

North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership conducts a series of multi-agency learning-themed audits throughout the year. Each audit explores a different safeguarding theme and the multi-agency responses to it. The partnership business unit collates and shares the audit findings. These include highlighting good practice, areas for development, actions, next steps, and further resources.

Multi- Agency Learning Themed Audit

Child Sexual Abuse in the Family Environment 2026

Introduction

This audit was undertaken to explore how effectively the partnership recognises, assesses and responds to child sexual abuse, particularly within the family environment.

Partners considered how agencies work together to identify risk, hear and respond to children's voices, share and connect information, undertake joint enquiries, assess people who may present a sexual risk, and coordinate intervention, disruption and challenge. It aimed to identify strengths in partnership practice, areas for development, and practical actions to strengthen the multi-agency response to child sexual abuse.

Areas of Good Practice

Early recognition and response to safeguarding concerns

Practitioners demonstrated commitment to recognising concerns and taking action when risks, disclosures or worries became visible.

Taking concerns seriously

Disclosures and concerns raised by children, family members, schools, police, members of the public and partner agencies were treated as significant and responded to appropriately.

Using children's voices to inform practice

Practitioners sought to understand children's lived experiences and used their voices to support assessment, planning and decision-making.

Professional curiosity and contextual understanding

Practitioners showed curiosity about family history, trauma, parental experiences, offending patterns, relationships and wider contextual factors.

Timely multi-agency action, challenge and reflection

Agencies mobilised quickly through safeguarding processes, with evidence of constructive professional challenge and reflective, child-focused practice despite complexity and uncertainty.

Context

Four family circumstances were considered through facilitated multi-agency reflective discussions. The audit explored recognition of risk, assessment and planning, intervention and disruption, multi-agency working, impact and outcomes. It was informed by the national context, including findings from recent child safeguarding practice reviews, national learning on child sexual abuse, and the most recent [Joint Targeted Area Inspection](#) focus on child sexual abuse in the family environment

Resources & Further Information

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026](#)

[Joint Targeted Area Inspection: child sexual abuse in the family environment](#)

[National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel: I Wanted Them All to Notice](#)

[Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse resources](#)

[NYSCP professional curiosity, information sharing and child sexual abuse guidance, voice of the child CSARC pathway](#)

[All NYSCP practice guidance can be accessed here.](#)

Areas for Development

Cumulative risk analysis

Information about family history, adult behaviour, police involvement and wider family context was not always connected over time.

Assessment, planning and recording

Records did not always clearly show evidence, analysis, uncertainty, rationale or how language influenced the recognition of harm.

Information sharing and partnership working

Relevant information was sometimes held across different agencies, systems or geographical areas, and was not always fully connected.

Specialist CSA and health pathways

There was not always a consistent shared understanding of CSARC processes, clinical advice or the role of medical information.

Whole-family and network-based practice

Assessments and plans did not always fully consider siblings, adult histories, family relationships, trauma, communication needs or wider protective networks.

Digital and AI-supported recording

Digital or AI-supported recording did not always make professional judgement, context, accuracy or the child's lived experience sufficiently clear.

Recommendations

- Improve **multi-agency information sharing, and remain professionally curious** so historical information, such as adult offending, police involvement, family background are routinely brought together to form a **cumulative** understanding of **risk and harm**.
- Strengthen **assessment, planning, recording and language** so records clearly show the evidence, analysis, uncertainty, intended impact of support and responsibility for agreed actions.
- Enhance how safeguarding **information is sought, shared, connected** and acted upon across agencies, **systems and geographical** areas.
- Develop clearer shared understanding of **specialist CSA and health pathways, including CSARC representation, clinical advice, communication** with families and the contribution of medical information.
- Embed **whole-family** and network-based practice, including assessment of siblings, parental responses, **family history**, communication needs, protective factors and wider network capacity.
- Clarify **safe and appropriate** use of digital and AI-supported tools within recording systems, retaining professional **accountability** for **accuracy, context and judgement**.

Partnership Actions as a result of the Audit

Although this audit identifies a number of recommendations, only one new partnership action is proposed in relation to the use of AI. This is because key themes identified through this process have already been highlighted in previous audits and reviews with actions attributed, and are being progressed through existing partnership work and monitored via the PLS workplan.

Questions for Reflection

Recognising and understanding risk

- How effectively do we connect family history, adult behaviour, offending information and current concerns?
- How do we gather information from across borders or services – what can we do to improve this?
- How do we recognise patterns of risk before concerns escalate?

Recording and language

- Do records clearly distinguish fact, analysis and professional opinion?
- Does the language used accurately reflect the seriousness of concerns and the child's lived experience?

Information sharing and challenge

- How do we seek missing information and record uncertainty?
- Is constructive challenge recorded, acted upon and translated into assessment and planning?

Whole-family working

- Are siblings considered as children in their own right?
- Do plans test whether family and professional networks understand the concerns and can act protectively?

Communication and engagement

- Are appropriate interpreters or communication supports used where required?
- Do we explore whether apparent non-engagement may reflect language, fear, trauma, shame, mistrust or previous experiences of services?

What to do now

Use this briefing to support immediate reflection and action within your team, service or agency.

Consider how the learning applies to current practice, supervision, assessment, recording and multi-agency working.

Identify and share examples of good practice that could be adopted, within your team service or agency particularly in relation to information sharing across systems, agencies and geographical boundaries, professional curiosity, and confident conversations about child sexual abuse.

Where improvements are identified, agree clear actions, timescales and ownership so that learning is shared and helps improve practice.

Further partnership Audits and Safeguarding Reviews can be accessed [here](#).