestic Violence and Abuse Sub-Group. The SBNI commissioned the Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland to undertake an analysis of the data collected and produce a report on the findings. The report 'Equally Safeguarded' was presented to the SBNI Board in October 2020. The Board approved this report which was then presented to SAG. The Domestic Violence Sub-Group is taking forward the actions associated with this report



The SBNI Domestic Violence and Abuse Sub-Group undertook to scope the training provided to professionals of all member agencies working with children who are victims of domestic abuse with analysis of this work being undertaken in this reporting year. This exercise was designed to produce a needs analysis to inform a training plan to support agencies working with children and young people affected by domestic violence and abuse. The scoping exercise involved all member agencies of the Domestic Violence and Abuse Sub-Group. As detailed above the Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland analysed the returns received and the outcome is also detailed in [Equally Safeguarded](#).

Storyboard Framework – A tool for working with Children who experience Domestic Abuse

An SBNI task and finish group met during 2020-2021 to consider the tools available to all practitioners to work with children who experienced domestic violence. The group comprised membership from the Health and Social Care Trusts, the NSPCC and the Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland. The group collated and considered the range of graphically animated tools available within the agencies who primarily work with children. The group determined the 'Storyboard Tool' used by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT) was consistent with the current models of intervention used by member agencies of the SBNI (for example the Signs of Safety model utilised within HSCTs). This tool had, when in development within SEHSCT, been consulted upon with children, parents and practitioners. The SBNI task and finish group recommends use of this tool as good practice to member agencies who work with children. The SBNI Board approval for use of the framework will be sought in the next business year (scheduled for June 2021).



Operation Encompass

Operation Encompass is an initiative currently operating in England and Wales. It involves the reporting to schools by police, before the beginning of the new school day, if a child or young person has been involved in or experienced a domestic abuse incident the previous evening. The purpose of the information exchange is to ensure members of education staff (teachers) are aware the child may require additional nurturing or support during the day. The cross departmental 'Domestic Violence Strategic Delivery Board' (SDB) in April 2018 asked that an SBNI task and finish group be established to determine if such an initiative should be delivered in Northern Ireland.



The SBNI task and finish group was established in November 2018 comprising representatives from the government departments of Health, Justice and Education. The group also had representation from the Education Authority and two health professionals. During the reporting year representatives from DoJ and DoH met to develop legislation to support and facilitate the sharing of information between PSNI and education providers.

This legislation was included in the miscellaneous section of the Domestic Abuse Bill which received Royal Assent on 01 March 2021 and is due to be fully implemented in the forthcoming business year (2021-2022).

Work had commenced in the previous reporting year (2019-2020) to introduce an 'Operation Encompass pilot' for the County Down area (based on parental consent given the on-going development of legislation). The purpose was to allow the PSNI to share limited information to the school of a child victim of domestic violence.

Implementation of the pilot was delayed as a consequence of the pandemic surges and the necessity to close schools to reduce the transmission rate of the virus. It is anticipated the pilot shall be implemented in the next business year and coinciding with the new academic year of 2021-2022.

During the reporting year (2020-2021), in order to ensure momentum was not lost on this project as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, significant work was undertaken to understand the environmental landscape for this proposed pilot area, data mining was undertaken and training packages for schools, boards of governors and parents were developed. Operation Encompass branded materials were developed and amended to reflect Northern Ireland culture with appropriate terminology, etc.

Mental Health

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

SBNI Business Objectives 2020-2021

- 4.1 Objective: Work with partners to raise awareness among parents/ carers and professionals of the effect of poor mental health on children and young people.**
- 4.2 Objective: Work with partners to promote awareness for children and young people in how to recognise, respond and seek help in relation to mental health.**
- 4.3 Objective: 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.**

Mental Health

The SBNI Strategic Plan 2018-2022 also focusses on the issue of mental health of children and young people living in Northern Ireland.

In May 2020, the Department of Health published the Mental Health Action Plan and a COVID-19 Mental Health Response Plan and later, as part of continuing reforms, published the ten year Mental Health Strategy, March 2021-2031. These provide a framework to support and promote good mental health, provide early intervention to prevent serious mental illness, provide the right response at the right time according to individual needs.

Following on from this in October 2020, the findings of the Health and Social Care Board commissioned 'The Youth Wellbeing Survey' were published. This survey collected data from more than 3,000 children and young people in Northern Ireland and more than 2,800 parents and caregivers. This study reports prevalence estimates of common mental health problems in children and young people in Northern Ireland.

Rates of anxiety and depression are around 25% higher in the child and youth population in Northern Ireland in comparison to other UK nations. Other findings included:

- 12.6% children and young people have common mood disorders
- an increase in depression and anxiety associated with family, social and economic factors, trauma adversity disability, poor child health, Special Educational Needs and parental mental health
- 5-10 year old boys had higher incidence of emotional problems than girls
- 1:8 children had emotional difficulties
- 1:8 had attempted suicide
- 1:2 young people between the ages of 11-19 had at least one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)
- common ACEs were: parental separation, parental mental health emotional neglect, domestic violence, parental alcohol or substance use
- more females report three or more ACES.

Within this context the SBNI worked to deliver against its 'mental health objectives'.

Business Plan Objective 4.1

Work with partners to raise awareness among parents/carers and professionals of the effect of poor mental health on children and young people.

What Just Happened?

This year the SBNI in partnership with Playboard, Parenting NI and the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust developed an e book 'What Just Happened'. The publication was in response to requests from schools who noted their parents and carers were experiencing increasing difficulties managing their children's stress and anxiety whilst home schooling, in addition to other external pressures on family life.



The e-book is published on SBNI's website and is readily available to parents and carer's through the Education Authority and Department of Education's portals. The e-book was evaluated through facilitative training programmes led by Parenting NI.

The SBNI worked in partnership with Playboard NI to contribute to a play based publication which has a focus on resilience and mental health for children and young people. This publication is still in the development stage and the focus of the resource has altered to become a children's story book with associated resources for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The development and progress of this resource will be reported on in the next annual report for 2021-2022.

The SBNI in partnership with the PSNI and The Open University contributed to the co-production and development of a free educational course – 'Engaging with children & Young People'. This online course is available to anyone interested in promoting their understanding of:

- effective ways of engaging with children and young people
- the potential impact of adverse childhood experiences on a child's development/emotional health and wellbeing
- the difference between 'at risk' and 'risky behaviours'
- steps that can be taken to better support children and young people.

Business Plan Objective 4.2

Work with partners to promote awareness for children and young people in how to recognise, respond and seek help in relation to mental health.

The Well Project – Promoting Well-Being through new coaching methods and tools.

The SBNI worked in partnership with Southern Regional College and the college's international partners to support their trainers in delivering a programme promoting mental well-being through new coaching methods and tools.

The Well Project is funded through the EU Erasmus + programme and enables partner colleges from Northern Ireland, Spain and the Republic of Ireland to work together to improve resources available for students who are progressing to Higher Education (HE). Southern Regional College (SRC) is the lead partner. The overall aim of the project is to:

- decrease the levels of stress and anxiety often faced by students who are making the transition to Higher Education by equipping students with tools and resources to boost their knowledge and skills around self-care.

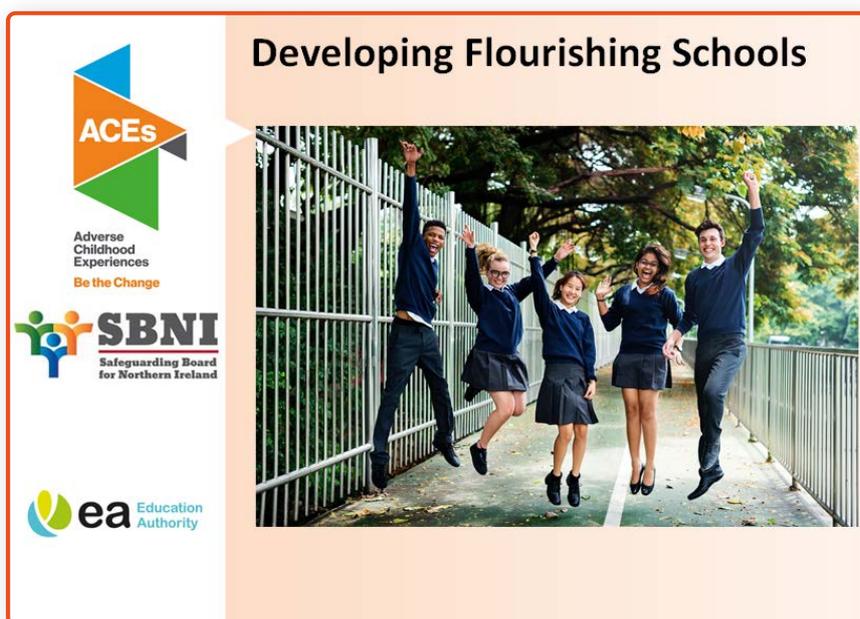
The SBNI provided advice and support to the Well Project's advisory committee sharing examples of good practice concerning emotional health and well-being. The SBNI facilitated a trauma informed session examining aspects of self-care to promote positive emotional health and well-being for lead project partners as well as a presentation on self-care for the training the trainers programme.

Flourishing Schools Programme

As a result of COVID-19, many school buildings remained closed for children and young people during the first period of lockdown. In response to requests from the Department of Education and the Education Authority (EA), the SBNI provided training and support for both schools and link officers from the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), the Controlled Schools Support Council (CSSC) and the EA who were tasked with supporting schools during the pandemic. The emphasis of the training was to enable schools to consider potential implications of isolation and lack of access to friends and supportive adults for children and young people during the first period of lockdown. It did this using trauma informed approaches to consider, safe and effective methods to help children, young people and staff reintegrate back into the full school community effectively. This training was delivered through a series of 15 webinars to:

- link officers from Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)
- link Officers from Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI)
- link Officers from Education Authority (EA)
- principals of Special Education
- principals of Nurseries and Pre School Settings
- principals of Primary Schools
- principals of Post Primary Schools.

A follow up session was delivered to Principals of Special Education schools, using the application of the Sequential Intercept Model/Universal Service Delivery process to develop a sustainable trauma informed school.



Pilot Schools Programme

Through the Trauma Informed Practice Project the SBNI has led the development of four pilot projects within three separate schools and one further education college including;

- one special education school
- one primary school
- one post primary school.

The aim of the pilot programmes is to develop a sustainable multiagency and collaborative model of trauma informed practice within each school/college. The model seeks to ensure that each child young person and their family has access to the right intervention and support at the right time to help children and young people develop a sense of well-being and support within their school/college community enabling them to fully engage in school/college life and learning. The pilot programmes have encouraged each school and college to host a multi-agency advisory panel. The college's advisory panel consists of senior leadership team from Human Resources, Curriculum, Student Support Services, and the SBNI, whereas the schools panels have included health trust membership as well as their schools advisory council. Each pilot project is underpinned by the Universal Service Delivery model which is quality assurance methodology that enables the pilot school or college and their advisory partners to map the entry to exit experience for children during each school day. This has enabled each school to expand and develop existing models of intervention and support including:

- recruitment of specialist personnel for pupil support
- establishment of a specialist centre for well-being staffed by specialist support staff
- development of emotional health and well-being curriculum that is child and young person centred and informed by children and young people
- engagement and development of partnerships with youth led advocacy services
- access to training in Theraplay
- access to community support initiatives involving children and their families
- a review of relationship and behavioral policies and procedures using a trauma informed approach
- strengthening relationships between education and health and social care services
- strengthening relationships and collaboration with intercultural services.

One pilot school identified the need for specialist personnel to lead on trauma informed practice within their school and have undergone a process of recruitment to ensure the right personnel are part of the staff team to help support children and young people's health and well-being. As part of their development the school was able to work collaboratively with community partners to establish a bespoke Well-Being Centre for their students.

Business Plan Objective 4.3

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.

Over the last year the SBNI has continued to support the PSNI with ongoing organisational training development that has equipped PSNI officers with the awareness, information and confidence to empathically respond to and intervene with vulnerable families.

A six-month post training evaluation reported that as a result of Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Awareness training, officers continued to show a strong improvement in the implementation of their knowledge into practice. The vast majority of officers stated that as a result of the training they have been more empathetic, have better used their communication skills to speak to and support people in crisis, have a greater understanding of vulnerability and feel better equipped to help vulnerable people and families. Overall, the ACE training has led to an increase in officers' ability to manage and interact with vulnerable individuals and children.

During the last year the SBNI has supported the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) to undertake a review of their current operational service delivery in relation to children who have experienced the harmful impact of adverse childhood experiences. Through the application of a methodology (Universal Service Delivery process) the YJA reviewed the experience of a child's journey from the point of entry to exit of the Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre. The review enabled YJA to identify areas that could be improved. One example is that it led to the identification of the need for an assertive outreach service that would promote a continuity and consistency of support by the YJA staff for the young person once discharged from the Centre. This development will enable those young people to maintain ongoing support and help from those YJA staff members they have built up trusting relationships with following their discharge into a community placement. YJA staff members will continue to support the emotional health and wellbeing of the young person and reduce the potential risk of recidivism and re-entry into the Centre.

The SBNI has worked in partnership with Child Care Partnerships to ensure all 'Programmes for two year old Coordinators' within Sure Start are trained within the Trauma Informed Practice 'Training the Trainer' Model. This will help to ensure that children and their families are offered the right intervention at the right time through a trauma informed approach to help strengthen emotional health and wellbeing for both the child and their family.

St John the Baptist College Portadown

At the start of the pandemic in April 2020, the SBNI was asked to work with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust to consider critical care wellbeing and support resources for the critical care units across the Belfast Trust. SBNI approached the principal of St John the Baptist College in Portadown with a view to some of the college's students designing pictures that could be displayed on the coffee room walls of the intensive care units throughout the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, as messages of encouragement and support for staff. The college welcomed the challenge and generously donated over 50 hampers/gift bags, bean bags and pictures to the Belfast Trust to help support critical care staff as they worked through the pandemic. The students spent time and effort creating beautiful artwork for staff to enjoy during their rest periods. This was all possible due to the generosity of all the staff, students and the board of governors from St John the Baptist College.



At the end of March 2021, the SBNI was pleased to be able to appoint a Chair for the Mental Health Committee. The work of the Committee and its membership will be reported in the next annual report.



Child Sexual Exploitation Sub-Group

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

SBNI Business Objectives 1.5 2020-2021

1.5 Objective: Statutory partners consider the range of child protection information available and use this to agree priorities moving forward which can be actioned through an Outcome Based Accountability framework in respect to Child Sexual Exploitation

Ensure Services in Respect of Child Sexual Exploitation are effective across SBNI member agencies

- **Develop Action Plan arising from Evaluation of CSE in NI**
- **Implement Actions arising from the 14 recommendations in Evaluation Report**

The CSE Sub-Group was established to:

- develop an understanding of CSE in Northern Ireland as experienced by young people through a collaborative approach to raise awareness and further develop agency and community understanding of CSE in Northern Ireland
- assist the SBNI Policy and Procedure Committee by identifying good practice and to highlight areas where practice required to be improved
- report to the SBNI Board on the delivery of the recommendations by member agencies of the “Marshall Report into Child Sexual Exploitation in Northern Ireland – Inquiry by Professor Kathleen Marshall” Nov 2014 (The Marshall Report) and “Getting Focussed and Staying Focussed – a Thematic Review of Child Sexual Exploitation” Nov 2015 (Pinkerton).



Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity.

(a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or

(b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child Sexual Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.³

The SBNI has had a key role in highlighting and managing the issue of child sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland. This has been undertaken through the SBNI Child Sexual Exploitation Sub-Group. The aim of the Sub-Group is to facilitate the opportunity for SBNI members to work collaboratively to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of children who are being sexually exploited or are at risk of being sexually exploited.

The CSE Sub-Group has, in this reporting period, been chaired by a PSNI Chief Superintendent and comprises senior management – at Assistant Director level- representation from Health and Social Care Trusts, Health and Social Care Board, Education Authority Northern Ireland (EANI), NSPCC, Probation Board (PBNI), Youth Justice Agency (YJA), the Social Work Regional Lead for CSE and Barnardo’s NI Safe Choices Project.

There is a natural cross-over between the work undertaken by this group and other SBNI committees (including the Online Safety Forum, the Child Protection Sub-Group and the Policies and Procedures Committee).

³ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-young-people-northern-ireland>

CSE Evaluation 2020

The “Getting Focussed, Staying Focussed Thematic Review into CSE” 2015 led by Professor John Pinkerton QUB, made a primary recommendation that the SBNI lead a regional benchmarking thematic audit into the effectiveness of responses to those children and young people being ‘Looked After’ with a record of repeated going missing where there are concerns about CSE.

In 2018, in response to the above, the SBNI commissioned an overarching review and evaluation of all member agencies responses to CSE; ‘Evaluating the responsiveness of SBNI member agencies to the prevention, recognition, treatment and management of CSE’ (Leonard Consultancy 2020).

This multi-agency evaluation examined, both at a strategic and operational level, how the member agencies of the SBNI have been addressing CSE from prevention to intervention within Northern Ireland.

The evaluation also took account of the ‘Child Sexual Exploitation in Northern Ireland, Report of the Independent Inquiry’, by Professor Kathleen Marshall (November 2014)

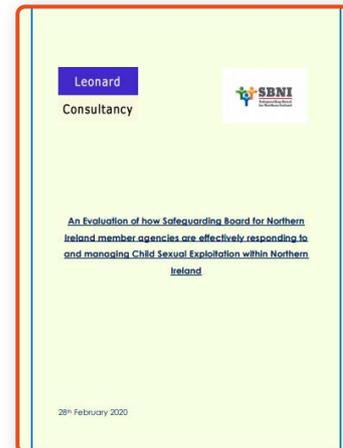
All SBNI member agencies co-operated fully and in a timely manner with the evaluation process.

Overall the review determined that the focused efforts post “Marshall” and “Pinkerton” have been effective in embedding the awareness and knowledge of CSE as a form of sexual abuse across the SBNI member agencies. There was a confidence and competence from practitioners across the member agencies in their recognition and understanding of CSE as a form of sexual abuse. The appointment of CSE Leads in both HSC Trusts and Police has overwhelmingly had a positive impact in enhancing the information sharing and joint working between police and social workers. This has led to a shared understanding between both agencies and led to improved joint working.

The evaluation also found that young people, who are deemed to be at risk of sexual abuse through exploitation, or have been confirmed as having been sexually exploited, will have experienced different forms of child abuse and a range of childhood adversities. The review recommended that these children should be assessed, managed and interventions provided as complex child sexual abuse within the SBNI child protection procedures. This would ensure more rigorous governance processes, more effective multiagency working and better sharing of information which should help to reduce risk and promote recovery.

The CSE Evaluation Report was published on 06 July 2020. Its publication coincided with the publication of the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) review of CSE in NI on 30 June 2020. The [CSE Evaluation Report 2020](#) is available on the SBNI Website.

The CSE Evaluation Report made 14 recommendations in respect of how the improvements made in the management of CSE could be consolidated and developed. As reported in the previous business year (2019-2020), work was already underway between the DoH, DoJ and the SBNI to ensure effective governance arrangements were in place to oversee the consideration and implementation of the action planning process of both the Evaluation and Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland Reports.



During the reporting year the Child Protection Senior Officials Group (CPSOG) refreshed its terms of reference and membership – in part - to oversee the governance of the implementation of the action planning of both reports (CSE Evaluation and CJINI Reports). A subgroup of the CPSOG has been established to support the governance of the implementation of both reports. SBNI have representation on this group.

The CSE Sub-Group has ‘themed’ the CSE Evaluation Report recommendations into three Broad areas

- **Governance**
- **Operational**
- **Preventative/Partnership**

Each Sub-Group meeting has addressed one of the aforementioned themes and identified owners, timescales and actions.

CSE Risk Assessment

Barnardo’s NI is leading on work in the UK in respect of a review of the professional risk assessment for practitioners who are concerned regarding Child Sexual Exploitation. The Sub-Group has commissioned Dr Helen Beckett of the University of Bedfordshire⁴ to explore this work and determine its potential relevance for Northern Ireland. This work shall progress in the autumn of 2021 and is factored into the timetable of action planning associated with the CSE Evaluation Report and CJINI Report.

4 Dr Helen Beckett, Director, The International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking & Reader in Child Protection and Children’s Rights

Online Safety Forum

SBNI Strategic Priority 1 2018-2022:- to provide leadership and set direction in the safeguarding and protection of children and young people

Online Safety Forum Work plan Objectives 2020-2021

- **Plan and implement a coordinated approach to online safety in Northern Ireland**
- **Inform and influence policy and practice development of online safety in Northern Ireland**
- **Raise awareness of new and emerging threats in the online world**
- **Promote the voice of children and young people as valued participants in the Online Safety Forum work**
- **Ensure that the views of children and young people are integral to the work of the Online Safety Forum**



The use of the internet and mobile technologies has opened up a world of exciting opportunities for children and young people and gives them access to almost unlimited information worldwide.

However, it also places them at potential risk of being bullied online, encountering sexual images and/or inappropriate content; online grooming; and misuse of their personal data. Most children and young people today are very proficient in using technology but immaturity and a lack of knowledge of the risks involved can put them in danger.



UK Council for
Internet Safety

The SBNI Online Safety Forum operates as a non-statutory committee of the Safeguarding Board.

Membership

The Online Safety Forum provides space for the sharing of new initiatives, trends and risks in respect to on-line safety with SBNI member agencies and partner agencies. The group is chaired by a Detective Chief Inspector from Police Service of Northern Ireland, Public Protection Branch. The forum's membership comprises representatives from the following agencies – Police Service of Northern Ireland, the 5 Health and Social Care Trusts, Child Exploitation Online Protection Command (CEOP – overseen by the National Crime Agency), Education Authority Northern Ireland, C2K (Education Technology Managed Service for Schools), NSPCC, the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), Include Youth, Northern Ireland Anti – Bullying Forum (NIABF), National Children's Bureau NI (NCB), Nexus NI, Parenting NI, Children in Northern Ireland and an SBNI Professional Officer.

During the business year 2020-2021 the Forum retained a place on the UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) Education Working Group (EWG). The Education Authority representative on the Forum attends the EWG.

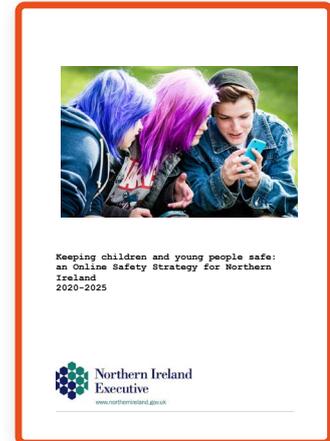
COVID-19 and associated Online Safety risks

The government 'Stay at Home' campaign and the subsequent introduction of regulations requiring society on a number of occasions to restrict its movements to endeavour to reduce the transmission of the virus, commenced at the beginning of the current reporting period. This increased the vulnerability and risk for children and young people who have been spending more time at home than ever before with the closure of schools etc. In recognition of this development, the SBNI undertook to promote member agencies online safety campaigns. This was done by frequently and regularly sharing and pushing social media posts in respect of advice for parents, carers and professionals with regard to staying safe whilst online.

The SBNI has worked with Ineqe – the company that hosts the SBNI Application (App), to ensure quick access to all current safeguarding information for parents, carers and professionals.

The Launch of the Online Safety Strategy

The Northern Ireland Executive commissioned the SBNI to oversee the development of an Online Safety Strategy. In doing so the Executive recognised that safety of children and young people when using the internet and electronic technology (e-safety) is a continuing concern for parents, carers, professionals, and broader society. Evidence of this concern is clear from the increased research focus and media coverage of incidents of cyber-bullying, grooming and exploitation.



The Online Safety Strategy proposes a new vision with core principles and commitments to underpin online safety for children and young people in Northern Ireland. A co-design process with children and young people informed the development of the Strategy. It focuses on three key pillars for action to achieve the vision of keeping all children and young people in Northern Ireland safe online;

- creating a sustainable online safety infrastructure for Northern Ireland
- educating our children and young people, their parents and those who work with them
- developing evidence-informed quality standards for online safety.

To make sure all children and young people are safe and secure online the strategy suggests that:

- all parents and carers are supporting their children and young people to stay safe online
- all those working with children and young people are supporting them to stay safe online
- the general public are supporting children and young people to stay safe online.

The overall objectives of the strategy are to support the development of a comprehensive cross-government three year action plan that will improve online safety by:

- reflecting existing evidence of good practice in online safety approaches
- engaging with existing online safety mechanisms elsewhere in the UK, seeking to add value and not to duplicate
- educating and supporting children and young people, and those responsible for their care and safety, to develop skills and knowledge to stay safe online
- facilitating the responsible use of digital and internet technology
- providing information on how to handle online abuse if it occurs and facilitating access to age-appropriate support services including recovery services.

The strategy was approved by the Northern Ireland Executive in November 2020. It was published by the DoH on behalf of the Executive on 09 February 2021 to coincide with Safer Internet Day 2021.

The Online Safety Forum has commenced work upon the actions attendant upon it as identified within the Action Plan.

(<https://www.safeguardingni.org/resources/online-safety-strategy>).



Anti-Bullying Week and Safer Internet Day

The SBNI Online Safety Forum in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Anti Bullying Forum supported Anti Bullying Week 2020, ABW20 Creative Arts Competition, the first NI Odd Socks Day and Safer Internet Day 2021.

This year, Northern Ireland joined the 'Four Nation' coordination to ABW20 in a joint theme of 'United Against Bullying'. This coordination strengthened the message 'We Are All a Piece of The Puzzle' emphasising that everyone has a role to play in ending bullying.



ABW20 Creative Art Competition

ABW20 Creative Arts Competition was launched during Anti-Bullying Week. Children and young people were encouraged to create a piece of art that reflected the 'United Against Bullying' theme and manifesto including positive messaging, the challenges of bullying and shared efforts to reduce bullying in schools and communities.

There were three categories to enter this year;

- **Written Word** (including essay, short story, poem and script)
- **Visual Art** (including drawing, painting, sculpture, photography and textiles)
- **Video** (including short film, dance, drama, song, spoken word).

There were five age categories for the competition, based on the school year group of the child/young person during ABW & Special Educational Needs Merit Prize. The age categories were Pre-school year – Primary 3, Primary 4 – 7, Year 8 – 10, Year 11 and over. A total of 225 entries were received.

Prize Winning Celebration Day

Shortlisted entries were judged by a panel, including members of the NI Anti Bullying Forum (NIABF), Translink & Safeguarding Board NI on 06 January 2021. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the usual celebration event was not possible but instead was held as an Online Celebration Day on 26 March 2021. A total of 16 winner and runner-up pieces were selected.



A celebration video of all winner and runner up pieces was shared and celebrated online and in social media. The winners and runners up received personalised letters from the Education Minister Peter Weir, acknowledging their success and thanking them for assisting in sharing the anti-bullying message, and prizes which were sponsored by Translink and SBNI.

Safer Internet Day 2021

Safer Internet Day – 09 February 2021

The Online Safety Forum supported a number of member agencies initiatives on Safer Internet Day as follows:

- **WHSCT** hosted several Zoom events. The first hosted by Dr Tarsan Singh Kuna considered the ethics of practitioners seeking information on service users' social media sites. The second event was hosted by Ms Paula Gibson considering the risks associated with Online Gaming and Gambling
- **Parenting NI** promoted short online workshops for parents to enable them to access support. One of the workshops was specifically targeted at dads
- **C2K** (EA Department which is responsible for internet services within schools) supported Safer Internet Day via the C2K News Desk and the made available to all schools specific education packs
- **UKCIS** (UK Council for Internet Safety) promoted all recent resources online.

Development of Guidance for teachers on 'Sexting'

The Online Safety Forum recognises the growing area of 'Sexting' in schools whereby children and young people electronically send explicit text and pictures of themselves to peers. The Forum recognised the absence of guidance specifically in Northern Ireland for teachers managing this difficult issue on a day to day basis. The Forum therefore developed guidance for teachers in Northern Ireland – in collaboration with the Child Exploitation Online Protection command (CEOP). During the targeted consultation in the autumn of 2019 the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) noted a that the legislative infrastructure which underpins similar guidance in England does not exist in Northern Ireland.

The Forum has continued to work alongside the PSNI and PPS to seek a remedy to this issue. The group have also refreshed its draft guidance following the revision of the UKCIS UK Guidance on Sexting.

PSNI/YJA Sexting Pilot

The PSNI advised the Online Safety Forum of a PSNI and YJA collaborative pilot scheme considering the issue of education and management of sexting issues in respect of young people. The pilot incorporated the Belfast, Newry and Mourne and Armagh/Banbridge/Craigavon council areas. The pilot has focused on 10-17 year olds who have engaged in sexting behaviours but where there are no aggravating factors. The Youth Justice Agency undertakes a one off educational session in respect of the area of sexting, initially with the offender and with the victim also. In the autumn of 2020 there had been 58 referrals and 14 referrals awaiting allocation. Feedback from families in respect of the pilot has been very positive.

Safer Internet Centre Online Safety Workshop

C2K facilitated an Online Safety Workshop for the forum members. The webinar was delivered by Boris Radonvic from the UK Safer Internet Centre. This was the first of at least annual workshops to be hosted for member agencies on the most recent developments in respect of on-line safety. The webinar provided information in respect of online gaming issues, availability of safer search engines for children, screen stacking, screen time and the 360 degree self-audit tool. The Online Safety Workshop was extremely successful and well received. Another session shall be made available in the forthcoming year.

Interfaith Sub-Group

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

- **Interfaith Sub-Group Work Plan Objectives 2020-2021**
- **Effective collaboration of stakeholders in ensuring children involved in the Faith sector are protected and safeguarded**
- **To develop and share good practice arrangements and safeguarding resources for use within the sector and encourage use across any Faith groups**
- **To support the promotion within faith groups of appropriate safeguarding messages at an operational level**
- **To identify key localised issues and develop safeguarding initiatives within Faith groups and share the same with the wider SBNI membership**
- **To review the wider SBNI Policies and Procedures for their applicability across the Faith sector in conjunction with the SBNI Policy and Procedures Committee to seek to ensure the dissemination and encourage adoption of same.**

In Northern Ireland it is recognised that at least 68% of all youth groups are based within the faith sector.

Northern Ireland faith groups recognise their obligation to protect children and young people with whom they come in to contact through the creation and promotion of a safe environment which protects them from harm. Faith organisations have a capacity to be a positive influence on children, providing the supporting structures and environment that places welfare first.

Faith groups in Northern Ireland are represented within the SBNI partnership and work in collaboration with other SBNI committees to encourage effective communication and engagement in the development of key safeguarding initiatives. The groups continue to promote the importance of sharing safeguarding resources, skills and knowledge.

The Interfaith Sub-Group seeks to facilitate co-operation between various faith groups and the SBNI. Membership of the group is derived from the Catholic Church Diocese of Down and Connor, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church and the Evangelical Alliance.

The group is attended by representatives from the NSPCC, the PSNI, and HSCB and is supported by a Professional Officer from SBNI. The aim of the SBNI Interfaith Sub-Group is to enhance the safety and welfare of children and young people within the range of faith group provisions across NI.

The Interfaith Sub-Group endeavours to harness a 'bottom up approach' to safeguarding and to work towards strengthening the interfaces between the voluntary, community and faith-based groups. This links to the SBNI ethos of ensuring that safeguarding practices are grounded at a local level and delivered by groups on the ground.

In particular, the Interfaith Sub-Group undertakes the following functions:

- develop partnerships between the faith groups, SBNI and others concerned in safeguarding children in Northern Ireland
- develop and share good practice arrangements and safeguarding resources suitable for use within this sector and encourage use across any faith groups
- reviews the wider SBNI policy and procedures for their applicability across the Faith Group sector in conjunction with the SBNI Policy and Procedures Committee and seeks to ensure the dissemination and adoption of SBNI policies and procedures
- identify key localised issues and develops safeguarding initiatives within Faith Groups, while sharing these with the wider SBNI membership
- support the promotion within faith groups of appropriate safeguarding messages at an operational level.

During the 2020-2021 business year the Sub-Group has endeavoured to reach out to additional Faith sectors – the Muslim Community, the Jewish Community and the Salvation Army to endeavour to ensure inclusiveness and promote further consistency of safeguarding practice across the region. The Sub-Group was delighted to welcome Major Jacqueline Wright from the Salvation Army to the group. Identifying membership from the Muslim faith sectors continues but remains a priority for the Sub-Group in the forthcoming reporting year.

The Sub-Group welcomed a new Chair and Deputy chair in the reporting year. Mr Lindsay Conway - Secretary to the Council for Social Witness, Presbyterian Church assumed the Chair and has become an SBNI Board Member representing the Interfaith Sector. Dr Jacqui Montgomery Devlin – Head of Safeguarding in the Presbyterian Church Ireland has assumed the role of Deputy Chair to assist Mr Conway.

The terms of reference for the group have been reviewed within the reporting year.

During the pandemic the Interfaith Sub-Group moved to online platforms and are continuing in this manner at the end of the reporting period.

Interfaith Conference – Role and Impact of Social Media on the lives of young people in the faith sector.

During the previous business year 2019-2020, the Interfaith Sub-Group focused primarily on delivering a conference to the faith sector considering the role and impact of social media on the lives of young people. The decision to focus on this aspect of safeguarding was arrived at following feedback from all areas of the faith sector advising this was an area clerical and pastoral leaders struggled with and on which they required further guidance and assistance.

The conference was due to be hosted in April 2020 but, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, this had to be postponed and brought into the new business year of 2021-2022. Work is presently underway to deliver this conference virtually in the autumn of 2021 and a task and finish group is developing the arrangements for this. An update on the delivery of this conference shall be provided in the next annual report.

The development of the agenda for the conference has a collaborative undertaking between all members of the Sub-Group. The Sub-Group recognised the need for young people to be involved in the process and commissioned a short drama to be delivered during the conference highlighting how young people and their parents/carers can struggle to safely navigate the ever changing on-line world. The drama was written and rehearsed by the young people and adults from the “Play it by ear” drama group on behalf of the Interfaith Sub-Group. It was unfortunate the momentum of the experience of the writing and subsequent rehearsal of the drama was not met with the immediate delivery in April 2020, as planned, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However the young people have agreed to film their drama and make it available for faith sector groups and also that it would be screened at the forthcoming conference.

The development of an Online Learning Platform for Young Leaders

Following on from work which commenced in the previous business year, the Interfaith Sub-Group continued to work on the development of an online-learning platform for young leaders in respect of key safeguarding responsibilities associated with this role. A group of young leaders had met to develop a brief and design the contents of the platform. The group had also been tasked to consider how the voice of young people could be better portrayed in safeguarding training. The Interfaith Sub-Group engaged the Northern Regional College (NRC) which specializes in the production of e-learning resources. This has proved to not only be a cost effective measure but also supported local enterprise and benefiting young people attending the college who worked on the project.



During the reporting year the programme was subject to a professional Quality Assurance overview and a consultation process with youth providers and additionally with the membership of the SBNI Online Safety Forum. The platform is now ready for Board approval and uploading onto the SBNI website for free access.

Gillen Report Work Stream

During the business year the Deputy Chair of the Interfaith Sub-Group has been invited to contribute to a cross departmental work stream 'Education and Awareness Group'. This group emanates out of the Gillen Review of the law and procedures in respect of serious sexual offences in Northern Ireland and is tasked with scoping and reviewing the existing education/awareness provision to identify the current arrangements on topics including:

- consent
- rape myths and social media
- jury responsibilities and contempt laws.

Following on from this, the group will look to implement an education/awareness campaign(s) through schools (age appropriate), television, radio, outdoor and internet advertising specifically on these issues. The recommendations from this work will also address the need to include in the school curriculum for disabled children, children with sensory disability and those who are members of marginalised communities sex education designed in a culturally sensitive manner on matters such as consent, personal space, boundaries, appropriate behaviour, relationships, fears of homophobia and transphobia, gender identity and sexuality. The group, currently chaired by representatives from the Department of Justice, was keen to include a representative on this group from the faith sector.

Information Flow with the PSNI

During the year, the Sub-Group undertook to improve communication between each faith sector and the PSNI. Initial points of contacts were identified within each church and an identified Chief Inspector within the PSNI. This has and will continue to lead to an improvement in the quality and timeliness of the exchange of safeguarding and child protection information as necessary.

Public Disclosure Scheme

The Sub-Group met with a Chief Inspector from the PSNI who provided a helpful and comprehensive guide to the PSNI Child Protection Public Disclosure Scheme. Literature was provided to all members of the group to consolidate the information provided by the Chief Inspector.



Next Steps

This eighth annual report has outlined the work of the SBNI during the past year. It outlines both the challenges and the many successes of the partner agencies and members.

2020-2021 was particularly challenging for all member agencies as they worked hard to respond to the global pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus.

The SBNI anticipates that the year 2021-2022 will bring similar challenges as agencies begin to rebuild and renew after the pandemic while still responding to public health needs such as long COVID, increased waiting lists, disruption to the school year as well as the mounting costs associated with the economic downturn and increased public expenditure.

It is anticipated that within the context that the virus is still with us, many of the planned SBNI activities and events will continue to be conducted 'on line' making use of technology to ensure key communications and engagements continue.

Work will continue to progress the full adoption of Operation Encompass across Northern Ireland and the engagement of an Online Safety Co-ordinator to assist in progressing the actions from the Online Safety Strategy. Work on the CSE Evaluation Report recommendations to improve services to children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation, will also remain a core part of the SBNI activity.

During the next reporting year the SBNI will begin the process of developing a new four year strategic plan, as the SBNI Strategic Plan (2018–2022) comes to an end.

Member agencies will be asked to consider the final work plans of each of the Board's committees identifying the progress made against each of the current SBNI priorities of domestic violence, neglect and mental health. Members will then agree a new set of strategic priorities for 2022-2026, informed by the views of children and young people and their parents/carers and taking cognisance of any new and emerging issues presenting in the child protection system.

The SBNI will also continue to promote the work of the local Safeguarding Panels recognising the important role they play, particularly in implementing the SBNI Neglect Strategy. We will also continue to build on the work of local panels in disseminating the learning from CMRs (albeit in virtual learning context). This will be particularly important following the completion of the CMR thematic review in 2020, which identified a number of key themes emerging from CMRs completed since the inception of the SBNI in 2012.

All of the SBNI work will continue to be delivered within the context of a trauma informed workforce. As a result of the EITP Trauma Informed Practice project Northern Ireland has seen significant progress in the development of trauma informed knowledge, skills and practice within the child protection system. There are concrete plans for the trauma informed approach to be further strengthened by our member and partner agencies. The SBNI will continue to support this journey towards organisational and system-wide change.

Finally, the SBNI will continue to build on the vast amounts of important safeguarding work going on in all member agencies, faith-based groups, sports clubs and communities across Northern Ireland in the fight against harm and abuse.

Glossary of Terms

ABW20	Anti-Bullying Week 2020
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
AIM	Assessment, Intervention and Moving on
App	Application
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
CCEA	Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
CCMS	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
CDOP	Child Death Overview Panel
CEC	Clinical Education Centre
CES	Centre for Effective Services
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
CnAG	Conradh na Gaelige
CPSS	Child Protection Support Service
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CVS	Community and Voluntary Sector
CYP	Children and Young People

ABW20	Anti-Bullying Week 2020
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
DSC	Delivering Social Change
DVA	Domestic Violence and Abuse
EA	Education Authority
ECHO	Extension of Community Healthcare Outcomes
EITP	Early Intervention Transformation Programme
EOTAS	Education Other Than At School
EWG	Education Working Group
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
Gateway	the first point of contact for all new referrals to children's social work services
GP/s	General Practitioner/s
HSC	Health and Social Care
HSCB	Health and Social Care Board
HSCT/s	Health and Social Care Trust/s
IAG	Independent Advisory Group
ISA	Information Sharing Agreement
LAC	Looked After Child
LDSF	Learning and Development Strategy Framework
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference

ABW20	Anti-Bullying Week 2020
NCA	National Crime Agency
NCB	National Children's Bureau
NI	Northern Ireland
NIABF	Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum
NICON	Northern Ireland Confederation for Health and Social Care
NIRARG	Northern Ireland Regional ACE Reference Group
NRC	Northern Regional College
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
P&P	Policies and Procedures
PfG	Programme for Government
PHA	Public Health Agency
PPS	Public Prosecution Service
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
QUB	Queen's University Belfast
RAMP	Risk Assessment Management Plan
RESWS	Regional Emergency Social Work Services
SAG	Stakeholders Assurance Group
SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centre
SBNI	Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland
SDB	Strategic Delivery Board
TIP	Trauma Informed Practice
ToR	Terms of Reference
UK	United Kingdom
UKCIS	United Kingdom Council for Internet Safety

ABW20	Anti-Bullying Week 2020
UU	University of Ulster
VOYPIC	Voice Of Young People In Care
YJA	Youth Justice Agency

Annex 1 Business Objectives 2020-2021

COVID 19

Prior to the commencement of the 2020-2021 SBNI Business Plan we started to experience the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

This has impacted on the activity we have been able to deliver and the way in which we have been able to operate.

Priority has been given to working within and across our Partnership to help keep the most vulnerable in our society safe and free from harm and abuse.

All of the staff of the SBNI Central Support Team (CST) have been availing of remote working since the 16 March 2020 and this has enabled much of the activity of the SBNI to continue, albeit in a more limited or revised format due to the pressures placed on member agencies by the pandemic.

The CST has been able to continue its business support of the Case Management Review (CMR) process. Due to exceptional operational pressures member agencies stepped back from CMR case work between March and June 2020, with the agreement of the DoH. However, they did continue to provide CMR notifications during this period.

The SBNI Safeguarding Panels, whilst not formally meeting, have remained in contact and pertinent safeguarding information was shared between April and August 2020. Activity has continued in relation to planning for CMR and Neglect dissemination events and these will be included in the revised work plans of the Panels from September 2020, for actioning in the final half of the business year.

Activity on the following SBNI Strategic Priority areas continued to take place during the first five months of the pandemic. Whilst not all of the associated committee/sub-groups had formal meetings, activity was undertaken with particular attention given to responding to safeguarding issues arising from the pandemic:

- Domestic Violence and Abuse
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Mental Health
- Inter Faith
- Neglect

Advice and guidance on safeguarding issues was promoted on social media platforms and practical and financial support was provided to front line services. Information booklets for children, young people and their families have been developed and distributed through our member agencies.

The SBNI also undertook to work with the multi-agency/cross departmental Collectively Preventing Harm Group to support an agile response to emerging safeguarding issues.

The SBNI business support activity continued during the first five months of the pandemic with the refresh of the SBNI Website being completed in year, CMR thematic review and Early Intervention Transformation Programme - Trauma Informed Practice Project have all continued as normal.

The SBNI spend profile is greatest in the final quarter of the financial year and 2020-2021 spend was no exception.

With the CMR cases continuing to rise and spend allocated across multiple business areas we fully committed to utilising our allocated budget. Detailed below is a summary update of how the SBNI delivered the Business Plan 2020-2021 during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Our Business Objectives

The Business Objectives of the SBNI for 2020-2021 are divided into 4 parts in accordance with the strategic priorities and aims set out in the SBNI Strategic Plan for the years 2018-2022:

1. To provide leadership and set direction in the safeguarding and protection of children and young people
2. To provide a voice to children and young people affected by domestic violence and abuse
3. To improve outcomes for children and young people affected or potentially affected by neglect through promoting the early recognition and improvement of agency responses
4. To provide a voice for children and young people affected by mental health issues.

The SBNI has a key role in contributing to the overarching Programme for Government (PfG) Outcome – “We give our children and young people the best start in life” and specifically to the relevant outcomes in the Children and Young People’s Strategy 2020-2030⁵ (CYP):

- Children and young people are physically and mentally healthy
- Children and young people live in safety and stability
- Children and young people live in a society which respects their rights.

The SBNI work in 2020-2021 under each of the aforementioned priorities is directly aligned to the relevant outcomes from the PfG and CYP strategy.

Performance measures have been developed in line with OBA – How much did we do? How well did we do it? And is anyone better off? – To monitor and improve our delivery and impact throughout the year.

‘Turning the Curve’, a process which refers to the actions we need to take to improve the well-being of children and young people, was used to engage our stakeholders and member agencies in developing actions to improve our performance through the year.

5 <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/children-and-young-peoples-strategy-2020-2030>

Strategic Priority 1:

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

1.1 Objective: To sustain consistency and standardisation of practice through the Provision of the 2017 Regional Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures

- Continue to seek assurance that member agencies have disseminated and embedded the 2017 Regional Core Child Protection Policies and Procedures (P&P)
- Identify gaps in the dissemination and embedding by member agencies
- Continue to align the Signs of Safety approach to complement the Core P&P

SUMMARY UPDATE:

The SBNI has continued to work with member agencies to disseminate and embed the 2017 Regional Core Child Protection Policies and Procedures (P&P). However in light of resource pressures on member agencies it was not appropriate to seek assurance. This activity will resume as soon as possible

The task and finish group established in relation to ensuring that the Signs of Safety approach is 100% complementary to the Policy and Procedures has continued to work throughout the reporting period but as the dedicated resource from the HSCB was redeployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this work has not been fully completed and will be carried forward into the 2021 – 2022 business plan.

1.2 Objective: Greater consistency and standardisation of practice through the provision of relevant 2018 Practice Guidance to support the Regional Core Policy and Procedures

- Develop and disseminate relevant Regional Safeguarding Practice Guidance to support Regional Core Child Protection P&P in collaboration with the DoH and other agencies

SUMMARY UPDATE:

Guidance developed and the following document was issued in year: Resolution of Professional Differences Protocol.

1.3 Objective: Children, Young People, Families and Communities are more aware of Child Protection and Safeguarding Issues and how to get help if concerned through an Engagement and Communication Strategy

- Develop and agree a three-year SBNI Communications Strategy 2020-2023
- Refresh the SBNI Website
- Develop and agree a two-year SBNI Engagement Strategy 2020-2022

SUMMARY UPDATE:

The Communications Strategy was completed in year as was the development of the SBNI Engagement with Children and Young People Strategy 2021 - 2023. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the complexities of engaging with CYP to develop the strategy further, engagement is planned in the first quarter of the next business year. The SBNI Website was updated and refreshed in year.

1.4 Objective: The Child Protection and Safeguarding system will be improved by hearing the views of Children and Young People, Parents, and Carers through engagement with the SBNI Safeguarding Panels

- Safeguarding Panels will continue to review the existing fora of:
 - Children and young people
 - Parents and carers
 - Identify the additional opportunities for eliciting their views and opinions.
- Continue to engage with children and young people, parents and staff to ensure their views are heard and responded to in relation to the child protection/ safeguarding system

SUMMARY UPDATE:

This is an ongoing statutory objective of the Safeguarding Panels, which has been undertaken, the details of which are noted in the main body of the annual report.

1.5 Objective: Statutory partners consider the range of child protection information available and use this to agree priorities moving forward which can be actioned through an Outcome Based Accountability framework

Continue to undertake CMRs as per the SBNI legislation, guidance and disseminate the associated learning across all sectors

- Continue to review and evaluate the Case Management Review process
- Undertake an analysis and review of the themes emanating from CMRs
- Undertake an analysis of child protection data to inform the child protection system and underpinning process
- Support the reform of child protection arrangements by the implementation of the 'Signs of Safety' approach

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Continue to address intergenerational abuse whereby patterns of abusive behaviour transfer from one generation to the next, by the continued introduction of an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) informed approach to practice and culture

CSE

Ensure Services in Respect of Child Sexual Exploitation are effective across SBNI member agencies

- Develop Action Plan arising from Evaluation of CSE in NI
- Implement Actions arising from the 14 recommendations in Evaluation Report

E-Safety

- Continue to plan and implement a coordinated approach to e-Safety in Northern Ireland

Interfaith

- Continue to promote effective collaboration of stakeholders in ensuring children involved in the Faith sector are protected and safeguarded

SUMMARY UPDATE:

All of the aforementioned objectives have been undertaken the details of which are noted in the main body of the annual report.

Strategic Priority 2:

To provide a voice to children and young people affected by domestic violence and abuse

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

- Continue to participate in the regional Stakeholder Assurance Group (SAG) and Independent Advisory Group (IAG) to ensure that the voice of children and young people is represented

SUMMARY UPDATE:

The aforementioned objective has been undertaken the detail of which is noted in the main body of the annual report.

2.2 Objective: Work with partners engaged in the DVA arena to raise awareness among parents/carers and professionals of the effect of DVA on children and young people

SUMMARY UPDATE:

The aforementioned objective has been undertaken the detail of which is noted in the main body of the report

2.3 Objective: Work with partners engaged in the DVA arena to promote education for children and young people in how to recognise, respond and seek help in relation to DVA

- Report on the analysis of the scoping of the current service provision for children and young people affected by domestic violence and abuse
- Report on the analysis of the scoping of the training provided and the needs analysis to inform a training plan to support agencies working with children and young people affected by domestic violence and abuse
- Support Operation Encompass Pilot within Northern Ireland

SUMMARY UPDATE:

All of the aforementioned objectives have been undertaken the details of which are noted in the main body of the annual report. It should be noted that the Operation Encompass pilot was delayed due to the impacts of Covid-19 pandemic.

Priority 3:

To improve outcomes for children and young people affected or potentially affected by neglect through promoting the early recognition and improvement of agency responses

3.1 Objective: Promote early intervention with the aim of preventing children and young people experiencing neglect

SUMMARY UPDATE:

The aforementioned objective has been undertaken by the Neglect Sub-Group with the NSPCC Graded Care Profile agreed and training started, the details of which are noted in the main body of the annual report.

3.2 Objective: Raise awareness of neglect with children/young people, parents/ carers and staff

SUMMARY UPDATE:

The aforementioned objective has been undertaken and an update can be found in the Neglect Sub-Group, the Safeguarding Panels and CMR chapters of the annual report.

3.3 Objective: The Child Protection and Safeguarding system will be improved by hearing the views of Children and Young People, Parents, Carers and Staff through engagement with the SBNI Safeguarding Panels in relation to neglect

The Safeguarding Panels will:

- Continue to engage with children and young people, parents and staff to ensure their views are heard and responded to in relation to Neglect
- Continue to improve awareness and understanding of neglect for organisations outside of SBNI member agencies, who work with children, families and others on neglect

SUMMARY UPDATE:

The aforementioned objective has been undertaken the detail of which is noted in the main body of the annual report in the Safeguarding Panels chapter.

3.4 Objective: Work with partner agencies to provide training in how to improve the recognition, assessment, and responses to children, young people and families experiencing neglect

- Implement the regional assessment tool
- Continue to circulate awareness raising materials to improve public awareness, understanding and action on neglect for children and young people, families and carers

SUMMARY UPDATE:

The aforementioned objective has been undertaken the detail of which is noted in the main body of the annual report.

Strategic Priority 4:

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

- 4.1 Objective: Work with partners to raise awareness among parents/carers and professionals of the effect of poor mental health on children and young people**
- 4.2 Objective: Work with partners to promote awareness for children and young people in how to recognise, respond and seek help in relation to mental health**
- 4.3 Objective: 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**
- Continue to work with member/partner agencies to identify how SBNI can support raising awareness of the effect of poor mental health on children and young people
 - Continue to support actions arising out of research in respect of mental health.
 - Continue to disseminate CMR learning regarding the impact of poor mental health.
 - Continue to work with member and partner agencies to identify how SBNI can support the recognition and response to the effects of poor mental health
 - Continue to work with member and partner agencies to identify how SBNI can support partner agencies in relation to the promotion of training on mental health

SUMMARY UPDATE:

The aforementioned objectives have been undertaken, the details of which are noted in the main body of the annual report in various chapters to include, Mental Health, CMR and Safeguarding Panels.