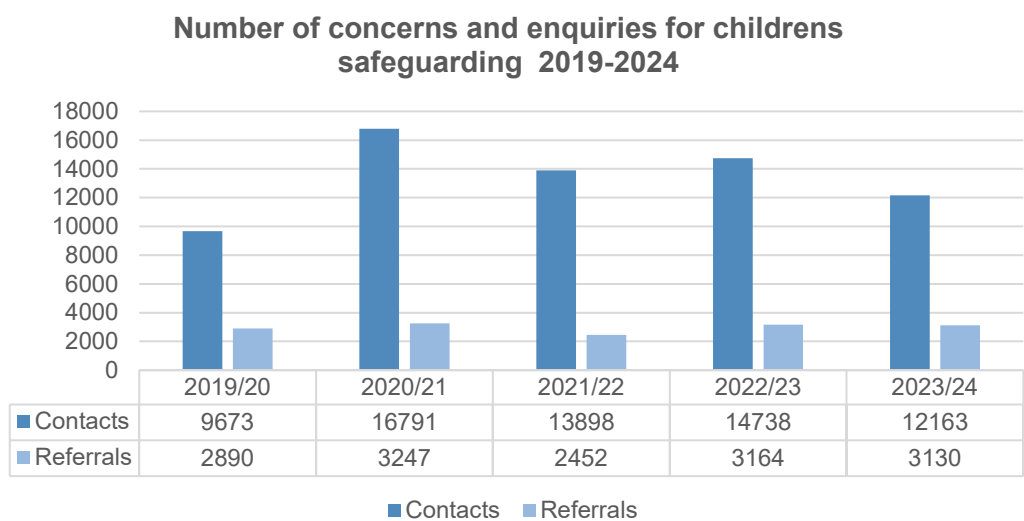
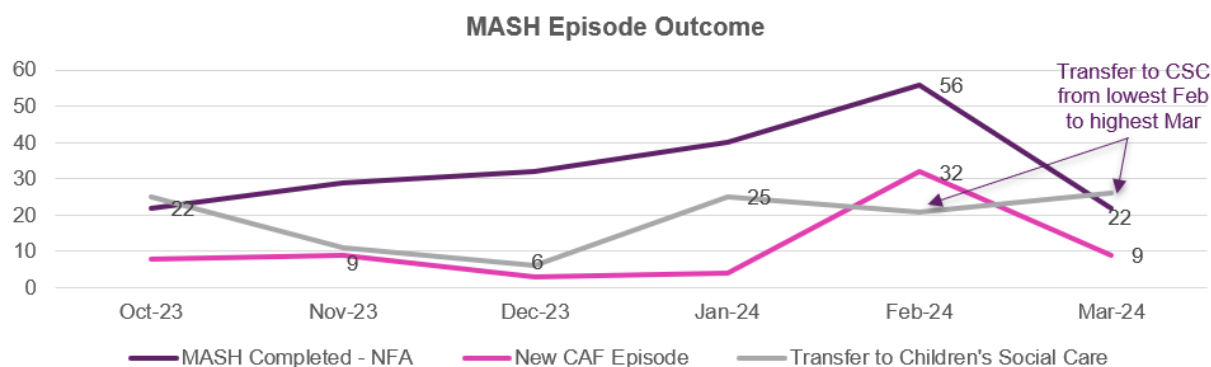


**CHART 1: NUMBER OF CONCERNS AND ENQUIRIES FOR CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING 2019-2024**



**What does this tell us?** – The number of contacts which led to a referral to children’s social care, **increased in 2022/23** from **17.6%** in the previous year **to 27.7%**. Changes to working practices where partners can consult the MASH before making a referral, and the revised threshold guidance launched in June 2022 were designed to support partners to make the right referrals at the right time. As a result referrals dropped by **17.5%** and the conversion rate increased from **21.4%** to **25.7%** in 2023/24 indicating improved referral practice.



**MASH Episodes have increased 62% in a quarter:**

- Q4 (January – March 2024) was the highest quarter of the year for MASH Episodes, with 235 outcomes listed
- This is up 62% on Q3 (October – December 2023), where there were only 145

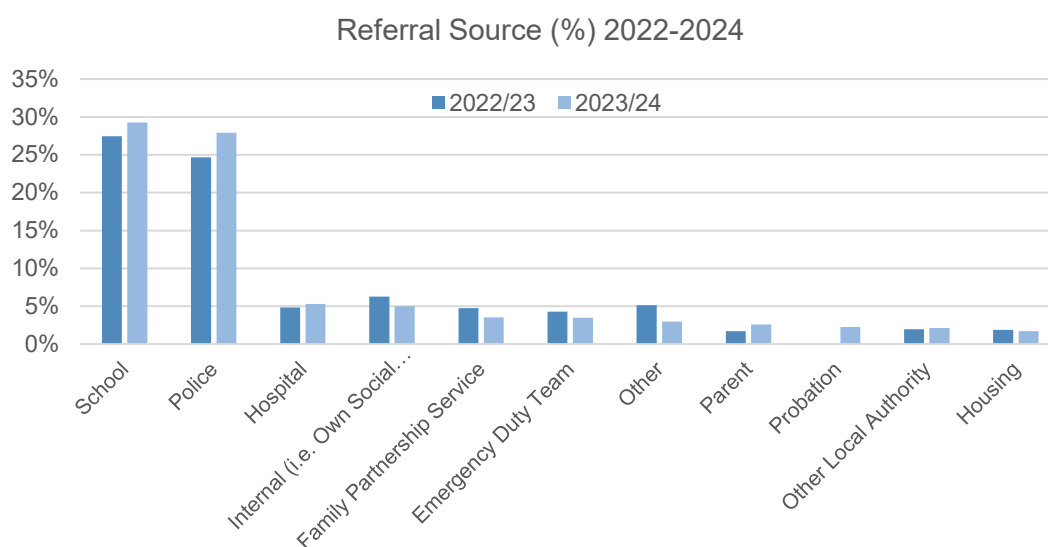
The outcome ‘Mash Completed – NFA’ was the most frequent outcome in the last 6 months with 201, followed by ‘Transfer to Children’s Social Care’ 114, then ‘New CAF Episode’ 65.

**February spike and March drop in NFA and New CAF Episodes; Transfer to CSC Stable:**

From September 2023 to February 2024, the number of MASH episodes with NFA outcome had been consistently rising, from 17 in September 2023 to 56 in February 2024. Meanwhile, New CAF Episode outcome had been staying between 0-9 each month, before shooting up in February 2024 to 32. In March 2024, both these outcomes then dropped dramatically back to October/November 2023 numbers, with 22 and 9 respectively.

Despite this similar shape for those two outcomes, the outcome Transfer to Children’s Social Care, aside from a dip in November/December 2023, has remained consistently in the 21-25 range each month. Due largely to the other drops, it went from being the lowest outcome of the three in February 2024 to the highest in March 2024, for the first time since October 2023. This means a significantly higher proportion in March 2024 than February were being transferred rather than ended at MASH stage.

CHART 2 SOURCE OF REFERRED 2022-2024 (%)

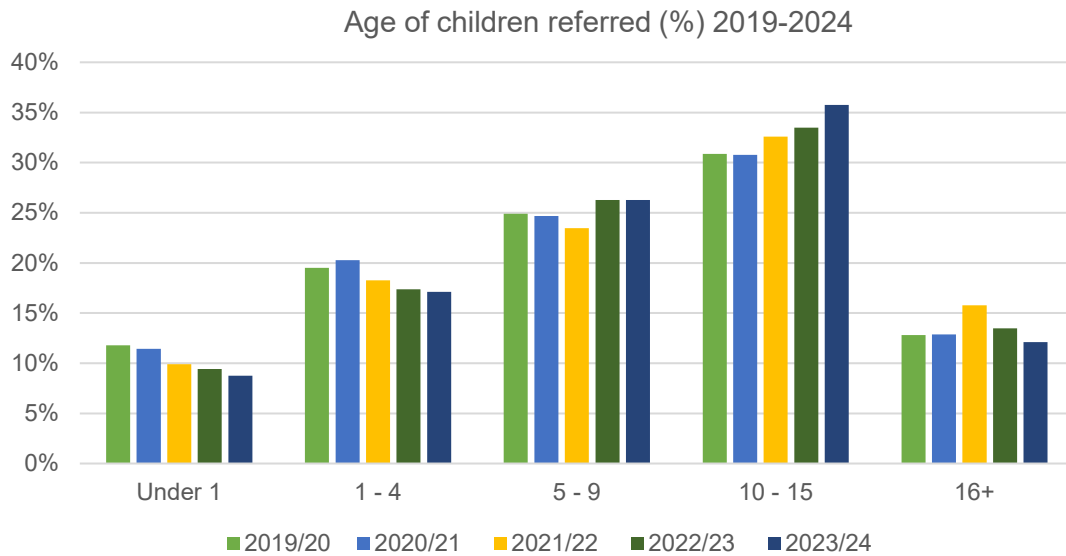


**Key facts:** To demonstrate partner agencies, influence on referrals, both schools and police consistently remain high sources, with an increase seen in the most current reporting period. All other sources of referrals are below 5%. The only other increase is “Parent” referrals, a rise from 1.7% to 2.6%.

Family Partnership Service has seen a decrease in referrals to social care statutory function. The addition to the top 10 source is “Probation” at 2.3%, which was not in the top 10 previous year, this is interesting and needs further exploration. Luton has faced a number of criminal activities during 2023/24 that have made national news, such as knife crime and this may have an influence on referrals from Youth Offending Service.

“Other” still remains one of the top 10 source, now at 7<sup>th</sup> position – it would be interesting to know when recording what constitutes this source?

CHART 3 AGE OF REFERRED 2019-2024 (%)

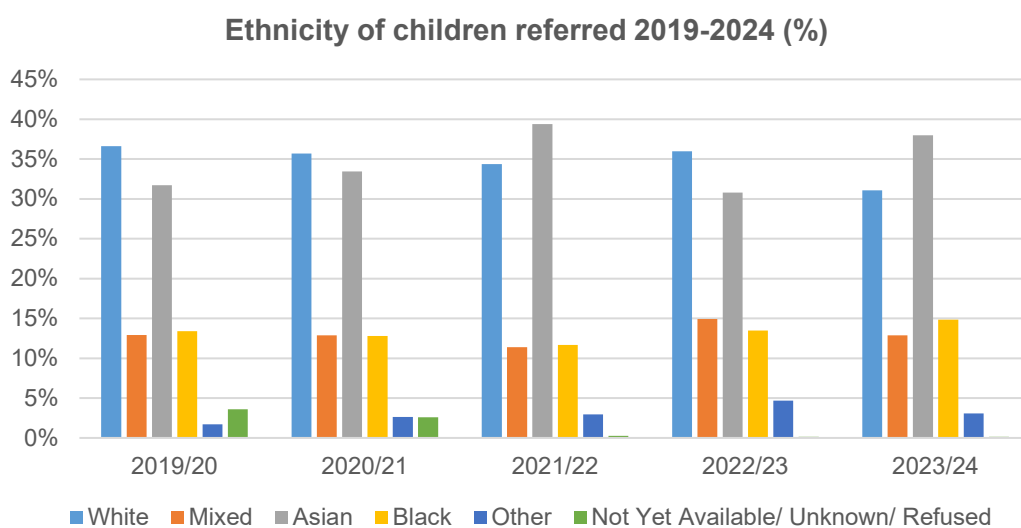


**Key facts:** The age of children referred to Children’s Social Care by partners does not show any major change and is in broadly line with the wider changing demographics in Luton. Current year 2023/24 demonstrates:

- a decrease in younger age group referrals: ages **under 1 to 4 years**
- whilst there is a year on year increase of referrals for ages 10-15 years

The majority of children referred to the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) continue to be in the **age group 10-15** the LSCP may need to consider why we are not identifying children at a younger age and in particular those under 1..

CHART 4 ETHNICITY OF CHILDREN REFERRED 2019-2024 (%)

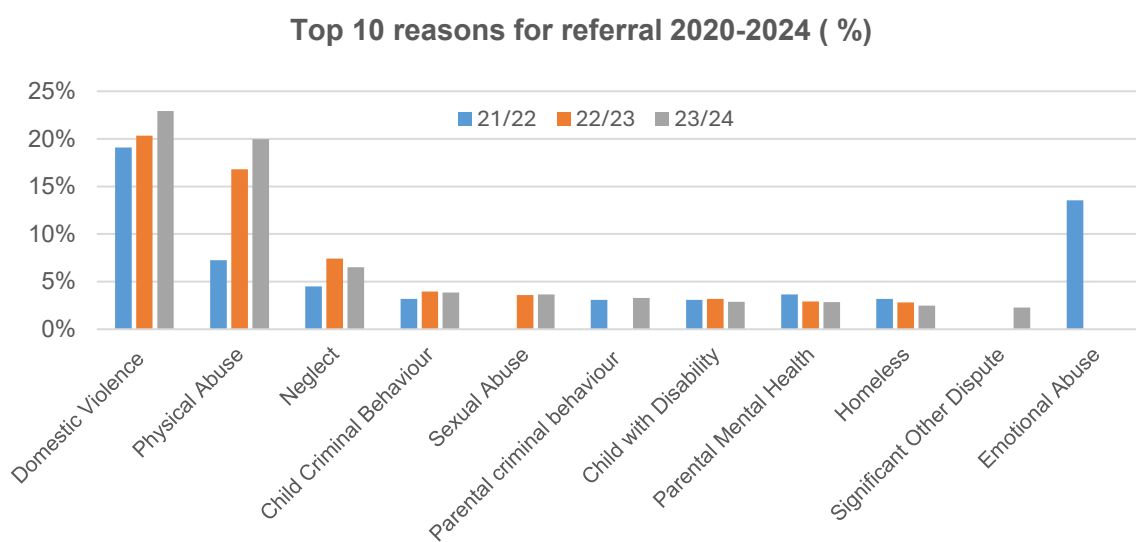


**What does this tell us?** - Analysing ethnicity over a five-year period represents how different referrals look compared to our population. White ethnicity referrals have seen a decrease during 2023/24, from **36%** representation the previous year to **31.1%** current year. Children of dual heritage over a five year period has remained around **13%**.

Whilst South Asian referrals have evidently seen a significant increase: **39.4%** - 2021/22, **30.8%** - 2022/23, and **38%** for 2023/24. Whereas Black ethnicity has only seen a slight increase in referrals.

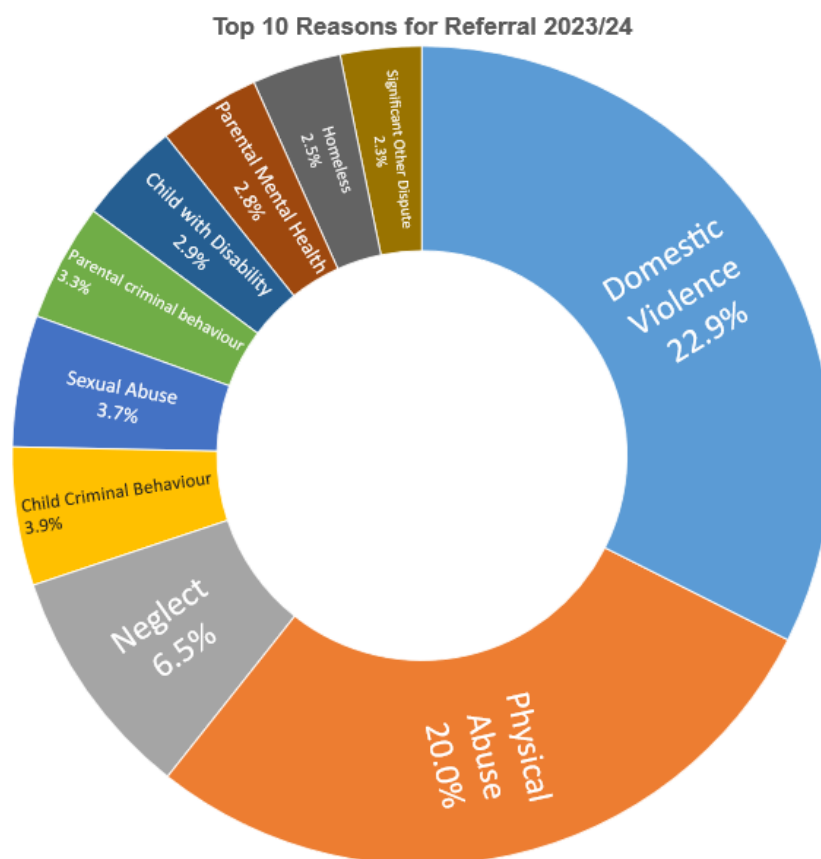
Due to work around cultural competence by the partnership, the percentage of referrals where ethnicity is not available, unknown or refused has reduced significantly from **2.6%** in 2020/21 to **less than 0.1% in 2023/24**.

**TOP 10 REASONS FOR REFERRAL**



The LSCP is provided with the ten reasons for referral over a three-year period. Domestic abuse continues to be the defining factor at **22.9%**, with a year-on-year increase of **3%**. The notable change is physical abuse, with 2021/22 presenting lower at **7.3%** and now closing the gap at **20%**, almost similar to domestic violence. Referrals for Neglect shows a changing trend: **10%** in 2017/18 and has reduced to **6.5%** during the current reporting period.

There has been changes to the indicators on the top ten list in 2023/24 as shown below. Parental mental health, child criminal exploitation and homelessness remain in the top ten which is likely to correlate with family pressures experienced through the cost of living crisis post COVID. The newest addition to the top 10 is “**Significant Other Dispute**” at **2.3%**, which historically has never been in the top 10 before. We are questioning as to the understanding of this reason by practitioners and partner agencies.



**Key facts in summary:** In looking at the top ten reasons for referral there has been a shift in the top ten reasons for referral from those in the previous three years. Domestic violence (22.9%) remains the top reason for referral and continues to increase during 2023/24 compared to last year, although it is still not at COVID period levels.

Physical abuse is now the second highest reason for referral with **625** referrals out of **3130 (20%)**. This has doubled since 2020/21 where the level was 10.7% and significantly higher than 2021/22 at 7.3%.

Trend data shows a slight **decrease in neglect:** 4.5% - 2021/22, 7.4% - 2022/23 and currently 6.5% during 2023/24. All other reasons remain low. The newest additions to the top ten in 2023/24 are parental criminal exploitation (3.3%) and 'significant other dispute' (2.3%).

**Other facts summarised:**

- ❖ The rate (per 10,000) of children that became the subject of a Child Protection Plan in the period is **65**, higher than **51.95 statistical neighbours and 54.3 England**
- ❖ More children became subject of a Child Protection Plan this year (**386**) compared to same period last year (**311**) – **24.2% increase**
- ❖ **21%** of children became subject of a plan again following a previous plan (ever). A significant improvement on 28.9% year before
- ❖ **93.1%** Child Protection Plan visit in time: 4 weeks (20 working days)

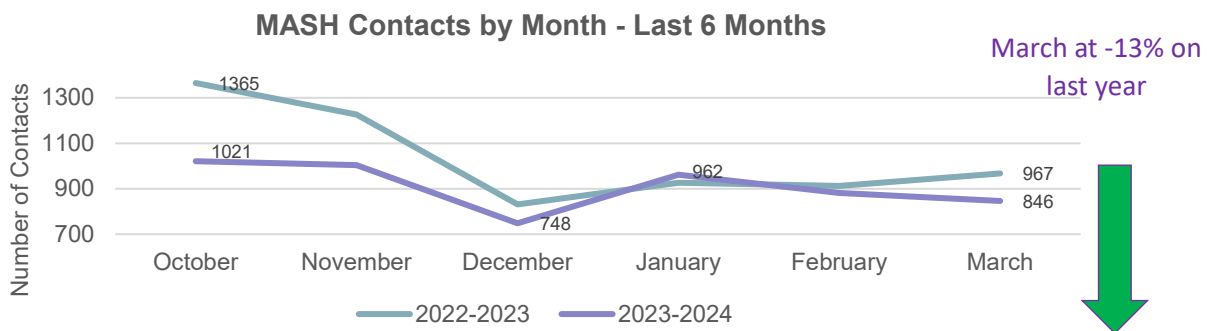
- ❖ Children Looked After Statutory Visit Timeliness = **90.4%**
  - ❖ **9.4%** of children looked after with **three or more placement moves**, below **England average of 10%**
  - ❖ **32.7%** of children looked after placed 20 miles or more from their home, compared to **26.4%** same time last year
  - ❖ **69.2%** of children had an initial health assessment completed within timescale, an improvement on 63.4% previous year and 43% the year before. Luton compares 4<sup>th</sup> highest performing in the Eastern Region which averages at 45.3%
  - ❖ Care leavers open to service has seen an increase:
    - 269 young people at March 2023, now 331 young people open at March 2024. Presents an **increase of 62 young people or 23%**
- With increased caseloads, overall performance has decreased compared to last year:
- March 2023: Age 17-18: in touch **97%**, suitable accommodation **92%**, EET **75%**
  - March 2024: Age 17-18: in touch **81%**, suitable accommodation **80%**, EET **72%**
  
  - March 2023: Age 19-21: in touch **98%**, suitable accommodation **95%**, EET **48%**
  - March 2024: Age 19-21: in touch **96%**, suitable accommodation **93%**, EET **44%**

There continues to be marked improvements in many safeguarding indicators. However, a challenge remains for the partnership in terms of Care Leavers. The LSCP will be revising the *Effective Support Strategy guidance*, as well as the procedures for children in specific circumstances, to ensure the right referrals are made at the right time and are of the right quality. This includes the application of thresholds for **children privately fostered** as numbers remain low year on year and the year-end figure for 2023/24 was two.

**FRONT DOOR ACTIVITY AND BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE DEMAND ANALYSIS – LUTON (APRIL 23 TO MARCH 24)**

From October to December 2023, the number of MASH Contacts reduced to **748**, before increasing in January 2024 to **962** and slowly decreasing again. The December 2023 decrease / January increase is to be expected, given the end of term and Christmas period. Setting that aside, overall, a downward trend from **1021** in October 2023 to **846** in March 2024 is visible.

- ✓ 18% reduction in MASH/EH Contacts in 2023/24 vs. 2022/23:**
- For period April 2023 to March 2024, there was a total of **11,511** Contacts
  - In comparison for April 2022 to March 2023, there had been a total of **13,977** Contacts. This means an **18%** decrease in contacts over this year



**Figure 1**

**✘ Conversion from Contacts to Referrals has dropped:**

- Over the last 5 months (October 2023 – March 2024), the “past 6-month period” conversion rate of Contacts to Referrals has dropped from **38%** to **30%**.

MASH have taken feedback from Ofsted Visit June 2023 focusing on the local authority’s arrangements for the ‘front door’. Ofsted stated we need to improve:

- *Multi-agency working arrangements which ensure that all partners have a shared understanding of thresholds of need and reach an agreement regarding their responsibilities in safeguarding and supporting children and families.*

**As a result, there has been more scrutiny at the front door.** We have worked with our partner agencies to better understand thresholds, to ensure consent and quality of contacts are pushed back, as well as more work being undertaken initially, such as signposting where necessary. This was reflecting in our higher conversion from Contacts to Referral performance which has slipped, and we need to ensure with our partners this does not continue to slip.

**✘ MASH Episodes have increased 62% in a quarter:**

Q4 (January – March 2024) was the highest quarter of the year for MASH Episodes, with **235** outcomes listed.

- This is up **62%** on Q3 (October – December 2023), where there were only **145**

The outcome ‘Mash Completed – NFA’ was the most frequent outcome in the last 6 months with **201**, followed by ‘Transfer to Children’s Social Care’ **114**, then ‘New CAF Episode’ **65**.

**February spike and March drop in NFA and New CAF Episodes; Transfer to CSC Stable:**

From September 2023 to February 2024, the number of MASH episodes with NFA outcome had been consistently rising, from **17** in September 2023 to **56** in February 2024. Meanwhile, New CAF Episode outcome had been staying between **0-9** each month, before increasing in February 2024 to **32**. In March 2024, both these outcomes then dropped dramatically back to October/November 2023 numbers, with **22** and **9**, respectively.

Despite this similar shape for those two outcomes, the outcome Transfer to Children’s Social Care, aside from a dip in November/December 2023, has remained consistently in the **21-25** range each month. Due to the other decreases, it went from being the lowest outcome of the three in February 2024 to the highest in March 2024, for the first time since October 2023. This means a significantly higher proportion in March 2024 than February were being transferred rather than ended at MASH stage.



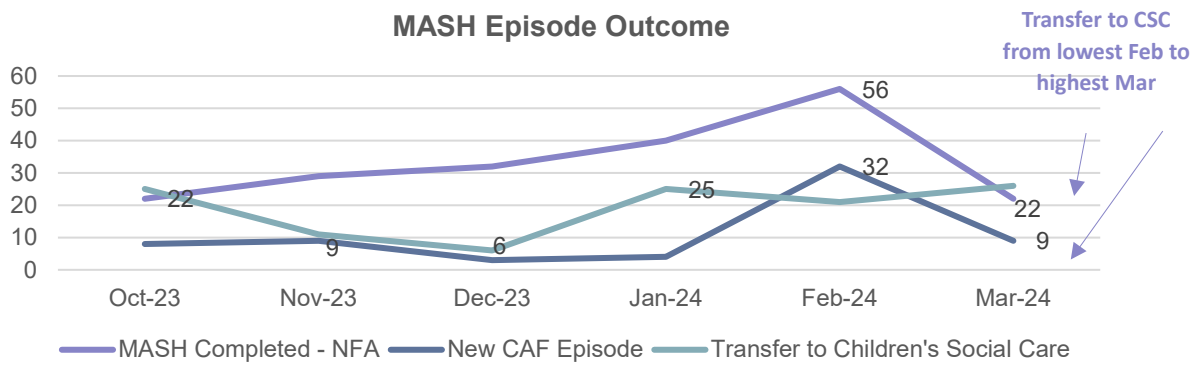


Figure 2

- MASH have to ensure we have consent for assessment, that will impact transfer to CSC
- Within CSC we are seeing a high number of Strategy Discussions. This poses the question whether we should be completing more MASH Episodes to identify at an earlier stage the level of risk, before transferring to statutory involvements. This is an area of focus for the Service and the wider partnership

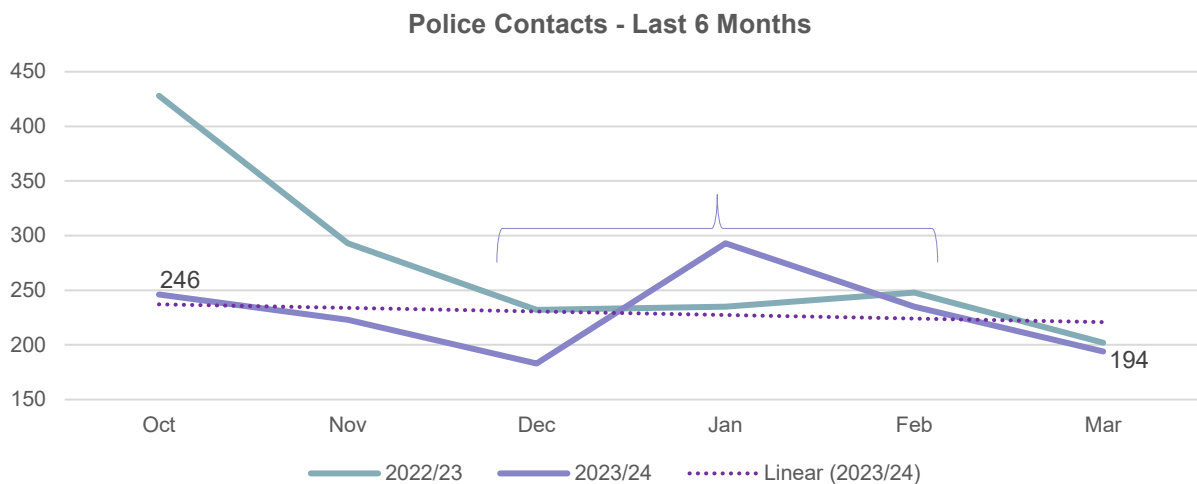
**Police Sourced Front Door Activity**

**✓ MASH contacts from Police down 28.5% in 2023/24:**

- The full year April 2023-March 2024 had **3,127** Police contacts, down from **4,374** in April 2022-March 2023, **-28.5%**.

The latest quarter (January 2024 to March 2024) had a higher total than the year prior, with **722**, versus **685** during the same period in 2023 (a **5.4%** increase). However, looking at the graph (Figure 3), we can see a much more pronounced drop in December 2023 and spike in January 2024 than the whole of 2022/23, which breaks the overall downward trend (shown by the trendline; from **246** in October 2023 to **194** in March 2024). It is therefore likely not reasonable to compare just from January and not also include December in the comparison.

When we compare the last four months including December 2023, we see a down from **917** in 2022/23 to **905** in 2023/24. As seen in February and March 2023 in Figure 3, the numbers this year are now only narrowly tracking under last year.



**Figure 3**

**Front Door Activity – Domestic Violence**

**✘ Contact Issues in last 6 months: Physical Abuse increase:**

Domestic Violence (DV) is the most frequently occurring category recorded as a Contact Issue. Table 1 below shows both the numbers and percentages of the top ten contact issue categories. Cells within the table have been highlighted to raise your attention to significant months of performance and easily conclude any patterns. Green represents the lowest number received and Red the highest number received (that is numbers, as opposed to percentages):

Contact Issue	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	Total
Domestic Violence	180 / 17.6%	180 / 17.9%	154 / 20.6%	221 / 23%	178 / 21%	190 / 22.5%	1103 / 20.2%
Information Requests (Other Agencies)	160 / 15.7%	198 / 19.7%	99 / 13.2%	150 / 15.6%	220 / 26%	147 / 17.4%	974 / 17.8%
Physical Abuse	96 / 9.4%	118 / 11.8%	78 / 10.4%	134 / 13.9%	86 / 10.2%	60 / 7.1%	572 / 10.5%
Neglect	52 / 5.1%	59 / 5.9%	37 / 4.9%	75 / 7.8%	51 / 6%	46 / 5.4%	320 / 5.9%
EHCP Request	40 / 3.9%	41 / 4.1%	30 / 4%	34 / 3.5%	31 / 3.7%	29 / 3.4%	205 / 3.8%
Parental Mental Health	30 / 2.9%	36 / 3.6%	19 / 2.5%	46 / 4.8%	44 / 5.2%	29 / 3.4%	204 / 3.7%
Child Mental Health	52 / 5.1%	37 / 3.7%	33 / 4.4%	22 / 2.3%	21 / 2.5%	27 / 3.2%	192 / 3.5%
Significant Other Dispute	32 / 3.1%	39 / 3.9%	20 / 2.7%	29 / 3%	21 / 2.5%	42 / 5%	183 / 3.3%
Homeless	41 / 4%	27 / 2.7%	11 / 1.5%	30 / 3.1%	36 / 4.3%	31 / 3.7%	176 / 3.2%
Child with Disability	39 / 3.8%	30 / 3%	23 / 3.1%	18 / 1.9%	16 / 1.9%	24 / 2.8%	150 / 2.7%
All Contacts	1021 / 100%	1004 / 100%	748 / 100%	962 / 100%	882 / 100%	846 / 100%	5463 / 100%

**Table 1**

The percentages shown are the proportion of total contacts. The period with the highest proportion of Domestic Violence was January 2024 at **23.0%**. While the decrease in contacts at Christmas and increase in January 2024 this would be expected to be highest numbers all around, this would not inherently impact the percentage share of contacts.

The colours within the table assist us to identify:

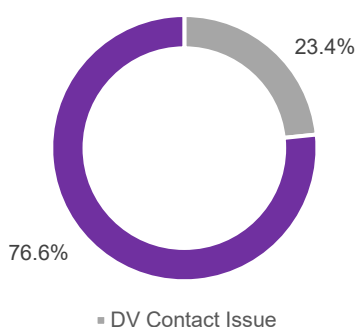
- **October 2023:** Parental Mental Health, Homeless, and Child with Disability Contact issues at their peak, with the highest number of contacts overall
- **November 2023:** EHCP requests at their peak number
- **December 2023:** This month represents the lowest point of contacts of the last 6 months at just 748 total – which may be related to the Christmas season – with Domestic Violence, Information Requests, Neglect, Parental Mental Health, Significant Other Dispute, and Homeless all at their lowest points and overall contacts at their lowest
- **January 2024:** In the post-Christmas period, Domestic Violence, Physical Abuse, Neglect, and Parental Mental Health were all at their peak as Contact Issues
- **February 2024:** Information Requests hit their peak, but Child Mental Health and Child with Disability were at their lowest
- **March 2024:** Significant Other Dispute hit its peak, but Physical Abuse and EHCP Request were at their lowest

**Physical Abuse** in the previous report (focused on July – December 2023) registered as 8.6% of contacts. Due largely to a big spike in January at 13.9%, this 6-month period registers as an increased 10.5%.

Whilst **Neglect** as a Contact Issue (**5.9%**) is recorded much less frequently than issues such as **Domestic Violence**, CiN Category of Need of “N1 – Abuse or Neglect” represents **70%**. The dual categorisation of need may be the reason for this.

The Pan Beds Neglect group meet quarterly to focus on comparison of data around neglect and address it as an important issue. A Task and Finish is meeting to overhaul the Neglect Scorecard with robust data and comparisons, so as to improve the meeting’s effectiveness.

**Domestic Violence vs Non - Domestic Violence Contact Issue - 6 Months**



**Domestic Violence case % mostly unchanged**

Figure 4 shows a monthly breakdown of domestic abuse vs non-domestic abuse contact issues and a percentage over the last 6 months pie chart. The pie chart shows the number of domestic abuse cases as a proportion of the number of non-domestic abuse cases, at **23.4%** over the last 6 months (with Table 1 showing the domestic abuse cases as a proportion of all contacts in the last 6 months stands at 20.2%). These numbers are largely unchanged since the previous report.

**Contact Issue into MASH from All Sources - Breakdown by Domestic Violence vs Non-Domestic Violence**

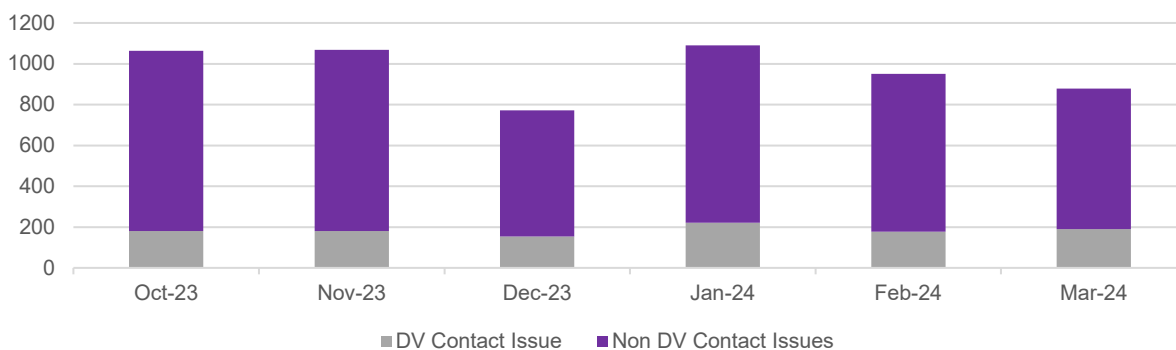


Figure 4

**Front Door Activity – Domestic Violence Contacts by Police**

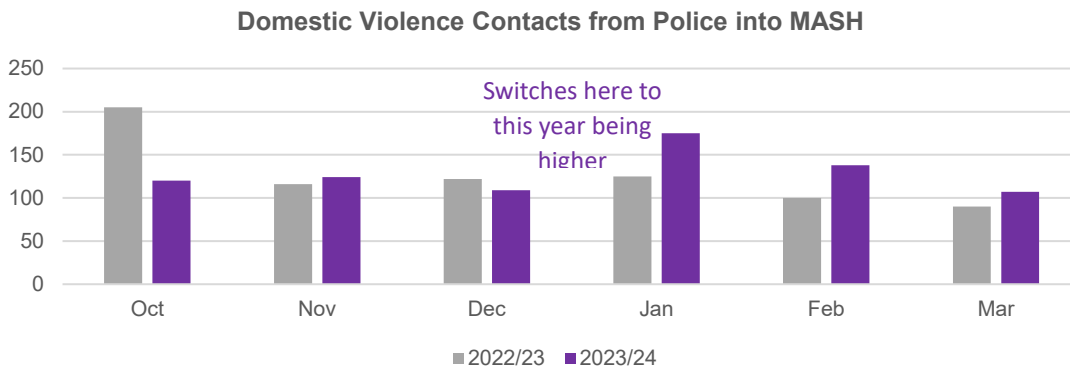
**✘ Two percent more Police Domestic Violence Contacts in last 6 months than year prior**

Domestic Violence was also the top reason Contact Issue from Police into Luton MASH. Of the **1,103** domestic abuse contacts from all sources (Table 1 above) in October 2023 – March 2024, **773** of these were sent by the Police. There were **758** in the same period in 2022/23, with an increase of **2%** this year.

Looking at the last six months’ Domestic Violence contacts only, the numbers for Police as a source flip from being lower than the previous year to higher as of January. As mentioned, there was a more dramatic Christmas drop and post-Christmas spike this year, which could be a contributory factor, but the higher numbers have continued in February and March 2024. However, the gap has closed in March 2023, down from a **40%** increase on 2022/23 in January to a **19%** increase in March.

It has previously been noted that we believe increases to be a result of things such as the impact of the Covid Pandemic and Cost of Living pressures. MASH have collaborated closely with Police looking at thresholds, and with Operation Encompass meaning low-level referrals are sent to directly schools. This had been the apparent reasoning for decreases this year on the previous year, until the January change. *NB: Luton Children’s Services does not hold data concerning the risk rating (high, medium, low) of Police notifications.*

Figure 5



## THE PROVISION OF HIGH QUALITY MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

The delivery of training and uptake of training has been as strength of the Partnership with a year on year increase in training undertaken by staff who work across the Luton footprint. The table below details the uptake of paid courses. The uptake has been significant with update by independent organisations, education settings and the VCSE demonstrating the quality delivery and reputation. Luton Borough Council has continued to ensure staff can access the full range of courses and the number of places taken up by Bedfordshire Police has almost doubled since last year. The LSCP will work to ensure its agencies are aware of the full range of eLearning, such as Child Poverty and work taking place on the *Pan Beds Child Sexual Abuse Snapshot* should see an increase in the update of courses around the *Impact of Sexual Trauma* and *Domestic Abuse* where uptake numbers are low.

### Feedback from training courses

‘I visit families with very young children on a daily basis, the training has given me some tools to be able to understand the child's voice without assuming and gaining their voice through the parent communication. I will use the training to improve my visit notes, thinking about how I can get this across for the voice of any children in the home to be noted and their needs expressed.’ *Social Care*

‘When assessing young people for psychosis or at-risk mental states, this is another element to consider. The guidance for the resources available will be useful in developing services for young people at my service.’ *ELFT, Bedfordshire - Contextual Safeguarding*

‘Overhaul of our safeguarding governance arrangements and reviewing all my supervision agreements with my supervisees.’ *Vol Sector, Luton - Safeguarding Supervision*

‘The session has led me to reflect on current meetings within the organisation and with external partners where we are at risk of this occurring. The session has increased my confidence in asking curious questions and also challenging timeframes for assessments and other actions from the multiagency teams.’ *Nurse, Bedfordshire - Working with Professional Challenge*

# Safeguarding Bedfordshire Training Report

## Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership April 2023- March 2024



CPD	BHT	CCS	CHUMS	ELFT	FAITH	GP	IND	LBC	ED.	EY/ OoS	MIN D	NHS	POL.	VOL	Totals
Harmful Practices themed eLearning	6	3	0	0	0	0	138	21	8	74	4	0	0	5	259
Exploitation themed eLearning	8	1	2	9	2	0	489	130	56	153	16	0	9	45	920
Child Poverty eLearning	1	1	0	0	0	0	23	7	3	10	0	0	2	2	49
eSafety eLearning	1	1	0	0	18	0	87	0	17	14	0	0	1	3	142
Safeguarding Adults L2 eLearning	1	2	7	0	1	0	134	26	32	18	11	1	3	80	316
Safeguarding Adults L3 eLearning	4	1	40	1	1	1	123	11	14	17	7	3	1	37	261
Safeguarding Children L2 eLearning	0	2	2	1	4	0	152	62	58	54	7	0	2	67	411
Safeguarding Children L3 eLearning	1	4	44	1	4	0	127	38	64	51	0	0	5	24	363
Emotional Well-being themed eLearning	1	2	0	3	0	0	271	11	6	27	14	1	3	17	356
Domestic Abuse themed eLearning	2	4	1	1	0	0	87	50	5	19	5	1	3	6	184
Contextual Safeguarding (3hrs)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	4	0	0	0	0	1	12
Safeguarding Supervision (2 days)	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	5	1	0	0	1	0	2	12
Working with Challenging Families (3hrs)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	1	0	0	1	0	9
Working with Professional Challenge (3hrs)	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	8	1	2	0	0	0	1	14
Voice of the Child (3hrs)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	10	2	0	0	1	0	2	16
Safeguarding Children with Disabilities (6hrs)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	1	2	9
Working Together to Safeguard Children (6hrs)	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	18	104	13	1	0	32	5	176
Brook Traffic Light Tool (3hrs)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	13	1	0	0	0	0	17
Understanding Neglect (7hrs)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
Domestic Abuse- Impact on Children & Young People (7hrs)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
Effective Child Protection Conferences (3hrs)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Impact of Sexual Trauma (7hrs)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Working in Multi-Agency Meetings (3hrs)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1635</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>3550</b>

