

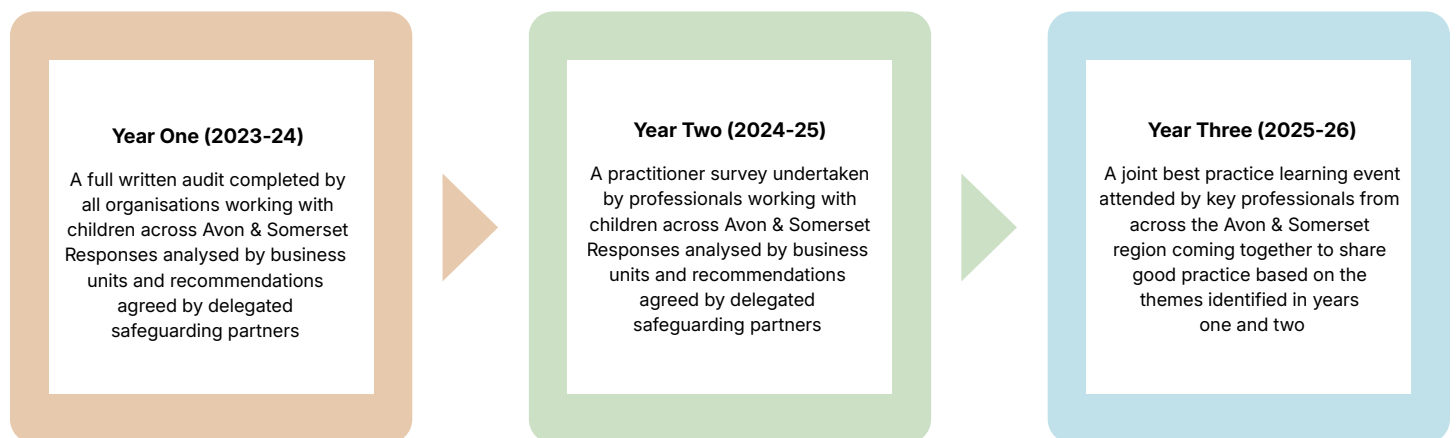


Section 11 2025-26

1. Background

Children's Partnerships across the Avon & Somerset region have worked together on a three year cycle of Section 11 auditing.

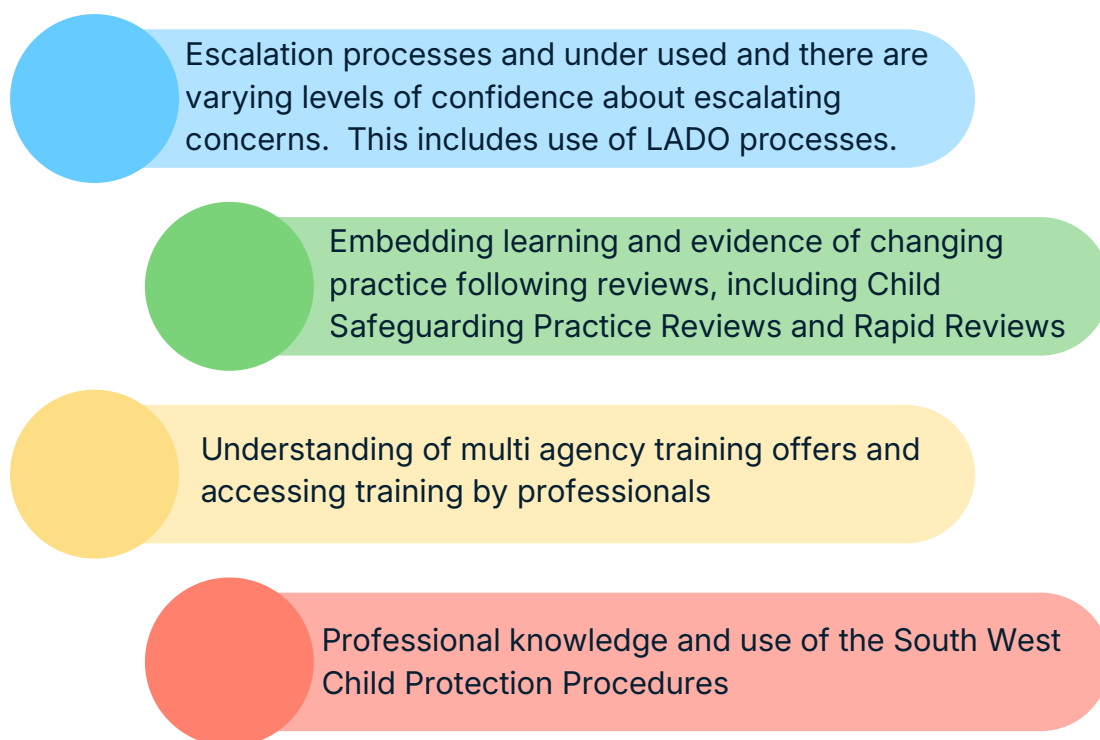
The three year cycle includes the following stages:



A Section 11 audit refers to a statutory self-assessment required under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, which places a legal duty on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure that their functions—and any services they commission—are carried out with due regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. These audits are a key part of how safeguarding children partnerships monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements across agencies. Organisations such as local authorities, health services, police, probation services, and youth offending teams are required to complete a Section 11 self-assessment. This process helps ensure that safeguarding responsibilities are embedded in their day-to-day operations, including areas like staff recruitment, training, and policy implementation. The Section 11 audit is not about introducing new functions, but about ensuring that existing responsibilities are fulfilled in a way that prioritises children's safety and wellbeing. It also provides a structured opportunity for agencies to reflect on their practices, identify areas for improvement, and demonstrate accountability to the partnership.

2. Key Findings from years one and two

Each of the partnerships identified different themes, however there have been some overarching themes that include the following:



In addition to these the five children's partnerships also identified the following:

Bath & North East Somerset

2023 – 2024

- All organisations to ensure information about the safeguarding lead is accessible.
- All organisations to review how they confirm knowledge and understanding of guidance, policies and procedures.
- Further assurance regarding the effectiveness of the escalation policy

2024-2025

- Liaise with partner organisations to support in identifying and raising awareness of individual organisation safeguarding leads, their role and responsibilities.
- Improve dissemination of learning from reviews and seek evidence on application of learning / change in practice
- Promotion of the Neglect Toolkit

Bristol

2023-2024

- Continue to promote the KBSP escalation policy
- Increase connection with faith and sports settings
- Need for a joint information sharing agreement to be made

2024-2025

- Share the new information sharing agreement through newsletter
- KBSP to promote use of LADO across partnership
- Organisations to consider how they will disseminate learnings from reviews to their staff

North Somerset

2023-2024

- Safeguarding lead added to agency's induction
- Raise awareness of issue resolution policy
- Multi-agency training offer promoted, and pathways followed
- Establish a process for managing action plans from learning

2024-2025

- Police colleagues aware of safeguarding lead and attend multi-agency training
- Safeguarding leads to ensure consistent access to and understanding of key safeguarding frameworks and resources and safeguarding updates
- Information sharing to be promoted and agreement in place across the force area

Somerset

2023-2024

- Improve monitoring of training compliance – including improvement in attendance of key agencies on core training, mechanisms to ensure that update training is undertaken at appropriate intervals.
- Increase awareness of the importance of the LADO role and Safer Recruitment Training.
- Organisations to ensure information about the safeguarding lead is accessible/included in induction.
- Organisations to provide assurance regarding the effective use of Resolving Professional Differences(Escalation) Protocol.

2024-2025

- Organisations are encouraged to promote key multi-agency publications and resources such as the Somerset Effective Support document (threshold document) and the South West Child Protection Procedures.
- Organisations to improve dissemination of safeguarding updates and effectively share local and national learning to facilitate meaningful improvements in practice.
- Explore alignment/shared information sharing policies and protocols across Avon & Somerset region.

South Gloucestershire

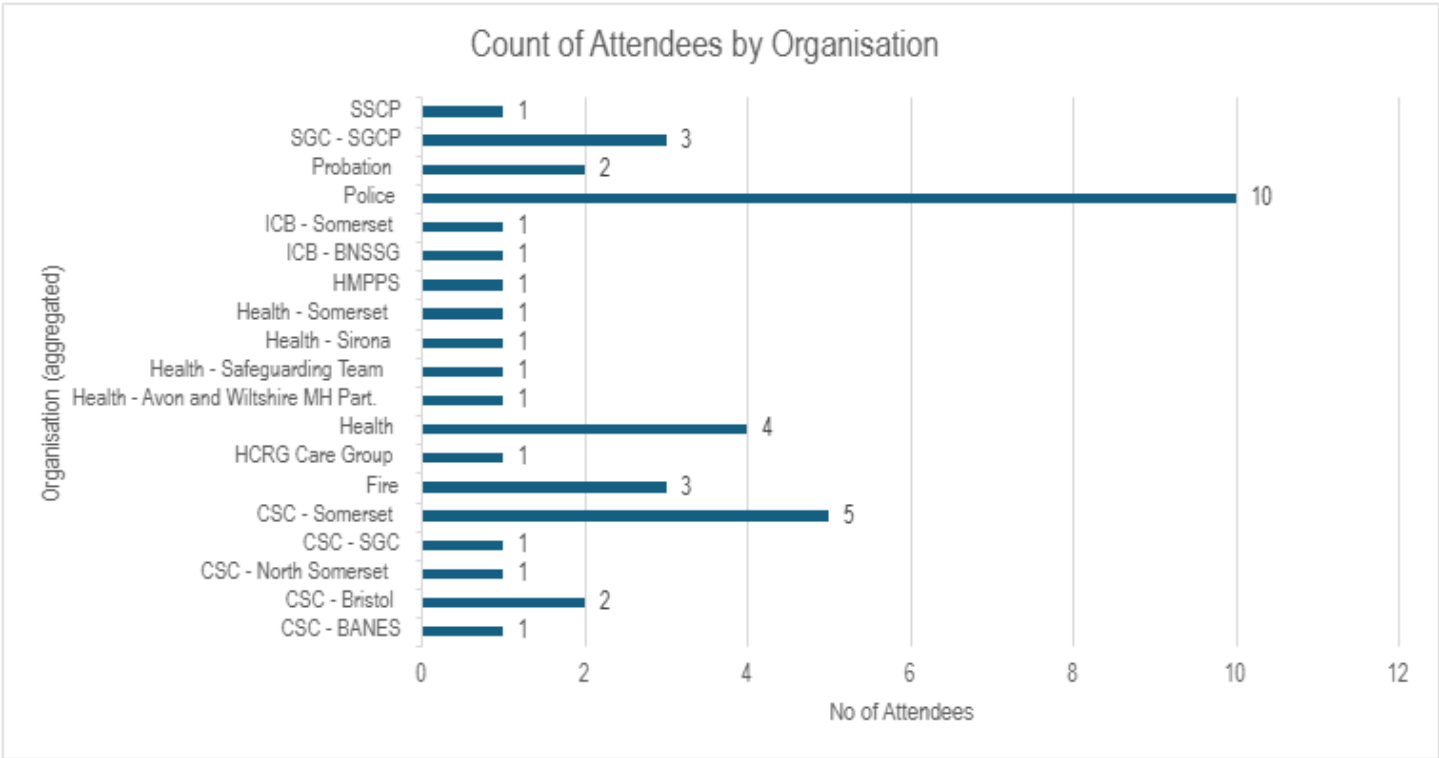
2023-2024

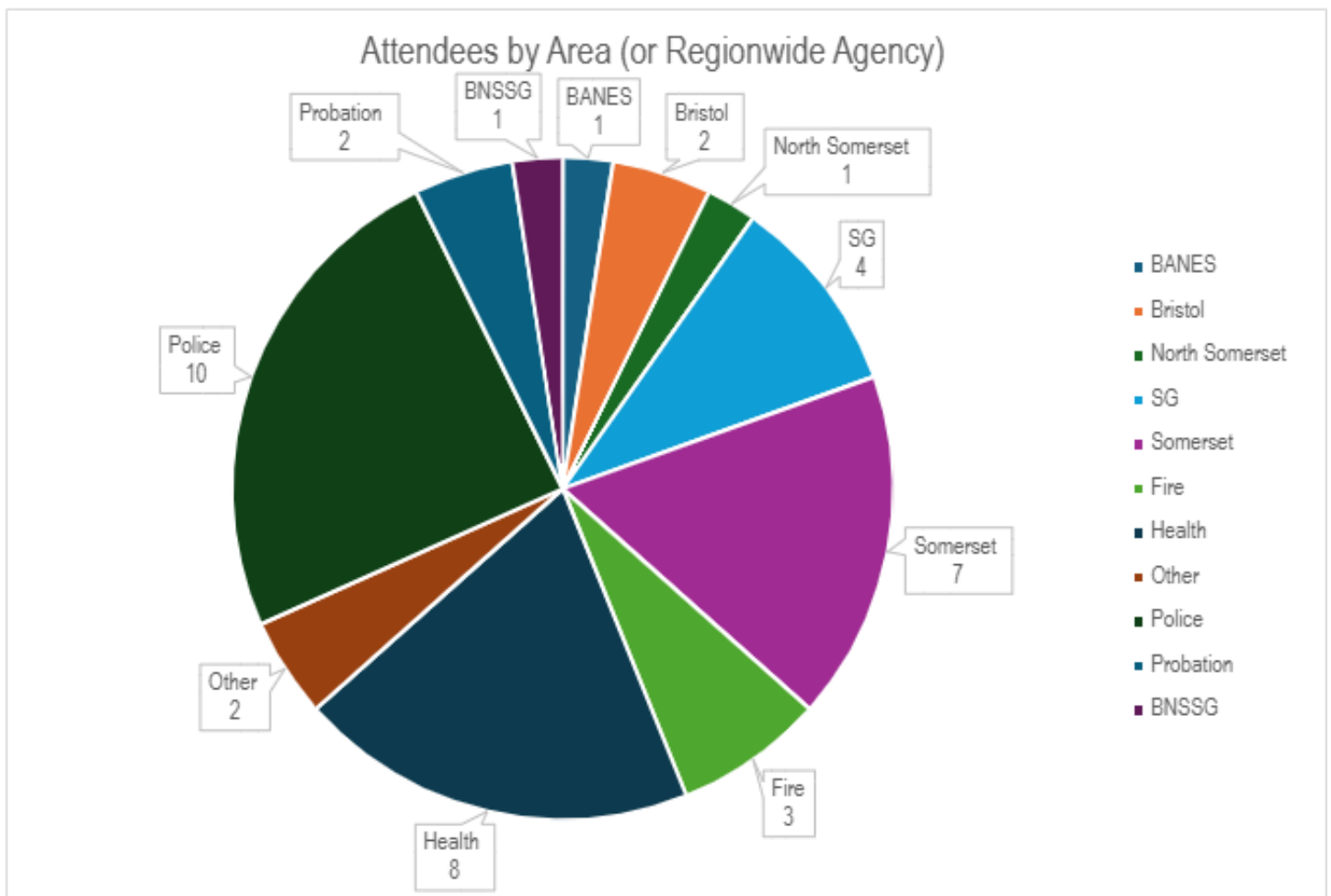
- Use of LADO and escalation
- Sharing of learning from CSPRs not consistent
- Working with fathers

- Multi agency training – offer not well understood
- Neglect
- Understanding of thresholds and knowledge of the document

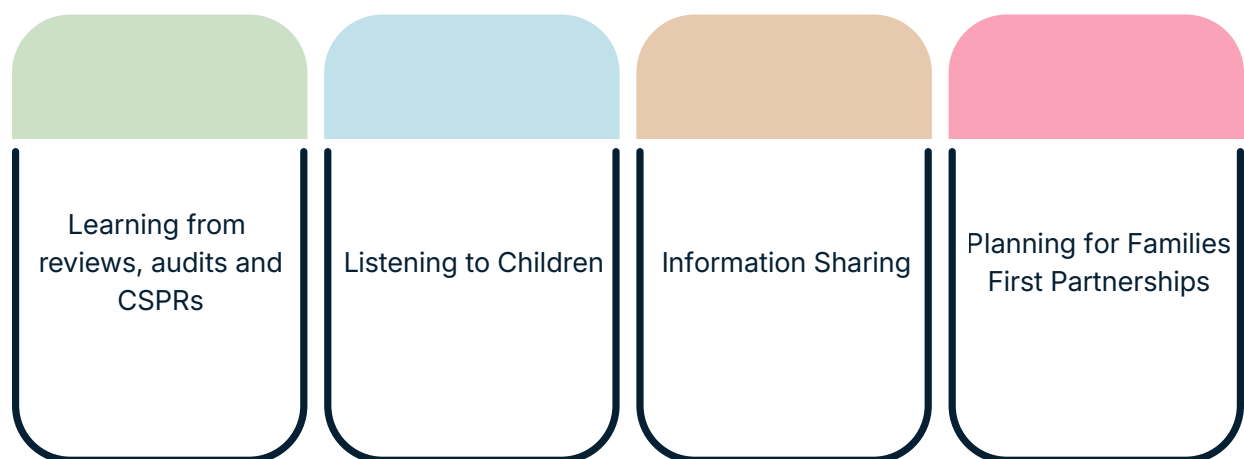
3. Section 11 process for 2025-26

The five partnerships held a best practice workshop this year. This event was hosted by Avon & Somerset Police and was attended by professionals from across the region.





Those attending worked in groups and considered eight themes, responses covered the whole of the Avon & Somerset region and so there may be local differences



Learning - what good practice was identified?

There was lots of feedback about learning events being effective as a way of sharing learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs), audits and other reviews.

- Making learning events open across the region rather than just in the local authority area where the learning happened is good practice and welcomed, bitesize sessions were popular

- There was also a suggestion of business managers being invited to other partnerships to share learning more widely
- Use of podcasts (Somerset) to share learning was highlighted
- Single page learning briefs were identified as good practice across the region to support sharing of learning for front line practitioners
- Organisations use their team structures to share learning to smaller groups, alongside electronic dissemination
- Tailoring the learning to suit the organisation helps to engage practitioners. The fire service shared how they pick out the elements relevant to them prior to sharing for example
- Tracking learning through 'one year on' reviews (South Gloucestershire)

The discussions included lots of work that indicate positive sharing of learning. and that this is prioritised.

There are more challenges in how to ensure that learning is embedded and evidence of change across the region.

Listening to Children - what good practice was identified?

The groups gave lots of examples of how they are listening to children's voices across the regions and across organisations working with children.

- Including children in consultations, co-production examples, focus groups and having specific boards and forums where children are included and/or lead.
- Considering our language and changing how we say things when working with children for example 'home' rather than 'placement'
- Thinking about what we wear - for example, suits can be a barrier to chatting to a child
- Co-produced information leaflets
- welcome pack for children seeking asylum
- including specific places in forms that must be completed that ask for the child's views
- 'young safeguarders' who have been through a service who give their views about how to deliver services
- Using text rather than calls at the request of children
- Awareness of surroundings for children when children are present in adult appointments
- Focus on child's voice rather than hearing the parent only

Information Sharing - what good practice was identified?

The groups all agreed that there is good information sharing within multi agency meetings that take place, for example in strategy discussions, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH).

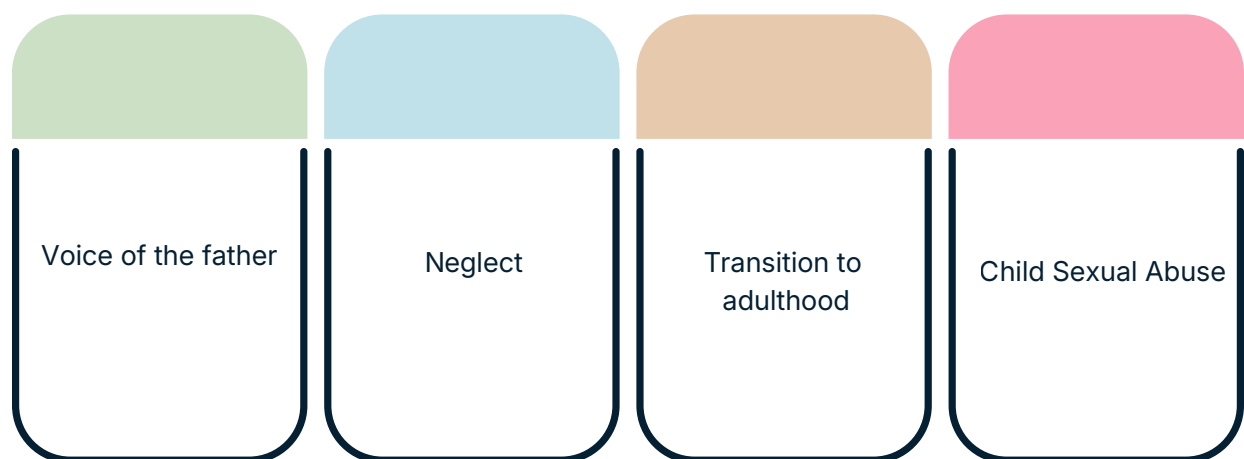
- There is improved information sharing evident following serious incidents in the region.
- Data sharing dashboard work being undertaken by Avon & Somerset Police to support data sharing between police and children's partnerships
- Internal NHS processes for flagging records for child protection, domestic abuse etc.

- Big appetite for sharing information, although recognition that there is still hesitation evident.
- Probation are setting up a regional domestic abuse and safeguarding hub as a source of information sharing
- Development of a regional data sharing agreement (Tier One)

Planning for Families First Partnerships (FFP) - what good practice was identified?

There were less responses for this topic, there were professionals in the room who didn't know about FFP, and some who were not clear on the local arrangements and plans being made.

- There are some 'seven minute briefing' resources being developed in some areas to help improve knowledge and understanding
- Joint development work taking place
- There have been practitioner workshops taking place
- Already some signs of improving practice as FFP being developed
- an opportunity to reset
- More opportunities to work together including with co-location
- Potential for some shared tools for example threshold documents
- Seeing commonality across the five partnership areas



Fathers - what good practice was identified?

- ante-natal work to link to father's records, including efforts to actively identify fathers
- requirement to include fathers in assessments
- Forms in multiple services include routine questions about father
- training of 'dad champions' to work with fathers
- Father's charter
- recent reviews highlight perpetrator diversion in domestic Abuse
- Prison sector undertaking needs analysis including father's needs
- Probation, predominantly working with men, practice embedded well regarding those who are fathers
- Use of Dad pad

Neglect - what good practice was identified?

- Changing culture - particularly in health settings from 'did not attend' to 'was not brought'
- Use of Neglect tools has improved
- Application of think family approaches when working with adults considering the impact on their children
- Calling neglect by name, being clear
- Police and Fire professionals would not usually complete neglect tools but have relevant elements in their own training included

Transition to Adulthood- what good practice was identified?

- More services and support available up to the age of 25
- Groups acknowledged that although not good practice consistently this is an improving picture and there has been lots of focus on this area across the region
- Use of language - voice of children has told us to use 'preparing for adulthood' and not 'transition'
- Effective protocols in place
- Evidence of adults and children's services and partnerships working together
- Camhs and Adult mental health working together and planning with children
- Dedicated staff and leads in place for transitions work in some organisations
- There is a probation officer in every Youth Offending Team to support transition
- Hospital work identified in transitioning children into adult services, providing longer appointment times, offers of bespoke support, use of different communication methods

Child Sexual Abuse - what good practice was identified?

- There are clear procedures in place for specialist services
- work is trauma informed
- specialist trained officers in the police
- preparation for JTAI inspections on this theme underway, questions about whether this could be more joined up
- New CSA policy (Somerset)
- CSA training has been established
- 'I wanted them all to Notice' working group in place (North Somerset)
- Effective MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) in place
- Closer working practices with offenders
- Use of correct language is improving
- Inclusion of new webpage for professionals (South Gloucestershire)



Professionals at the event fed back that there is an opportunity to have a joint language and communications strategy for the delivery of the Families First Partnership. There are opportunities to have a consistency across partnerships with Families first.

More work needed embedding 'I wanted them all to notice' and the recommendations for child sexual abuse.

Gaps in transition to adulthood work. Adoption of a shared approach. For example a group of children told one of the partnerships that they would prefer to use the language 'preparing for adulthood' rather than transition to adulthood. A shared approach and commitment to adoption of this language across Avon & Somerset should be considered.

Each partnership has reflected on the priorities for their own local area in addition to this regional report.

Conclusion

Each of the five children's partnerships in Avon & Somerset have worked together to undertake this three year cycle of Section 11 auditing. There was a lot of very positive feedback for the event focussing on good practice that this report reflects. It is recommended that the next three year cycle beginning in April 2026 includes the same elements:

Year One: Full written self audit

Year Two: Practitioner audits

Year Three: Best Practice Event

Some of the good practice identified in this report does not relate to the whole area, and if there are elements individual organisations or partnerships want to explore to learn from one another then the pathway to do that is through the Business Manager for the partnerships.

Details of the Business Managers are included below:

Area	Business Manager	Contact details
Bath & North East Somerset	Ian Mulcahey (interim)	BanesBCSSP@bathnes.gov.uk
Bristol	Richard Hawkrige (interim)	kbsp@bristol.gov.uk
North Somerset	Zoe Gartland	zoe.gartland@n-somerset.gov.uk
Somerset	Margaret Brookes (interim)	sscp@somerset.gov.uk
South Gloucestershire	Sarah Taylor	sgcp@southglos.gov.uk

