



SAFEGUARDING

ANNUAL REPORT 2024 - 2025



Our Safeguarding Vision

At Torus, safeguarding is central to our organisational ethos and embedded throughout our operational practice. We are committed to protecting the rights of individuals to live safely, free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

We recognise safeguarding as a shared responsibility - one that spans all sectors and requires cohesive, multiagency collaboration to ensure the wellbeing of those most at risk.

Our 2024–2027 Safeguarding Strategy, sets out a clear vision:

To respond to risk and need at the right time, with safety-led, non-judgemental support delivered by skilled and confident colleagues.

We recognise that our unique position as a housing and service provider allows us to identify concerns that may otherwise go unnoticed. The **'Think Family'** approach ensures we consider the needs of the whole household - not just the individual.

Our strategy is built around four key principles

THE RIGHT RESPONSE

Early identification, consistent language around safeguarding, and access to appropriate support.

THINK FAMILY

A holistic view of safeguarding that includes children, young people, and all household members.

COLLABORATION

Strong partnerships and effective information sharing to deliver more joined-up safeguarding solutions.

LEARNING

Continuous improvement through training, audits, and feedback to build on our existing safeguarding culture.



Launched during our first Safeguarding Children's Week in May 2024, our safeguarding strategy 'Playing Our Role: Think Family' marks a significant step forward in how we embed safeguarding across Torus. It's driven by our shared values, delivered with empathy, and focused on making a meaningful difference. 'Think Family' is about building on the strong foundations we've already laid, and continuing to push for better, more joined-up support for every household we serve.

Cath Murray Howard, Chief Operating Officer and Executive Lead for Safeguarding



Bringing the Vision to Life:

Embedding Safeguarding Across Torus

At Torus, safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. We've built clear structures and processes to make sure safeguarding is part of how we work every day, and we're committed to improving and staying accountable.

Strengthening Governance and Strategic Oversight

In 2024/25, we enhanced our governance framework by rebranding the former Safeguarding Subcommittee into the Safeguarding Assurance Group. The group provides strategic leadership and oversight of our safeguarding and domestic abuse responsibilities. Chaired by Group Housing Director, the Safeguarding Assurance Group convenes quarterly and includes senior leaders from across the organisation. Its remit includes:

-> Setting the strategic direction for safeguarding
-> Monitoring performance and compliance
-> Identifying risks and agreeing mitigating actions
-> Driving continuous improvement in safeguarding practice.

Enhancing Accountability Through Board Engagement

To further strengthen transparency and accountability, our Board Safeguarding Champions meet quarterly with the Group Housing Director, the Managing Director of Torus Foundation, and our Safeguarding Officer. These sessions provide a forum for scrutiny and challenge, enabling us to:

-> Review the effectiveness of current safeguarding arrangements
-> Identify emerging risks and trends
-> Ensure appropriate governance and oversight
-> Promote a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

Our governance model ensures that safeguarding remains a strategic priority, embedded at every level of the organisation and responsive to the evolving needs of our communities.



Strengthening Delivery through Subgroups and Steering Groups

To strengthen and streamline our safeguarding delivery, Torus held a development away day in January 2025, bringing together members of all existing safeguarding subgroups: Training and Learning, Policy, Procedure and Practice, Children and the Domestic Abuse Steering Group.

The session provided space to reflect on progress, identify current challenges, and agree on the direction needed to drive forward the actions set out in our Safeguarding Strategy.

As a result, we have restructured our safeguarding subgroups into two focused Steering Groups:

-> Domestic Abuse Steering Group
-> Safeguarding Practice and Culture Steering Group.

This consolidation of groups ensures greater clarity, coordination, and impact. Importantly, it integrates children's safeguarding into our broader safeguarding approach - placing children on equal footing with adults and embedding their needs into our core safeguarding activity, rather than treating them as a separate consideration.

Each Steering Group brings together subject matter experts from across the organisation who act as champions within their service areas - sharing knowledge, shaping practice, and contributing to the development of operational plans.

Updated Terms of Reference have been introduced to clearly define roles, responsibilities, and expected outcomes, ensuring accountability and alignment with our strategic goals.

We envisage that the revised structure will elevate the visibility and influence of safeguarding across Torus.



Key Achievements in Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse (2024 - 2025)

Throughout 2024/25, Torus has made significant strides in strengthening its safeguarding and domestic abuse response. These achievements reflect our commitment to continuous improvement and delivering meaningful outcomes for those we support.

Sector Recognition	Operational Enhancements and Service Development	Internal Capacity Building and Resources	Collaborative and Multi-Agency Engagement
<p>Achieved Gold Accreditation awarded by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) in October 2024, recognising excellence in our domestic abuse response and housing practice.</p> <p>Sponsored and spoke at the Liverpool Domestic Abuse Conference 2024, reinforcing our commitment to regional partnership working and highlighting the vital role housing plays in safeguarding practice.</p>	<p>Peer Review of our commissioned domestic abuse service, Safe2Speak, ensuring quality assurance and service effectiveness.</p> <p>Launch of a New Target Hardening Offer to enhance safety measures for victims of domestic abuse.</p> <p>Review and Refresh of Safeguarding Policies and Procedures, aligning with best practice and legislative updates.</p> <p>Embedding the Work of the Domestic Abuse Housing Team and Tenancy Sustainment into Support Network, strengthening internal expertise and service delivery.</p> <p>Agreed and developed the role of Safer Estates in the management of domestic abuse perpetrator cases.</p> <p>Facilitated an away day for all safeguarding subgroup members.</p>	<p>Safeguarding Children’s Week (May 2024) – a successful awareness campaign engaging colleagues across the organisation.</p> <p>Launch of the ‘I Have a Concern’ Online Resource, providing staff with a streamlined and accessible platform for reporting safeguarding concerns.</p> <p>Commissioned an External Case Audit of complex and challenging circumstances to identify areas for learning.</p> <p>Launched safeguarding training (refresher modules) for all colleagues.</p> <p>DHR Training for Senior Leads across Housing and Torus Foundation.</p> <p>Held two Significant Event Analysis workshops.</p>	<p>Active contribution to multi-agency reviews and audits, including:</p> <p>Section 11 Audit.</p> <p>Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs).</p> <p>Attendance at Safeguarding Adults Boards across the Heartlands.</p> <p>Consistent housing representation at MARAC across the heartlands.</p>

Children's Safeguarding Week - May 2024

To launch our refreshed safeguarding strategy and promote a holistic 'Think Family' approach, we held our first Children's Safeguarding Week in May 2024.

The week commenced with a Group-wide video launch, led by Cath Murray Howard, Chief Operating Officer, introducing the new strategy and reinforcing our commitment to safeguarding adults, children and young people through a collaborative and household-focused approach.

A diverse programme of events was delivered throughout the week, including targeted briefings, internal communications, and a series of Lunch and Learn sessions designed to build knowledge and confidence among colleagues.

These sessions were well-attended and received positively, reflecting strong engagement across departments and a shared commitment to improving outcomes for children and families.

Topics included:

-> 'Think Family': Developing Our Safeguarding Approach
-> The Early Help Offer in St Helens (delivered by partners colleagues)
-> Why Professional Curiosity is Key!
-> Domestic Abuse and the Impact on the Child HMS Breakfast Briefings.

In addition, during Children's Safeguarding Week our St Helens Neighbourhoods Team collaborated with partners from the St Helens Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to review the quality of safeguarding referrals being made by housing teams. This partnership working provided valuable insights into how we can strengthen our referral processes and improve practice through shared learning and continuous improvement.

Alongside this, young people at FireFit Youth & Community Hub worked with colleagues to co-design a young person friendly version of safeguarding procedures, ensuring children and young people accessing provision at the Hub understand their rights, know how to raise concerns, and feel empowered to contribute to a safe environment.

Children's Safeguarding Week marked an important milestone in embedding the 'Think Family' ethos across our organisation, reinforcing the importance of early identification, professional curiosity, and multi-agency collaboration in safeguarding children.



Safeguarding Reporting and Data Insights

Throughout the year, a key area of focus has been the review and refinement of safeguarding policies and procedures across the Group. This work has been led by members of the Safeguarding Practice and Culture Steering Group, with active engagement from colleagues to ensure that the procedures in place are both practical and effective.

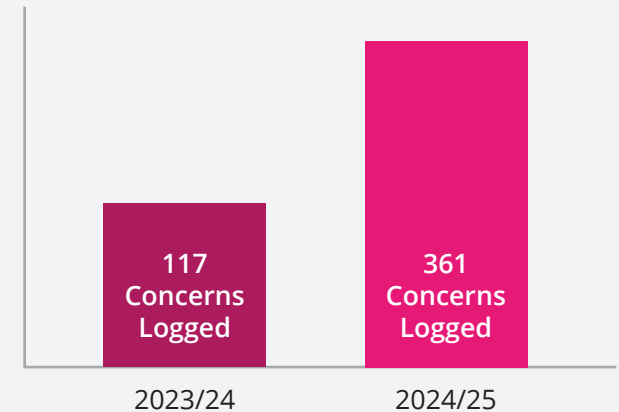
Comprehensive reviews of policies and procedures relating to safeguarding adults, safeguarding children, PREVENT, and domestic abuse have resulted in a more consistent and robust approach to the escalation and recording of safeguarding concerns. This consistency is vital to ensure that all identified risks are appropriately captured and addressed.

The continued establishment of the Domestic Abuse Housing Team, alongside the development of improved internal reporting mechanisms, has significantly enhanced our understanding of the prevalence and impact of domestic abuse within our homes and communities.

Safeguarding Data Overview (2024/25)

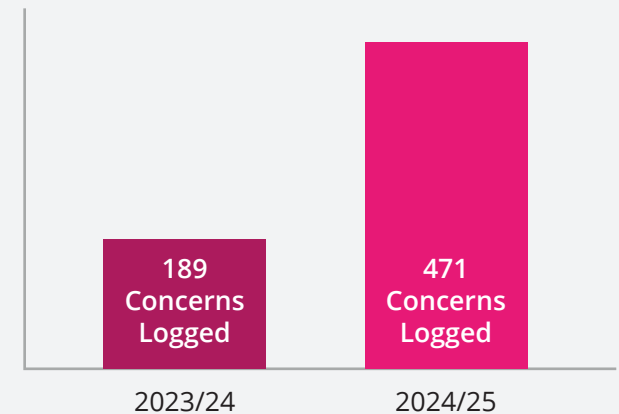
Children's Safeguarding Concerns

- **361 concerns** were reported relating to children, representing a **149% increase** in comparison to the previous year.
- The **most prevalent** categories of concern for children were:
 - Domestic abuse
 - Neglect



Adults Safeguarding Concerns

- **471 concerns** were reported relating to adults, representing a **208% increase** in comparison to the previous year.
- The **most prevalent** categories of concern for adults were:
 - Domestic abuse
 - Self-neglect
 - Financial abuse



ABC Respond Procedure: Early Identification and Escalation

Overview

The ABC Respond Procedure provides a structured escalation pathway for designated business areas to raise welfare concerns about tenants and household members. It enables:

-> Early identification of safeguarding needs
-> Efficient internal escalation of welfare concerns
-> Timely support and protection for those at risk

Review and Performance (2024/25)

In 2024/25, the procedure was reviewed to ensure continued effectiveness and alignment with changes to organisational structures. As a result, its use was streamlined to HMS, Assets, Corporate Core Services and Developments, with other service areas required to log concerns directly via the housing management system.

Housing and Tenancy Sustainment: working together in action

Concerns were escalated regarding refuse accumulation and poor living conditions at the tenant's property. Housing Officers identified significant health and safety risks, including blocked access to essential facilities and fire hazards.

A referral to tenancy sustainment was made. Through consistent engagement, the tenant accepted support, leading to waste removal, benefit access, and improved living standards. The intervention not only enhanced the tenant's wellbeing and safety.

“

I was assisted to empty my shed, and get storage for my belongings. This makes my home better because I won't have clothes in bags. I am also better off moneywise due to the help I received from Kate

”

Following these changes (as expected) usage of the ABC Respond Procedure decreased by 17%, with **1,341 new alerts** recorded.

The most common concerns related to tenant welfare and home conditions, highlighting potential support needs.

Gold Standard Housing Response to Domestic Abuse

In October 2024, Torus was extremely proud to achieve Gold Standard Accreditation from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA), recognising our commitment to improving how we identify and respond to domestic abuse - the largest category of safeguarding concerns we identify and respond to across the Group.

This milestone followed a two-year transformation programme led by the Domestic Abuse Steering Group, which embedded best practice across the organisation and strengthened our safeguarding framework.



Key Achievements

-> Implementation of new domestic abuse policies and procedures
-> Mandatory domestic abuse training rolled out to all frontline colleagues
-> Establishment of a Domestic Abuse Champion Network
-> Investment in a dedicated Domestic Abuse Housing Team

Introduction of new approaches to manage domestic abuse perpetrator cases

Impact and Outcomes

In 2024/25, the Domestic Abuse Housing Team responded to 952 new cases, whilst the numbers exceed all other forms of abuse identified, this represents a decrease of 11% (118) cases in comparison to the previous year. We recognise that many domestic abuse cases still go unreported due to the complex nature of disclosure, and we remain committed to creating safe spaces for victims to come forward.

Our Response in Practice

-> Torus housing is actively represented at Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) across our heartlands, contributing to coordinated safety planning for high-risk victims
-> Victims have access to a single point of contact within Torus for housing-related support
-> Practical safety measures are provided to help victims remain safely in their homes

This work reflects our ongoing commitment to safeguarding and our role as a responsible housing and service provider. We continue to build on this foundation through collaboration, training, continuous learning and our ongoing commitment to maintaining DAHA accreditation status.

Commissioned Services in St Helens: Domestic Abuse Refuge Provision



Torus is commissioned to deliver the domestic abuse refuge service in St Helens, providing emergency accommodation for individuals and families fleeing domestic abuse or facing homelessness as a result of abuse.

The refuge offers a safe and supportive environment, where each resident is assigned a dedicated key worker. Support is tailored to promote recovery, enhance independent living skills, and facilitate access to long-term, stable accommodation. The service works in close partnership with social care professionals and voluntary sector agencies to ensure a holistic, multi-agency approach to safeguarding and wellbeing.

In addition to accommodation, the team operates a 24/7 helpline offering advice and emotional support to those affected by domestic abuse. Over the reporting period, the helpline **received 390 calls**.

During the year, the refuge accommodated a total of **42 adults and 33 children**.

The team is currently working collaboratively with St Helens Council to expand the refuge provision. A new refuge site is currently in development and is expected to launch in 2025, further strengthening the borough's response to domestic abuse.



Thank you to all of the staff in Refuge for supporting me, I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for your support

The staff have supported me to move on from my relationship, it was hard, and I have had a lot of ups and down's, but I feel positive about the future and that is down to the support I have received

My keyworker is so kind, caring and can never do enough for me

I feel safe here

Quotes from Refuge support recipients



Commissioned Services in St Helens:

Safe2Speak and Domestic Abuse Outreach Service

Safe2Speak

The Safe2Speak team is commissioned by St Helens Council to provide tailored, community-based support for victims of domestic abuse residing within the borough. The service is delivered by a team of highly skilled domestic abuse practitioners, including:

-> A practitioner embedded within the St Helens Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
-> A court specialist supporting victims in accessing justice through criminal and civil courts
-> A practitioner co-located within local drug and alcohol service Change Grow Live, dedicated to working with victims with intersecting complex needs

The team works collaboratively with the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), statutory services, and voluntary sector partners to deliver comprehensive safety and support planning for those at risk of harm.

Key Achievements (2024/25)

-> Responded to **1,412 new referrals**, providing timely and effective support to victims
-> Maintained **100% attendance** at MARAC meetings, ensuring consistent multi-agency engagement
-> Delivered **20 domestic abuse training modules** to professionals across the borough, enhancing awareness, skills, and safeguarding capacity
-> Contributed to multi-agency audits and **Domestic Homicide Reviews**, supporting continuous improvement in safeguarding arrangements
-> Undertook a **peer review** of the service, resulting in a detailed action plan to guide future service development and strategic planning

“

My practitioner was fantastic and really helped me in one of the most difficult times of my life

I wouldn't feel as safe and secure as I do now without this support. I think I would have found court impossible without the help I received

My IDVA was an angel when I needed her - she has been amazing, a great support, supporting me 100%

Extremely supportive throughout

Client feedback

”

Tenancy Sustainment:

Targeted Support for Tenants at Risk

Torus Tenancy Sustainment Team provides intensive, housing-related support to tenants facing multiple or complex challenges. These include safeguarding concerns such as self-neglect, hoarding, serious property neglect, mental health and substance misuse, and poverty affecting access to food, fuel, or furniture. The team works collaboratively with internal services and external partners to prevent harm and sustain tenancies.

Key Achievements in 2024/25

- > **Team Integration:** Successfully embedded within the Support Network following the housing restructure.
- > **Referral Criteria Review:** Developed clearer, more targeted criteria to ensure appropriate referrals and timely support.
- > **Responded to 1727 new cases** referrals including 394 cases referred via ABC Respond.
- > **Data Development:** Launched a task and finish group to design a tenancy sustainment dashboard for improved data tracking and impact measurement.

Next Steps for 2025/26: The development of the tenancy sustainment dashboard remains a priority. It will enable the team to better understand referral patterns, evidence outcomes, and demonstrate the impact of their work in preventing harm and promoting tenancy stability.



Case Study

Terry* was living in poor conditions and facing multiple challenges, including alcohol dependency, financial difficulties, and lack of self-care. He wasn't receiving PIP despite being eligible and had unresolved debts.

Support Provided

-> Safeguarding referral for self-neglect
-> Referrals to We Are With You (alcohol support) and Citizens Advice Liverpool (debt support)
-> Helped initiate a PIP claim

Health Crisis

Terry was hospitalised after a seizure linked to alcohol misuse. This became a recurring pattern. In January 2025, he was discharged with no keys, and unable to access his home. A safeguarding referral and emergency services call led to a diagnosis of an acute health issue.

Collaborative Resonse

Social services quickly assigned a social worker. I worked closely with the hospital, Neighbourhoods, and social services to ensure he wasn't discharged back into unsuitable housing.

Outcome

Terry is now safe, abstaining from alcohol, and supported to transfer into settled in retirement living with twice-daily care. With all support goals met, his case has been successfully closed.

* Name changed



Learning & Development

In 2024, we launched our Safeguarding Refresher Training Programme for all colleagues across the Group. This mandatory training is designed to be aligned with current legislation, best practice guidance, and learnings from both internal and external reviews.

The training is tailored to reflect the specific needs and context of Torus, ensuring relevance and impact.

A key focus of the programme was on the practical aspects of safeguarding - particularly improving our colleague's professional curiosity to enable more proactive identification of concerns and then driving a clear process for raising concerns internally.

This emphasis directly supported the recent updates to our safeguarding procedures, helping to embed consistent and confident practice across the organisation.

During 2024/25:

All colleagues complete mandatory safeguarding e-learning and induction workshops. Front-line staff also receive specialist training based on role requirements.

Training delivered to date:

-> **380** new joiners completed corporate induction safeguarding workshops
-> **870** colleagues received specialist training:
 - 370** in domestic abuse awareness
 - 500** in safeguarding

Further sessions are planned, with practice and culture meetings driving solutions to embed safeguarding into daily service and proactively support tenants.

“

Really interesting and useful information - well delivered

I enjoyed being in the session with other areas of the business as it opened my eyes and brought new perspective as to how I can help people

Training participants

”

A Culture of Learning

At Torus, we are deeply committed to fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement in our safeguarding and domestic abuse response. We recognise that the nature of safeguarding work is complex and evolving, and we strive to ensure our workforce remains confident, informed, and equipped to manage challenging and sensitive concerns effectively.



Over the past year, we have taken significant steps to strengthen our organisational practice and embed learning at every level:

.....> **Significant Event Analysis Workshops:** We facilitated two in-depth workshops focused on Significant Event Analysis, providing frontline colleagues with a structured space to reflect on complex cases. These sessions enabled staff to identify systemic barriers, share best practices, and collaboratively develop solutions to improve safeguarding procedures and outcomes.

.....> **Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) Participation:** Torus has actively contributed to seven Domestic Homicide Reviews, working closely with multi-agency partners to examine the circumstances surrounding tragic incidents. Through this collaborative approach, we identified key learning points, enhanced our understanding of domestic abuse dynamics, and refined our internal processes to better support victims and prevent future harm.

.....> **DHR Training:** We commissioned training for members of our Housing Management and Safeguarding Assurance Group, aimed at deepening their understanding of the DHR process. This training has helped to strengthen our ability to contribute meaningfully to the review process.

.....> **Independent Case Audit:** We commissioned an independent audit of a particularly complex safeguarding case involving multiple housing services. The audit provided valuable insights into our practice, highlighted areas for service improvement, and informed targeted staff development initiatives.

These activities reflect our commitment to embedding a learning culture across the organisation. By prioritising reflection, collaboration, and continuous development, we ensure that safeguarding remains central to our values and operational practice - ultimately improving outcomes for the individuals and communities we work alongside.

Safeguarding Partnerships and Multi Agency Working

Torus continues to play an active and influential role in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements within all areas we operate. Our commitment to collaborative working is central to our safeguarding strategy, ensuring that we contribute meaningfully to the protection of adults, children, and young people.

Strategic Engagement and Relationship Building

Throughout 2024/25, Torus has maintained strong representation at a wide range of multi-agency safeguarding forums, including Safeguarding Adults Boards and their subgroups across the Heartlands.

Our strategic leads continue to work closely with partners across health, social care, police, and education to ensure a coordinated and effective safeguarding response.

Operational Collaboration and Frontline Involvement

Torus frontline teams remain actively engaged in multi-agency safeguarding processes, attending:

- Strategy Meetings
- Child Protection Conferences
- Core Groups
- Family Action Meetings
- MARAM (Multi Agency Risk and Management)

These forums enable our colleagues to contribute valuable housing-related insights and support holistic safeguarding interventions.

Our Housing teams also work in partnership with Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) and PREVENT teams, sharing relevant information to support safeguarding enquiries and risk assessments



Communications and Engagement

Effective internal communication is essential to embedding safeguarding and domestic abuse awareness across Torus.

Key initiatives during 2024/25 included

-> Torus' Children's Safeguarding Week (May 2024) - our first dedicated week of activities focused on child safeguarding
-> Global 16 Days of Action Against Violence Against Women and Girls (November 2024)
-> National Safeguarding Adults Week (November 2024)
-> Launch of 'I Have a Concern' - a new online guidance tool for colleagues
-> Development of Pathways to Support - clear criteria and internal processes for accessing housing and support services

These activities supported consistent messaging, improved access to safeguarding resources, and reinforced our commitment to continuous improvement.

Policy and Procedure Review: Stakeholder Engagement

-> Tenant Engagement: Tenants were actively involved in the review of safeguarding policies, providing feedback that informed updates and ensured relevance to lived experience. Members of Torus Diversity and Inclusion Panel were consulted on the content of the Vulnerability Policy as well as the Safeguarding Adults, Safeguarding Children and Prevent policies.
-> Colleague Engagement: Staff from across the Group participated in consultation sessions to shape safeguarding procedures. Their input helped remove barriers and resulted in clear, accessible processes that support consistency - particularly for those who may not manage safeguarding concerns daily. These procedures are now supported by newly developed online guidance, accessible on all work devices.

External Engagement: Domestic Abuse Conference 2024

-> For the third year in a row, Torus sponsored and presented at Morecrofts' Annual Domestic Abuse Conference in Liverpool, where our Domestic Abuse Housing Team Leader and Operations Manager shared insights into our approach in a presentation titled 'The Power of Housing'. The event provided a valuable platform to showcase the role of housing in identifying and responding to domestic abuse, and to strengthen partnerships across the sector.

Looking ahead 2025/26

With a newly established governance and operational structure, the next 12 months will be a period of focused activity and development. Both revised steering groups now operate with clearly defined actions aligned to strategic priorities and operational plans.

Over the coming year, we aim to:

Domestic Abuse Steering Group	Safeguarding Culture and Practice Steering Group
Develop a Torus Domestic Abuse Strategy	Lead on an action plan to embed Torus Safeguarding Strategy
Maintain DAHA Accreditation	Lead on review of our approach to safeguarding through audit and assessment
Develop processes to support DHR reviews	Ensure our policies and procedures and robust and in line with legislation and changes in best practice
Increase recognition of early signs of domestic abuse through revised training and resources needed to equip the workforce.	Continue to develop our safeguarding dashboard and dip checking processes.
Develop a communications plan to continue to raise awareness and upskill colleagues	





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