

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

## **2016-17**



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# **Foreword by the Independent Chair**

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The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland has 29 member agencies 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.

Each agency is represented by a senior member of staff on the partnership which collectively provides leadership and direction to the child protection safeguarding system across Northern Ireland.

The year 2016-17 has been a challenging one for SBNI – working within the wider context of Departmental changes, continuing austerity, political instability and an increased negative spotlight on child protection issues across the UK. During this reporting period the Department of Health also commissioned and published an independent review into the effectiveness of SBNI, conducted by Professor Alexis Jay.

While the outcome of the Jay review provided a number of challenges to the partnership, its recommendations also provided an opportunity for the Safeguarding Board to modernise and reform.

Importantly it provided the impetus the individual agencies needed to refocus the partnership on its collective responsibility to safeguard and protect children. The SBNI has embraced and implemented all of Professor Jay's recommendations and has moved forward with renewed energy and vigour.

In January 2017 I was appointed interim Independent Chair, with a firm objective of embedding the changes recommended by Jay into the structure and operations of SBNI. I also set out to reaffirm the leadership role of the partnership in terms of child protection and safeguarding across the region.

This fourth annual SBNI report contains information on the many successes and improvements which have been achieved over the last 12 months – both individually and collectively. It specifically reports on engagement with children and young people, providing a platform for their voices to be heard amid the formality of case management reviews, data collection, new policy or procedures and key statutory functions.

The five strategic priority areas outlined in the SBNI's 2016-17 Business Plan underpinned the work carried out during the year. These were:

1. Working in partnership to ensure children and young people are living in safety and with stability
2. Protecting and safeguarding children by responding to new and emerging concerns
3. Providing leadership and setting direction
4. Driving improvements in the current child protection system and
5. Building the capacity of the SBNI in the medium term.

Looking to the future, the SBNI is clear that its three big strategic priorities over the next three years are domestic and sexual violence, mental health and neglect. The focus will be on an evidence based approach to tackle these by addressing the key adverse childhood experiences known to contribute to poor outcomes for children in the long term.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in the SBNI – particularly the office staff, the members, the independent panel chairs and other key stakeholders. I look forward to your continued support and co-operation in the year ahead.

**Bernie McNally OBE**  
Interim Independent Chair



# Safeguarding Snapshot



**1,851,600**

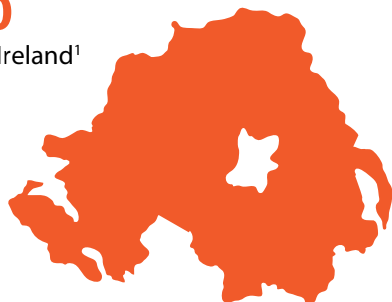
people in Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup>

**433,161**

children under 18<sup>2</sup>

**23%**

of total population<sup>2</sup>



**3,470**

child protection investigations carried out<sup>2</sup>

**2,313**

child protection assessments completed by Gateway<sup>2</sup>

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**34,124**

children were referred to social services<sup>2</sup>

**7.9%**

of all children

**2,890**

children in care of HSC Trusts (LAC)<sup>2</sup>

**77%**

in foster care,

**33%**

of these with kinship foster carers<sup>2</sup>

**24,689**

children categorised as In Need<sup>2</sup>

**5.7%**

of all children

**13.5%**

children placed at home with parents<sup>2</sup>

**5.8%**

children in residential care<sup>2</sup>

**43**

admissions to secure care (2015-2016)

**24**

of these were repeat admissions<sup>2</sup>

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**4,312**

children In Need with a disability<sup>2</sup>

**17.5%**

of all children In Need

**171,612**

pupils in primary schools<sup>3</sup>

**140,413**

pupils in post primary school<sup>3</sup>

**2,146**

children on the child protection register<sup>2</sup>

**8.7%**

of all children in Need

**23,825**

pupils in funded pre-school education<sup>3</sup>

**102,127**

are entitled to free school meals<sup>3</sup>

**30.4%**

of all pupils

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**9,196**

family support referrals<sup>2</sup>

**4,279**

child protection referrals<sup>2</sup>

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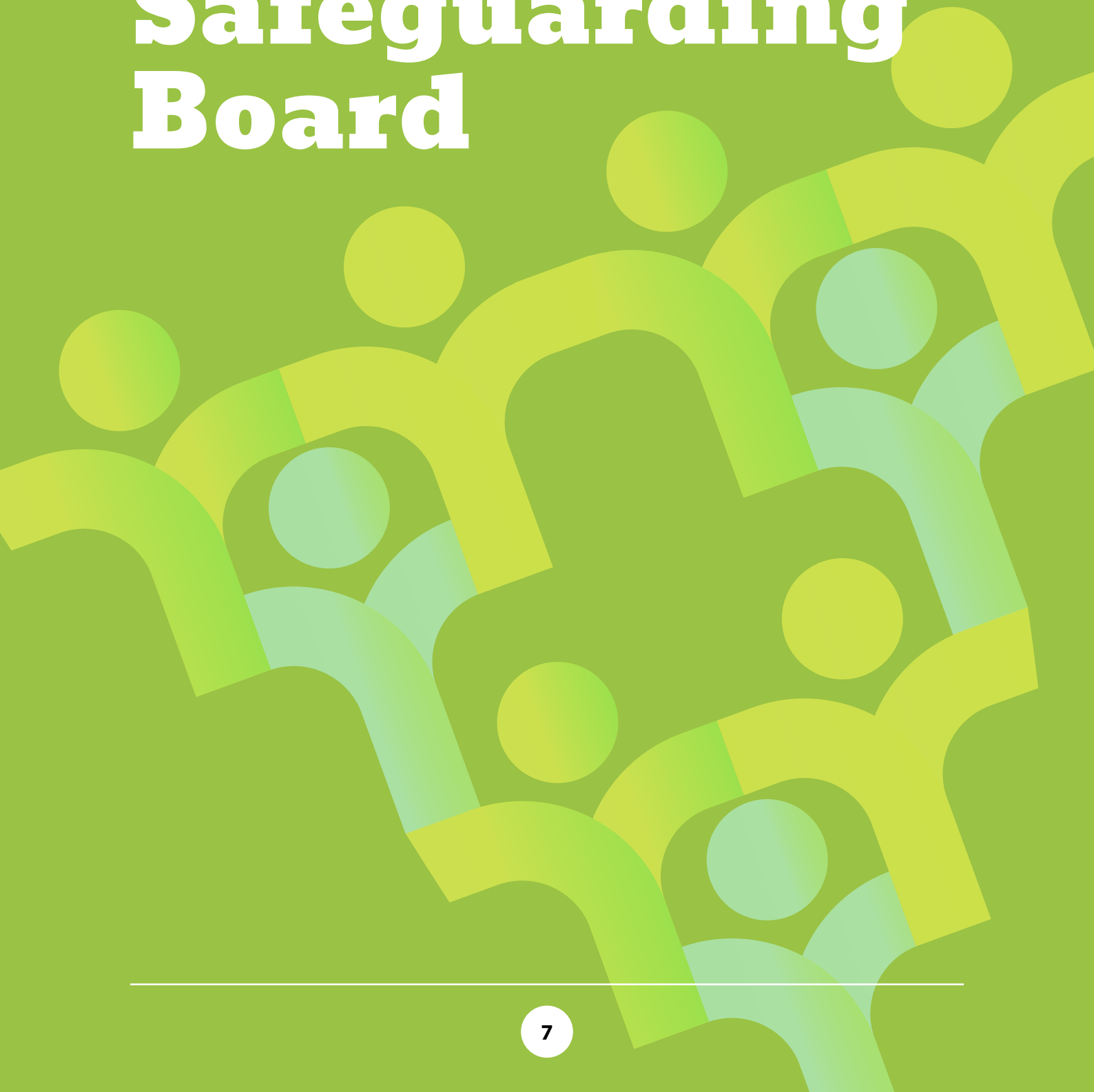
1. <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/population/mid-year-population-estimates>

2. <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/childrens-social-care-statistics-northern-ireland> and HSCB Delegated Statutory Functions Report: Statistical Report 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016

3. <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-enrolments-201617-statistical-bulletins>

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# The role of the Safeguarding Board



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

They are led by an Independent Chair appointed 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.

### **Working across sectors**

While 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 SBNI has brought a formality and structure to that collaboration in the form of a number of statutory committees and short term working groups.

### **Safeguarding panels**

The key 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 has been appointed on the basis of their previous operational management experience within the child protection and safeguarding system. The role of the safeguarding panels is to take forward collaborative work locally around the key strategic priorities set by the SBNI. The panels have also a key role to play in identifying new and emerging issues from the ground ensuring that the SBNI are fully informed of any concerns emerging from local communities, parents, children and other key stakeholders.



The next important statutory committee which is crucial to the effective functioning of the SBNI is the Case Management Review panel (CMR). 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 that there have been exceptional outcomes for the children and young people concerned or are cases where things have not gone well and lessons need to be learned. The chair of this committee reports directly to the SBNI and the learning from each review is disseminated throughout the system via the local safeguarding panels.

### **Emerging concerns**

Significant SBNI collaborative working also goes on within a number of short term inter-agency working groups set up to examine a particular issue or emerging concern. For example a Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) sub-group has been set up to take forward some of the child protection agenda recommended in child law specialist Professor Kathleen Marshall's independent report into CSE in Northern Ireland and Professor John Pinkerton of Queen's University Belfast's thematic review relating to CSE and missing children (Getting Focused and Staying Focused).

### **Internet guidance**

A further working group example is the E-Safety Forum which 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 advice and guidance on how to deal with the threats posed by an ever changing technical/internet 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.

### **Reporting on progress**

Each of these short term groups meet regularly under the chairmanship of a board member and report directly to the SBNI on progress against agreed terms of reference. The work of each of these committees is outlined in the pages that follow in this annual report.

# Meet the Board Members

**Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland**  
**Annual Report 2016-17**

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**Yvonne Adair**  
Safeguarding Panel  
Chair-Southern and  
South Eastern areas



**Paddy Kelly**  
Director Children's Law  
Centre



**Marie Roulston**  
Director Women, Children and  
Families Division, Executive  
Director of Social Work, Northern  
Health and Social Care Trust



**Neil Anderson**  
National Head of Service  
for N. Ireland NSPCC



**Cheryl Lamont**  
Chief Executive and  
Accounting Officer for  
Probation Board NI



**Dawn Shaw**  
National Director,  
Northern Ireland  
Action for Children



**Dr Martin Cunningham**  
GP Representative



**Pauline Leeson**  
Chief Executive, CiNI



**Andrew Thomson**  
Independent.  
CMR Panel Chair



**George Clarke**  
Detective Chief  
Superintendent PSNI



**Dr Clare Mangan**  
Director of Children  
and Young People's  
Services, EANI



**Una Turbitt**  
Assistant Director of Public  
Health Nursing for Children  
and Young People (PHA)



**Kieran Downey**  
Director of Women  
& Children's Services  
Western Health &  
Social Care Trust



**Paddy Mooney**  
Director Include Youth



**Brendan Whittle**  
Director of Children's  
Services & Executive  
Director of Social Work,  
South Eastern Health and  
Social Care Trust



**Brian Hanna**  
Safeguarding Panel  
Chair-Northern, Belfast  
and Western areas



**Paul Morgan**  
Director of Children and  
Young Peoples Services,  
Southern Health and  
Social Care Trust



**Lynda Wilson**  
Director of  
Barnardos NI



**Liam Hannaway**  
Chief Executive of  
Newry, Mourne and  
Down District Council



**Fionnuala McAndrew**  
Director of Social Care &  
Children, HSCB



**Cecil Worthington**  
Director of Social  
Work/Children's Community  
Services Belfast Health &  
Social Care Trust



**Dr Carolyn Harper**  
Medical Director/Director  
of Public Health Agency  
(PHA)



**Barbara McDermott**  
Director, Safeguarding,  
Down and Connor Diocese



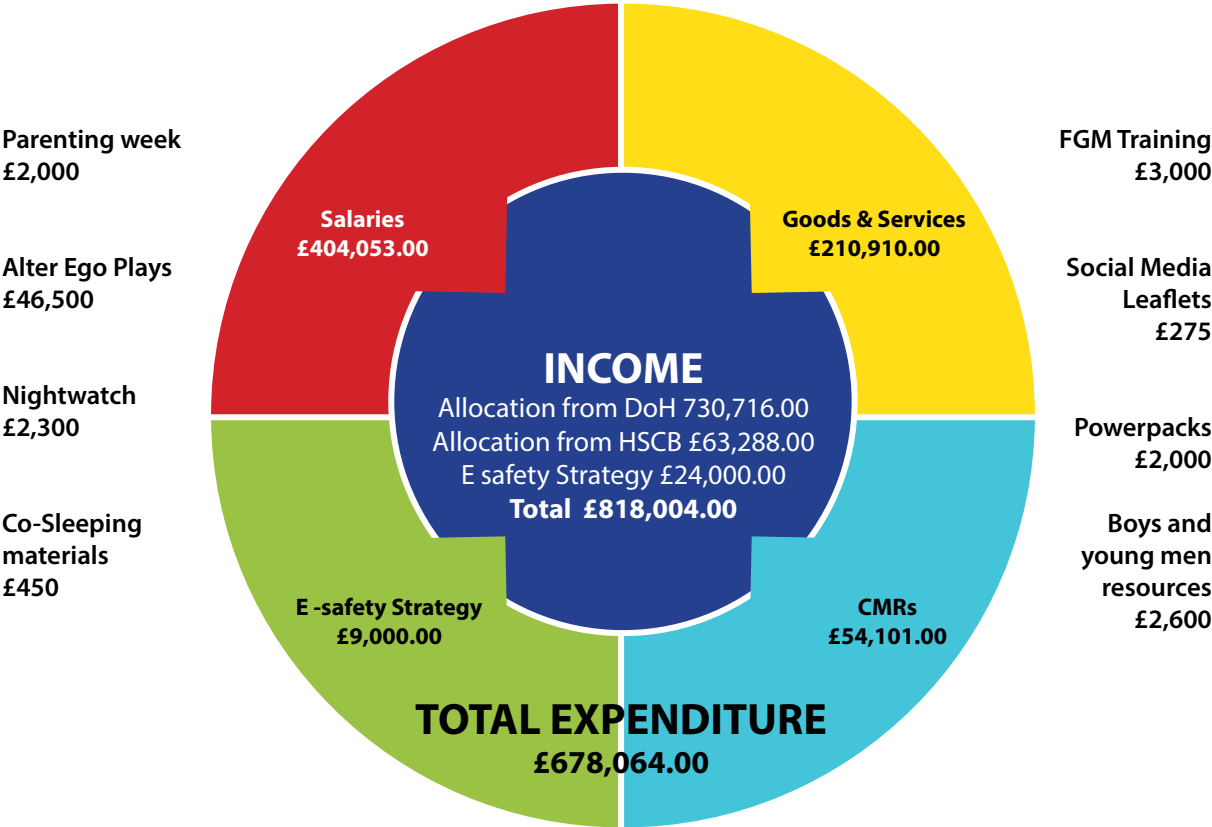
**Mary Hinds**  
Executive Director of  
Nursing, Midwifery  
and Allied Health  
Professionals (PHA)



**Declan McGeown**  
Chief Executive Youth  
Justice Agency

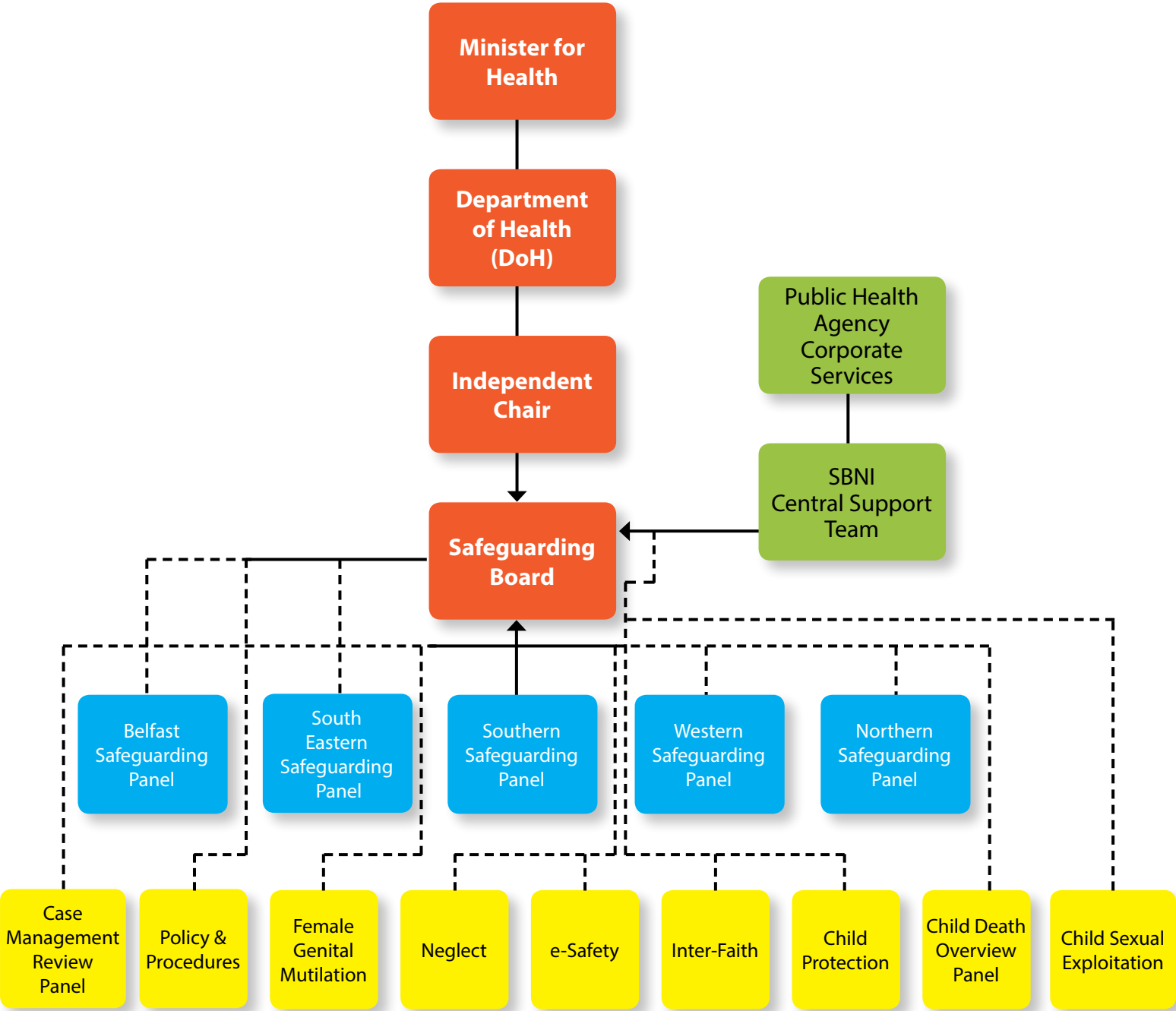
# Focus on Finance

The Department of Health is the SBNI’s sponsor and allocates the annual budget which, for 2016-17, amounted to £730,716. This was supplemented by the Health and Social Care Board with a provision of £63,288 and with Northern Ireland Executive programme funding for the development of an E-Safety Strategy and Action Plan for NI for £24,000.



# **How the SBNI is structured**

# Organisational Structure



# **Learning from practice**

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**SBNI Strategic Priority 4**

**‘Driving improvements in the current child protection system’**

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**SBNI Business Plan 2016-2017 to “Influence practice positively and enhance the learning from Case Management Reviews, by improving the CMR process”<sup>4.1</sup>**



The SBNI has a statutory function to carry out case management reviews on notified cases where there either have been exceptional outcomes for young people or where things have gone wrong and significant learning for the system is involved. The main purpose of such reviews is to help strengthen the systems and processes for protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect by learning from our practice experience.

The task of conducting case management reviews is primarily carried out through the CMR panel who appoint an independent reviewer to examine the case. The Case Management Review panel meets monthly and is chaired by an independent member of the Board with senior manager representatives from a broad range of member agencies. The criteria for conducting a CMR is set down in legislation.

Each review establishes the facts of the case – what worked well, whether there are any lessons to be learned from the way statutory and voluntary bodies worked together and whether any changes are needed.

Since it was established in 2012 the SBNI has completed seven case management reviews, with an additional five cases currently under review. The Safeguarding Board has agreed to publish an executive summary of each completed review provided it is in the best interests of children, young people and families to do so.

Learning from CMRs are making a difference to the child protection system in the following ways:

- More focused assessment of alcohol and drug use to enable a harm reduction strategy
- Enhanced and more robust information and process systems will enable those who will be required to act to have all the information they need to ensure appropriate safeguarding measures are taken
- When a child or young person goes missing the new updated protocol to be followed will be consistently and systematically applied.

Two training events were held during 2016/17 – the first focusing on completing reports while the second provided support on the use of the Chronolator software. Peer support events were also held for Independent CMR reviewers appointed to undertake CMRs. Work is now underway to establish a new CMR process in Northern Ireland to ensure the learning from reviews is shared in a timely manner and acted upon with the option for focussed and concise reviews. The CMR criteria is presently being revised and the recruitment of CMR independent chairs is taking place. Sharing of learning takes place with information being placed on the SBNI website and learning events are planned for later in the year.

# **Child sexual exploitation - the work of the CSE Sub-Group**


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**SBNI Strategic Priority 2 ‘Protect and safeguard children by responding to new and emerging concerns’**

**Business Plan Priority 2016- 2017 to, “safeguard children who go missing from their home or care and/or are at risk of sexual exploitation.**

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Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a major threat to children in Northern Ireland and the SBNI has a key role to play in managing the issue. This is done through the Child Sexual Exploitation Sub-Group. The aim of this group is to work collaboratively to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of children and young people who are being sexually exploited, or who are at risk of being sexually exploited.



**include YOUTH**  
invites you to  
**Chelsea's Choice**  
Wednesday, 8 February 2017  
3.00pm—4.00pm  
H3 Lounge, Kingspan Stadium  
134 Mount Merrion Ave,  
Belfast BT6 0DG

**Chelsea's Choice**, a theatre production by **Alter Ego Creative Solutions Ltd Theatre**, aims to raise awareness of the issue of **child sexual exploitation**.




The **Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI)** has commissioned this touring play once again and Include Youth is hosting a performance at the Kingspan Stadium for young people who are not in mainstream education or training.

The drama, targeted at young people (aged 12+) and professionals working with them, hopes to empower young people and provide them with the skills and knowledge necessary to protect themselves.

Allocation will be first come first served. To find out more or book places email Kate Moffett, [KateM@includeyouth.org](mailto:KateM@includeyouth.org) or call **028 9031 1007** by Friday, 3 February.

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[www.includeyouth.org](http://www.includeyouth.org)  
@IncludeYouth



Light snacks & refreshments available.  
Support with transport is available.

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During the previous reporting period both Professor Kathleen Marshall and Professor John Pinkerton published two separate reports into various aspects of CSE in Northern Ireland. The implementation of the findings of these reviews became the focus of the CSE Sub-Group throughout 2016/17.

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The Sub-Group primarily worked collaboratively with a range of organisations on the issue of CSE – raising general and professional awareness and helping to ensure a consistency of message.

CSE Awareness Week in February was undertaken on social media, highlighting for example ways to get help if a young person is at risk of, or experiencing CSE. There was also a particular emphasis on the risks to young people of ‘sexting’.

The CSE awareness initiative also highlighted that boys and young men are at risk of sexual exploitation and promoted the voice of young men, encouraging them to use their experiences to help others.

The content of the awareness week focused heavily on input from young people who have been affected by sexual exploitation, using their experiences to help increase understanding of the issue. The campaign created 38,169 impressions of CSE Tweets on Twitter and 599 engagements.

CSE Awareness Week coincided with the start of the SBNI’s ‘Northern Ireland CSE Awareness Programme’. The programme began with the delivery of three educational plays to primary and post primary schools across Northern Ireland by Alter Ego Creative Solutions.

Two of the plays focused specifically on CSE and were aimed at post primary children: ‘Chelsea’s Choice’ - looked at how ‘Chelsea’ a 14 year old girl became a victim of sexual exploitation through her relationship with her ‘boyfriend’. The performance of the play was attended by over 8000 young people.

‘Crashing’ – explored how ‘Eddie’, having lost both his parents, ended up sleeping rough and was befriended by Michael who offers him a place to stay but clearly has another agenda. ‘Crashing’ had a total audience of 6,000 young people.

Both of these post primary plays presented an age appropriate scenario of CSE within the context of substance misuse and domestic violence. As preventative education is an important aspect of the SBNI’s awareness raising programme, the messages communicated by the plays addressed issues relating to the entire range of CSE activities including a focus on healthy and unhealthy relationships and the significance of the grooming process. The plays also highlighted ways young people can seek help and support from peers, parents, teachers and other professionals.

Evaluation after the performances was encouraging. It found that, of the 14,000 young people who saw the plays, almost all who attended felt they had a better understanding of what CSE is and would recommend the plays to others. They also had a better understanding of the grooming process, understood that grooming and sexual exploitation can happen to boys as well as girls and began to realise that CSE can be carried out by both men and women – old and young, working in groups or alone. The evaluation also showed an increased understanding of what constitutes a healthy relationship.

*"We had the group in this morning for Chelsea's Choice, and I have to say, they were excellent. The messages given to our Year 10s were clear and as a preventative message for safeguarding them, to make positive choices in the future, this was a very worthwhile, informative and engaging production. Discussion/explanations at the end, helped to reinforce the messages as well"*

*"We had our first showing of Crashing this morning and I had to let you know how fantastic it was. The boys were completely engrossed with it and the actors were superb. Very hard hitting at times, but the fact that this is a true story meant that it was important for the boys to be exposed to its content. The discussion at the end was brilliant – the actors had obviously done their research and covered everything from what is a healthy relationship to all the forms of grooming and CSE."*

*"We were delighted when the SBNI offered us the opportunity to see both Chelsea's Choice and Crashing and following the event received excellent feedback from the audience. As the co-ordinator of child protection and safeguarding training and education with student teachers I often engage with a wide range of external partners to organise workshops, speakers, practitioners and specialists and indeed I often use an arts-based approach to learning and teaching myself. The young people who performed both of the above did so in the most professional, creative, talented and powerful way I have seen in my career to date. Please pass on our warmest congratulations and thanks to them for such excellent productions." (Stranmillis University College, Belfast)*

The third play in the CSE awareness programme was In the Net, which was performed to 11,000 children in primary schools across Northern Ireland. The play follows 'Dotty' aged 8, who finds out how to be safe online by going on a journey through the internet. The play reinforced messages about e-safety and cyber-bullying in an age-appropriate and fun way which focused on:

- safe internet/social media use
- keeping personal information safe
- the effects of cyber-bullying on others
- what to do if you are being cyber-bullied
- what to do if you get that 'Uh Oh' feeling online
- what makes a healthy relationship
- what to do if you have questions or concerns

By taking In the Net into primary schools it has allowed the important messages of healthy and unhealthy relationships and grooming to be discussed with younger children in an age appropriate manner and build the foundations for future messages in post primary school.

The delivery of the plays was only possible due to the partnership working of the SBNI membership. The Education Authority NI's (EANI) regional Child Protection Safeguarding Service in Schools (CPSSS) facilitated the link up with schools to publicise the plays and each production was shared equally across all EANI geographical areas. In conjunction with NSPCC, promotional items carrying the Childline number were distributed to the schools to provide easy access to help for children and young people who saw the plays. Include Youth co-ordinated and hosted a performance of Chelsea's Choice at the Kingspan stadium for 80 young people from several voluntary organisations.

Youth Action coordinated and hosted a performance of Crashing at their own theatre for over 100 young people, again including young people from a range of voluntary organisations. Further performances of these very influential educational plays are planned into the future.

Another aspect of the CSE Awareness Programme was the Barnardo's Nightwatch NI project which aimed to raise awareness of CSE among organisations and employees who work in the Northern Ireland night time economy.

This programme particularly targeted staff working in the hotel and hospitality business, taxi drivers and NI Fire and Rescue Service and NI Ambulance Service. The programme provided advice, training and strategies for sharing information and reporting concern.

During 2016/17 the SBNI also specifically supported the issue of boys and young men (BYM) in relation to CSE. This involved challenging the cultural norms associated with machoism, signposting boys and young men to services, as well as improving professional and community understanding of the issue. The first Boys and Young Men workshop of 2016 was held on 14th October 2016 with the aim of putting the issue on the agenda for all member and partner agencies. The workshop attempted to deal with issues such barriers to disclosure and gaps in professional knowledge around in identifying and responding to CSE in boys and young men. The workshop was coordinated and facilitated by Barnardo's NI Safe Choices project and hosted by Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Policing Community Safety Partnership. Other participants included community, voluntary and statutory stakeholders with presentations by PSNI, Southern HSCT, Youth Action, Youth Justice Agency and Cara – Friend. The out workings of the day included the development of awareness raising information for BYM created by young people themselves. This involved the development of information leaflets and posters, which are now being distributed across, community, voluntary and statutory sectors.



# **Local Safeguarding Panel Activities**

A focus on the Business Plan’s five strategic priority areas – along with the cross cutting theme of neglect ensured a busy and productive year for the five local safeguarding panels who worked to deliver on the plan..

Each of the five local safeguarding panels have an independent chair and are interagency and multidisciplinary in nature. Each panel has representatives from local voluntary and community groups, the education sector, Youth Justice Agency, PSNI, Probation Board and VOYPIC. Health and Social care representatives include nurses, doctors, social workers and professionals with special responsibility for children’s mental health services.

During the year 2016/17 local Panels have concentrated on: improving panel membership; identifying emerging themes from local communities; working with other relevant local partnerships (Outcomes Group, Domestic Violence Partnership and Adult Safeguarding); improving multiagency governance in respect of the CMR process; embedding the Child Safeguarding Learning and Development Strategy and work with GPs to achieve greater involvement in Child Protection Work.

**BELFAST AREA**

Key activities

- the panel completed two audits on case conference attendance to focus on improving the protection of children subject to the child protection process
- reflective practice sessions were held relating to CSE and other child protection issues.
- CSE awareness-raising sessions
- an audit of professionals and parents views of the child protection and conference process with a view to improving multi-disciplinary safeguarding practice

**SOUTHERN AREA**

Key activities

- awareness raising sessions regarding bruising in pre-mobile babies.
- audit of Looked After Children and the risk to them of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- audit of attendance at child protection case conferences
- conference – Neglect Under The Microscope – What Works?



### **SOUTH EASTERN AREA**

#### Key activities

- multi-agency drug, alcohol and psychoactive substances workshop
- development of a family specific DVD showing the benefits of early intervention
- development of a protocol for GPs to identify parental mental health problems and referral pathway to social services
- audit of children on the Child Protection Register two years or more, highlighting neglect.

### **WESTERN AREA**

#### Key activities

- a conference to launch the Safeguarding Board's multi-agency neglect strategy was held in March 2011, focussed on how better to identify and respond to neglect. Follow up workshops were held in Omagh and Enniskillen
- the panel were interested in young people's experience of the child protection process. They successfully used Ask First which is a tool developed by Participation N.I. enabling young people to express their views. The results of this work have led to improvements in how the child protection service is delivered to young people. The panel subsequently engaged the Verbal Arts Centre in Derry to assist in injecting these key improvement messages into the system both locally and regionally

### **NORTHERN AREA**

#### Key activities

- use of reflective case reviews of complex local cases to help address areas of potential conflict arising from inter-agency working
- implementing the learning from the Northern Health and Social Care Trust/PSNI workshop on Child Sexual Exploitation
- implementing and reviewing SBNI Guidance on bruising in pre-mobile babies
- delivering a multi-agency information day on services for children and young people to pupils of a local post-primary school and their families
- launch of NHSCT Strategy for Safeguarding Children from Abuse and Neglect
- an examination of the potential risks posed by babies co-sleeping with their parents and the development of an improved consistent response by professionals and agencies

# **Safer in the digital world**

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**SBNI Strategic Priority 2 'Protect and safeguard children by responding to new and emerging concerns'.**

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## Keeping children, young people and their families safer in the digital world has been the focus of the SBNI's E-Safety Forum.

Over the past twelve months the Forum has worked on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive and in conjunction with the National Children's Bureau (NCB) to produce a draft E- Safety Strategy and accompanying action plan for Northern Ireland.

The strategy aims to:

- reflect existing evidence and good practice of e-safety approaches
- engage with existing e-safety mechanisms in the UK, seeking to add value and not duplicate
- educate and support children and young people and those responsible for their care and safety to develop skills and knowledge to stay safe online
- facilitate the responsible use of digital and internet technology
- facilitate access to age-appropriate support services including recovery services and information on how to handle online abuse if it happens

The final draft presented to the Department of Health was co designed with children and young people, parents /carers and teachers and promotes both the voice and views of young people. The Strategy is set to go out to public consultation early autumn 2017.

In October 2016 the Chair of the Forum was one of two key note speakers during Parenting NI's 'Parenting in the Digital Age' awareness week. He spoke at two events one for professionals and one for parents which were very well attended and which received excellent feedback.

Following these events the Chair and some members of the Forum took part in the Queen's University Belfast Child Care Research Foundation conference to inform practice development, using current information on new and emerging threats in the on-line world and presenting a short film made by young people from the Youth Service, for young people, on the importance of digital down time.

“The children were enthralled and there was lots of discussion in the classroom afterwards.”

“The children were completely engaged throughout and thoroughly enjoyed the performance. The messages regarding e-safety and cyber bullying were expertly delivered.”

“An excellent production aimed at a group of children who are not normally targeted, well done.”

As part of Safer Internet Day 2017 the SBNI released a parents and professionals Safeguarding App, designed in conjunction with parents and children, which provides information on subjects such as child sexual exploitation, (il)legal highs, bullying, gaming, other forms of abuse and the importance of healthy relationships.



The App also supports a newsfeed and updates, signposting to key safeguarding services. It has geo location features, reporting information, advice and help including video and audio content with immediate access to 'topic specific' advice where and when needed. The App allows adults to have access to safeguarding information wherever they are and whenever they need it 24/7.

Release of the App took place at the same time as the tour of 'In the Net' across primary schools in Northern Ireland. The play, commissioned from Alter Ego Creative Solutions, and seen by more than 11,000 pupils, is about an eight year old girl called Dotty who finds out how to be safe online by going on a journey through the internet. During the performance messages about cyber bullying and e-safety were reinforced in an age appropriate way.

There was a very positive response to the play and feedback from the schools evaluation of the play and its content was excellent.

Alongside the App and In the Net, the Forum also supported Safer Internet Day 2017 by helping to sponsor a C2k schools DVD competition, with the Chair of the SBNI

**“I spoke with many of the children after the performance and I can assure you they all got the message. There can never be enough of this form of support for schools.”**



**Winners Holy Trinity College.**



**Winners Fairview PS.**

Bernie McNally and forum member Caroline Karayiannis (EANI) presenting the prizes to the winners of the KS3 category, Holy Trinity College Cookstown and the Key Stage 2 winners, Fairview Primary School.

Both DVDs highlighted a whole school approach to e-safety and demonstrated talented and innovative ways to highlight important messages. The competition is an excellent way to promote the voices of children and young people in the work of the Forum.

A further significant piece of work completed in March 2016 by the SBNI was the production of an e- safety awareness raising training resource for both children and young people and their adult carers. The product known as Virtual Reality pulls together key e- safety messages into one resource with specific messages for Key Stage 2 children and Key Stage 3 children, with specific advice and guidance for parents and other caring adults. During the 2017/18 it is intended to deliver the resource, free of charge, to 1000 trainers. The content for the resource will be updated within 18 months in order to stay relevant and current for its target audience. During March 2016 the PSNI worked with Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) to deliver cyber safety sessions to parents, carers and grandparents across NI. The PSNI used the Virtual Reality content – and feedback for the sessions was highly positive.

**“The play was fabulous in every way, from the personable nature of the actors/ actresses to the thought behind the concept and messages delivered. It tied in really well with our ongoing work regarding e-Safety and our celebration of Safer Internet Day 2017”**

# **Safeguarding in Faith Communities**

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**The aim of the Inter Faith Sub-Group is to enhance the safety and welfare of children and young people within the range of faith group provisions across NI.**

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The Inter Faith Sub-Group of the SBNI draws its membership from the Church of Ireland, the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Alliance, the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church, the PSNI and the NSPCC.

It aims to deliver on its safeguarding responsibilities by:

- developing partnership working with others concerned in safeguarding children and young people in Northern Ireland
- developing and sharing good practice arrangements and safeguarding resources within the faith sector.
- contributing to the review of SBNI child protection policy and procedures
- ensuring the adoption and dissemination of the revised child protection policy and procedures across the faith sector
- identifying key localised issues and developing key safeguarding initiatives within faith groups
- supporting the promotion within faith groups of appropriate safeguarding messages at an operational level

It is acknowledged that at least 68% of youth groups in Northern Ireland are faith based and as such accessing volunteers and young people in these settings is a very important resource for anyone wishing to get key safeguarding messages to young people.

As in all other youth based organisations, social media platforms are widely used in the faith sector by volunteers, youth workers and young people to communicate and engage with each other. To ensure that these platforms are used safely the interfaith group produced a safeguarding guide to the use of social media. The purpose of the guide is to promote the safe and positive use of all social media and all e-communications. The guidance provides simple, common sense advice about using social media, cameras, mobile phones and other various forms of communication technology in a safe and positive manner, protecting both young people and volunteers and employees who work with them.

The guidance forms part of the wider work undertaken by SBNI on e-safety and supplements materials produced by the E-Safety Forum.

The full guide – Use of Social Media and other E-Based Communication – is available at the SBNI website: <http://www.safeguardingni.org/>

The Inter Faith Sub-Group also held a half day conference – the first of its kind in Northern Ireland - on the role of faith communities in safeguarding children. The keynote speaker was the Rt Rev Mark Sowerby, Bishop of Horsham, Diocese of Chichester who spoke on the theology of safeguarding and highlighted both the challenges and the positive role the faith sector can play.

The event provided an opportunity to share safeguarding policies and procedures, training materials, resources and local community initiatives. It also enhanced communication and co-operation about safeguarding matters across faith groups and demonstrated a real commitment by faith communities to genuinely work together to protect and promote the welfare of all children and young people, in Northern Ireland.

The conference generated a consensus that working together and sharing good safeguarding practice across faith communities was a positive thing to do. Two further lunchtime seminars were subsequently held, in Belfast and Ballymena, focussing on the role played by vetting in the safety and protection of children in faith communities and the importance of information sharing to the child protection agenda. There were presentations from the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Access NI and the safeguarding team from the Diocese of Down and Connor. The conference and follow up seminars were such a success that further similar events are planned for the future.





# Tackling neglect

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## **SBNI Strategic Priority 1**

**‘Work in partnership to ensure children and young people are living in safety and with stability’**

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**SBNI Business Plan 2016- 2017 to “Ensure safeguarding practice in relation to the issue of Neglect and particularly vulnerable children is effective.”1.1**

## In the UK neglect is consistently cited as the most common reason for a child or young person to need a child protection plan or to be placed on a child protection register.

It is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs – adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter – and something that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children and young people who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse and they become more vulnerable to predators who wish to do them harm.

In Northern Ireland nearly a quarter of children (106,000) are living in low income households and are deprived of four or more items that a majority of the population regard as basic necessities. Northern Ireland is the poorest region in the United Kingdom, with the greatest proportion of children living in poverty (Devaney and McConville 2016)<sup>1</sup>.

Four out of five children placed on the child protection register in Northern Ireland, (80%) were registered because of either physical abuse or neglect or a combination of both. Neglect was the second highest category of abuse (664 children) after physical abuse (715 children). A total of 431 children suffered a combination of neglect and physical abuse.

The SBNI identified neglect as a cross cutting theme in its Business Plan 2016/17 and established an SBNI Neglect Sub-Group to tackle the issue on an multi-agency basis. The group began by developing an agreed multi-agency neglect strategy to help agencies in Northern Ireland who are involved with children, young people and parents to take actions to prevent, reduce and manage the effects of neglect on children, young people and families.

The main aims of this strategy are to:

- secure collective commitment for addressing neglect across all SBNI member agencies
- demonstrate effective leadership in driving any required systems and process changes forward
- improve awareness and understanding of neglect across all SBNI member agencies. This includes a common understanding of neglect, the impact of neglect and the thresholds for intervention
- improve the recognition, assessment, use of assessment tools and responses to children, young people and families experiencing neglect
- agree common outcomes, measures and metrics on the effectiveness of single agency

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<sup>1</sup> (Devaney J. and McConville P. Childhood neglect – the Northern Ireland experience Research, Policy and Planning (2016) 32 (1), 53-63)

and multi-agency service provision

- ensure that the views of children and young people, parents/carers and staff inform practice and interventions
- improve awareness, understanding and action on neglect for organisations that work with children, families and others

During 2016/17 the SBNI contributed to two conferences on neglect to raise awareness of the local context regarding the issue. A portal on neglect has also been developed on the SBNI website - and toolkits and resources have been posted on this site for the use of all staff working in this field. There are plans for further awareness raising, training and a multi-agency practice survey to enable, shared learning.

In terms of measuring impact, the following outcome indicators will be used to demonstrate the effectiveness of this strategy and its implementation:

- reduction in the number of re-registrations on the Child Protection Register under the category of neglect
- reduction in persistent absenteeism from school where neglect is known to be a concerning factor
- increase in the number of child dental registrations
- reduction in the number of child dental caries
- increase in the number of case conferences where the category of registration includes neglect
- increase in the referral rates to Social Services and Family Support Hubs referencing early identification of neglect

The SBNI has now agreed that neglect will be one of its three big strategic priorities for the period 2017-2020 which means an even greater emphasis will be placed by all member agencies on dealing with the causes and impact of neglect on children and young people.

# Think family

## The need to think about the potential impact on the whole family when one of its members has a mental health problem continues to be an important element of the work of the Safeguarding Board.

During 2016/17 the SBNI played its part in the all-important joined up working on the Think Family regional action plan, supporting collaboration across all agencies to protect children and families.

The Health and Social Care Board, one of the member agencies of the Safeguarding Board, led on a range of initiatives including:

- Development of the Champions model across all five Health and Social Care Trusts in adult mental health and children's services supporting collaborative and partnership working.
- A two year pilot project in the South Eastern Trust to develop greater signposting and engage families in the conversation.
- Focus on data collection has given an overview of the volume of families involved along with the qualitative aspect of the impact of family focused conversations.
- A Think Family support practitioner started a one year secondment in Belfast Health and Social Care Trust in September 2016.
- The Western Health and Social Care Trust recruited a Think Family support practitioner for one year to help mental health and family and child care staff focus on the impact of parental mental health issues in the family.
- Development of a Think Family Social Work Assessment in adult mental health services is helping to highlight the importance of adverse life events in planning treatment and care.
- A two year research study involving Queen's University, the University of Ulster and international academics is progressing well and will provide a benchmark of family focused practice in Northern Ireland.
- Queen's University is currently leading on a Think Family audit looking at case files in Trusts to see how the Think Family protocol Responding to the Needs of Children whose Parents have Mental Health or Substance Misuse Issues is embedded in practice.

# **Safeguarding children and young people who have a disability**

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**SBNI Business Plan 2016- 2017 New and Emerging Issues**

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**Children with a Disability**

Children and young people who have a disability. are known to be particularly vulnerable to all forms of abuse. Contributory factors include physical vulnerability, communication difficulties, denial and lack of respect for their human rights.

In order to understand fully how the needs of children and young people who have a disability were being met within the child protection system in Northern Ireland the SBNI commissioned a study from Queen's University Belfast which reported in 2015.

The study was called "Safeguarding Disabled Children and Young People, a scoping exercise of Statutory Child Protection Services for Disabled children and young people in Northern Ireland" Dr Berni Kelly and Dr Sandra Dowling QUB 2015.

It has provided the basis for future improvements to the child protection system for children and young people with a disability and their families. The actions arising are currently being taken forward by the SBNI through the Children's Services Improvement Board chaired by the Director of Social Services at the HSCB.

These actions include:

- a regionally agreed definition of disability to improve staff confidence and consistency in recording disability for children in contact with the child protection system
- amendments to the current policies, to ensure the unique needs or additional risks for children with a disability are more adequately reflected.
- a regionally agreed criteria for access to disabled services to ensure equality of access to services
- training to raise staff awareness of the signs and symptoms of abuse in the context of a range of impairment types
- more emphasis on the responsibility of child protection workers to use alternative communication styles to engage with children with a disability and increase their opportunity to disclose
- early intervention with provision of a range of supports which is crucial to prevent family breakdown where there is a child with a disability in the family
- recruitment of more specialist foster carers/shared care arrangements to provide alternative care options as part of children with a disability's protection plans

A follow up study of the child protection system response to children with a disability is planned by the SBNI to ensure improvements are embedded in the child protection system and equality of access to services is assured.

# **Supporting those at risk of female genital mutilation**

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**SBNI Business Plan 2016- 2017 New and emerging issues**

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The exact number of girls living in Northern Ireland who are affected by Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is not known – but this issue of growing concern has been responded to in Northern Ireland by an SBNI Sub-Group encouraging a multi-agency approach to safeguarding those at risk or affected by it.

The Sub-Group has representation from communities particularly affected by FGM – and this is an extremely positive factor in taking forward work on this issue. Members have been working with communities in a culturally sensitive manner, developing regional resources, developing practice guidance, collecting data and providing training. On February 6th - International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM – women from affected communities shared insight and experiences to help understanding of FGM and how best to work with communities. Fifteen women from Sudan, Somalia and Yemen attended the event. There were also representatives present from the Black and Minority Ethnic community, Women's Aid, and FGM support group leaders.

Some key learning from the day:

- the negative consequences of FGM were recognised by women from affected communities, particularly after the discussion of the health complications of the practice
- pressure to perform FGM still exists and can present a real risk to girls even when mothers oppose the practice.
- pressure to perform FGM still exists and can present a real risk to girls even when mothers oppose the practice
- women affected by FGM in Northern Ireland experience a range of physical and emotional health problems but find it difficult to access to support services
- there are additional risks during labour for pregnant women who have experienced FGM

Speaking after the special focus day, those who attended responded positively.

*“This is the first time I knew there are four different type of FGM. I just know about two”*

*“We talked about how to explain to other people how this happens and how we can stop it”*

*“It is important to raise the awareness and know about all forms of FGM”*

*“This is just the beginning and we will work together to widen our awareness”*

Following the awareness day the National FGM Centre, England provided a two day multi-agency Train the Trainer programme for 15 people in Northern Ireland. Those attending agreed to deliver a total of 45 FGM awareness raising sessions by September 2018.

# Guiding staff through the development of policies and procedures

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## **SBNI Strategic Priority 3**

### **‘Providing leadership and setting direction’**

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**SBNI Business Plan 2016-2017 to “Seek to develop consistent practice across the region by reviewing the existing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect and safeguard children to ensure greater consistency and standardisation of practice.”<sup>3.1</sup>**

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## The development of child protection policies and procedures which operationalise government policy is the statutory responsibility of the SBNI.

The overarching safeguarding policy for the Northern Ireland government is **Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland**.

This revised policy was issued by the Department of Health in March 2016 and is a cross sectoral policy which has been endorsed by all government departments in Northern Ireland.

The Policy and Procedures Committee of the SBNI is a multi-agency/multi-disciplinary group whose main task during 16/17 was to revise and update the extant Regional Child Protection Policy and Procedures which had been developed in 2005, to bring them into line with the new government safeguarding policy.

These revised SBNI policy and procedures were issued for public consultation in February/ March 2017. There was a positive response with all agencies taking collective ownership of these very important documents. An engagement event with children and young people was also facilitated by the Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC) which provided positive feedback from the children and young people on how the response and reaction of professionals to allegations of child abuse impacts on them.

The new policy and procedures include core guidance which explains the process for all agencies on what to do if they are concerned about a child or young person and the role of statutory agencies such as the Police and Social Services. Safeguarding practice guidance has also been made available to multi-agency staff and volunteers on specific areas of child protection.

Work is now underway to make them available on an e-based platform so that they can be accessed quickly – and updated without delay. The revised policy and procedures will be launched later this year.

# Next steps

This fourth annual report has outlined the challenges and changes the SBNI has faced over the year as well as the successes and improvements that have been achieved. Over the next 12 months the SBNI partnership intend to continue to build on this work as well as beginning to address any new priorities that the Board may set.

Earlier this year the SBNI partnership began work on the strategic plan for 2017 – 2020. Members agreed that the key high level strategic priorities of the SBNI still remained as relevant as ever. They have resolved to:

- work in partnership with other agencies, service users and communities to ensure children and young people are living in safety and with stability
- provide leadership and set direction for the safeguarding system across NI
- respond in a timely manner to new and emerging concerns
- drive improvements in the current child protection system
- continue to build the capacity of the Safeguarding Board to enhance the knowledge and skills of the entire membership to ensure the Board is providing effective, evidence based responses to the safeguarding challenges now and in the years ahead

In addition to these high level objectives the SBNI has agreed to adopt a trauma-informed approach to safeguarding in the search for better outcomes for children. The CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study is one of the largest investigations of childhood abuse and neglect and its impact on later-life health and well-being.

**<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html>**

The study identified three main findings:

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are common
- Adverse Childhood Experiences are strong predictors of later health risks, diseases and developmental disorders
- this combination makes Adverse Childhood Experiences one of the leading determinants of poor health and social dysfunction

The research found that many adult diseases and developmental disorders begin early in life and that these could be reduced by the alleviation of toxic stress in childhood. The research indicates that severe and/or chronic adversity in childhood has a significant, negative impact on the child's development, well-being, life chances and future outcomes. Four or more adverse experiences correlated with a higher probability of poor outcomes for children throughout their lives, including a greater likelihood of suicide attempts, mental health problems, criminality and addictions. The research identified that people with six or more ACEs died nearly 20 years earlier on average than those without ACEs. Realising these connections and intervening early with proven strategies, is likely to improve outcomes, aiding prevention and recovery. The SBNI has therefore identified three Adverse Childhood Experiences for children in Northern Ireland which they have agreed to focus their collaborative efforts on over the next three years. These are:

- domestic and sexual violence
- child and parental mental health
- neglect

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

# **SBNI** **central** **support** **team**



**Pictured left to right (front):** Helen McKenzie, Chair Bernie McNally, Margaret Burke, Roisin Toner **Back row:** Lisa McEneaney, Michael O'Hare, Joanne McCloskey.

Margaret Burke	Professional Officer
Helen McKenzie	Professional Officer
Paul McNeill	Business Support Manager (Temporary)
Lisa McEneaney	Office Manager/Board Secretary
Roisin Toner	Business Support Officer (CMR)
Michael O'Hare	Business Support Officer (Committees)
Joanne McCloskey	Personal Secretary to the Chair



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# Glossary of terms

**Access NI** – body within Department of Justice that checks whether people applying to work with children have a criminal record

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**ACE** – Adverse Childhood Experiences

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**CAMHS** – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

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**CDOP** – Child Death Overview Panel

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**Child In Need** – a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development without the provision of services

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**ciNI** – Children in Northern Ireland

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**CMR** – Case Management Review

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**CPSSS** – Child Protection Support Service for Schools

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**CSE** – Child Sexual Exploitation

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**CYPSP** – Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership

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**DOH** – Department of Health

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**DOJ** – Department of Justice

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**EANI** – Education Authority Northern Ireland

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**FGM** – Female Genital Mutilation

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**Gateway** – the first point of contact for all new referrals to children’s social work services

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**HSC** – Health and Social Care

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**HSCB** – Health and Social Care Board

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**LAC** – Looked After Child

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**NCB** – National Children’s Bureau

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**NSPCC** – National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

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**PHA** – Public Health Agency

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**SBNI** – Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland

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**VOYPIC** – Voice Of Young People In Care

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