NSPCC & MOTT MACDONALD

Building Safer Communities For Children

A new toolkit for the property industry, putting children at the heart of the places we design, build and operate.











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A Note from our CEO



We exist to keep children safe. Everything we do puts children first: their voices, their experiences, their needs.

We've been protecting children for over 140 years. And as long as children need us, we'll be here.

We know what we need to do to keep people safe, but we can't do it on our own. The property sector has the power to ensure children's safety is at the heart of communities. You can influence design, to create spaces that are not only safe for children, but actively support their physical, mental and emotional health. You can operate spaces in a way which will encourage children to feel safe, to feel ownership over their environment and to have access to the support they need. Finally, you can make sure that everyone in the communities you create are true child safety ambassadors - you can ensure that everyone on-site has relevant safeguarding training to empower them to spot the signs of child abuse and know how to act.

In this paper we set out a clear call to action to every professional in the built environment: partner with us through small interventions or large - to ensure children's safety is at the heart of the spaces you design, build and operate.

This has been a collaborative effort between so many leaders in the sector; through five roundtable sessions and multiple individual interviews we have spoken to developers, land-owners, architects, asset managers, housing associations, construction companies and local authorities. We have been inspired by your genuine passion for this important topic. A particular thank you has to go to the team at Mott MacDonald and our sponsors Related Argent for their expertise, insight and clear passion for such an important and under-discussed topic.

Of course, any discussion around young people should include young people, and our NSPCC Youth Board for Change have provided invaluable insights in to this discussion. You will see their thoughts and observations scattered throughout.

Thank you for taking the time to read this paper. We hope it gives you the inspiration and clear, simple tools to consider children's safety in your daily work. We look forward to hearing from you and exploring how we can best work together. Because together, we can build safer communities for children.

Chris Sherwood, NSPCC CEO

Executive Summary

We all have a role to play in building safer communities for children.

Why Safe Places Matter

Children's safety and wellbeing are shaped by the environments they grow up in, yet these needs are often overlooked in UK planning, design and neighbourhood management. Poor housing, traffic-dominated streets, a lack of suitable spaces and services, and inconsistent operations create predictable risks. These risks undermine children's health, independence and long-term outcomes, while exposing organisations to operational and compliance challenges.



A Systems Approach

A whole-system model illustrates how safeguarding outcomes depend on aligning design decisions, neighbourhood management and cross-sector services.

A Lifecycle Approach

The paper provides a development lifecycle framework, aligned with the Royal Institution of British Architects (RIBA) Inclusive Design Overlay, showing how safeguarding principles can be embedded from early ambition setting through design, construction, handover and long-term stewardship.

Local Good Practice

UK case studies illustrate that child centred approaches are both feasible and commercially compelling.

Call to Action

This paper sets out the case for embedding child safeguarding into built environment practice as both a strategic responsibility and an opportunity to create higher-performing, more resilient places.

The call to action for business leaders is clear and direct:

Give Voice and Ensure Visibility

Engage children, listen to them and make their needs and aspirations visible in every brief and operational decision.

Put Child Safety First

Build safety in from the outset, supported by clear standards and co-design with young people.

Check Your Policies

Assess your organisation's safeguarding position. What risks exist and how you can act to reduce them?

Everyone's Responsibility

Equip every professional and contractor with the skills to play their part in keeping children safe in their community.

By acting now, the sector can reduce predictable harm, improve asset performance and help build safer, more inclusive communities for future generations.

Introduction

How to use this toolkit to help build safer communities for children.

Foundations

This paper begins from a simple premise: children and young people deserve environments that protect, include and empower them. Their voices highlight both the everyday barriers they face and the opportunities for change.

This section sets out the foundations that guide the rest of the paper.



“Places”
Our focus is on urban communities across the UK, where dense populations, complex infrastructure and diverse social dynamics create both heightened risks and significant opportunities to improve children’s safety.



“Children”
Refers to all individuals up to age 18, and up to 25 for those with additional needs. Children are not a single group; their experiences differ by age, gender, disability, cultural background and other intersecting factors.



“Safety”
At the NSPCC, we understand safety as the absence of harm, including physical protection, emotional wellbeing, and the sense of being accepted, valued and able to express oneself. Safety is shaped not only by physical conditions but also by social factors such as perception, trust and belonging.

Who and What This Paper Is For

This document provides a framework to help developers, planners, operators, local authorities and partners embed child safety into the design, delivery and management of the built environment.

This paper does not offer a universal or prescriptive solution. Its purpose is to set the agenda and establish a shared direction, rather than to prescribe a single model for every space.

Key Aims

1. To set out the evidence on how built environments shape children’s safety and wellbeing.

2. To provide a framework for action that developers, operators, local authorities and partners can adopt across design and operational processes.

3. To issue a call to leadership: child safety must become a core part of responsible development and corporate strategy.

Contributors

This paper has been a true collaboration between property professionals from across the sector. We are thankful for all those who have contributed their thoughts and perspectives through the five roundtables and follow-up interviews conducted to inform this paper:

Co-producers:
NSPCC
Mott MacDonald

Sponsor:
Related Argent

Young People’s Board for Change

- The NSPCC’s Young People’s Board for Change is a platform for young people aged 13-16 to shape and influence the NSPCC’s work.
- Young people from the Board for Change have supporting our work developing the “Building Safer Communities” Paper.
- Get in touch with us if you would like to explore opportunities to access the insights of this group of young people for your own initiatives. We can also support you to organise similar forums with children and young people that meet the highest safeguarding standards.

Contributors:
ADP Consulting
Barnet Council
Bristol City Council
Clarion Housing
Derwent London
Earls Court Development Company
Grosvenor Property UK
Group Metropolitan
Homes England
Lendlease
Places for London
Poplar HARCA
Related Argent
Structuretone
The Portman Estate
Westminster City Council
ZCD Architects

This paper has called on brilliant work already being done in the sector. Examples are given of case studies throughout the paper, and in particular references can be found on page 11 and 43- 47.

Why Safer Communities Matter

There are over 16 million children and young people in the UK, representing nearly one quarter of the population.

Yet many of the spaces they inhabit daily, where they live, travel through and play, are rarely designed or managed with them in mind or with their involvement. Many environments are unwelcoming or poorly adapted to children's needs, and those responsible for managing them often lack the training and experience required to ensure they are genuinely safe.



Neighbourhood conditions play a decisive role in shaping children's wellbeing.

UNICEF has long emphasised that children's lives reflect the wider social, environmental and economic conditions around them, making their experiences a sensitive indicator of community health. Neighbourhood disorder, including vandalism, noise, litter and neglected public spaces undermines children's sense of safety and independence. Children and young people are acutely aware of the signals their environments send about care, safety and belonging.

Traffic risk and fear of crime are consistently identified as the two dominant safety concerns for children.

The House of Commons Library's 2025 briefing identifies that in high traffic or deprived areas, families often restrict children's outdoor activity, reducing physical activity and social interaction.

This reflects a wider pattern in which the built environment prioritises motor vehicles over children's needs, creating unsafe streets and limiting independence. The long-term impact is visible in the decline in children walking to school independently — from 86% in 1971 to just 51% in 2024, based on National Travel Survey statistics.

Awaab's Law

Following the death of Awaab Ishak, Awaab's Law requires social landlords to remediate serious hazards, especially damp and mould, within strict timeframes to prevent children from being exposed to conditions that endanger their health. Poor quality housing, marked by damp, mould, overcrowding, and inadequate heating is consistently linked to both acute and long term heath problems.

Creating Environments Where Children Can Thrive

The strong influence that the spaces children inhabit and move through have on their health and wellbeing is why child-friendly design is so important. Walkable neighbourhoods, with low-traffic or car-free streets, strong visual connections between homes and shared spaces and micro-scale features such as small play pockets all support children's everyday independence - principles highlighted in Dinah Bornat's 'All to Play For: How to Design Child-Friendly Housing'.

The Greater London Authority (GLA)'s 'Making London Child-Friendly' report shows that the most protective environments are low-traffic, well-lit and designed around inclusive movement. International frameworks from UNICEF and the Global Designing Cities Initiative reinforce these principles, linking environmental quality to children's autonomy, sense of belonging and early development.

When neighbourhoods are inclusive, well-maintained, predictable and socially connected, children gain the confidence to explore, interact and develop a sense of belonging. These everyday experiences shape their wellbeing, their relationships and their long-term outcomes.

For the NSPCC, this underscores a simple truth: keeping children safe requires environments that actively protect and nurture them. The property sector has a critical role to play. By designing, maintaining and managing homes and neighbourhoods that prioritise children's safety and wellbeing, it can help reduce risk at its source and contribute to healthier, more resilient communities in the future.













1, 2- Child-friendly design and extensive green spaces at Related Argent and Barnet Council's Brent Cross Town
3 - Child-friendly design including traffic-calming measured and safe travel corridors to encourage independence.
4 - The Inclusive Safety Toolkit led by ZCD Architects and Earl's Court Developmemt Company
5 - NSPCC's Young People's Board for Change encouraged youth participation and consultation in any important decisions involving children and young people
6 - The NSPCC and other local charities provide excellent community engagement, access and insight, encouraging stronger safeguarding measures

Our Framework For Action

A systems problem requiring a systems response.

Creating safer communities for children is not only about preventing harm, it is about shaping places where children can genuinely flourish. A child's life is influenced by everything around them: the home they live in, the neighbourhood they move through, the social networks and services they rely on, and the systems that surround and support their family.

The evidence we have reviewed and mapped shows that children's outcomes are shaped by a constellation of interconnected factors across their homes, neighbourhoods, services and wider systems.

Safer communities for children are built through whole-system action, not isolated interventions. Improving housing conditions, strengthening safeguarding practice, designing child-friendly streets, and embedding youth voice are not separate tasks; they are mutually reinforcing components of a coherent ecosystem.

When these elements align, children experience safety not as a single service or programme, but as a consistent reality across the places they live, learn, travel, and play.



This Framework is set out in four sections which interact with one another, as summarised below:

Key Focus Areas (page 16)

This section outline how the key pathways of housing conditions, neighbourhood operations, children's lived experiences, child-friendly design, evidence-led governance & accountability, and contextual safeguarding interact to influence safeguarding outcomes.

Roles and Responsibilities (page 30)

Safeguarding in the built environment is everyone's responsibility. This section highlights the role all built environment professionals can play to build safer communities for children.

Whole Lifecycle Approach (page 34)

Bringing the first two sections together, this section uses the RIBA design stages to show how child safeguarding can be integrated into each stage of development lifecycle.

Measures of Success (page 38)

This section provides guidance for assessing progress over time.

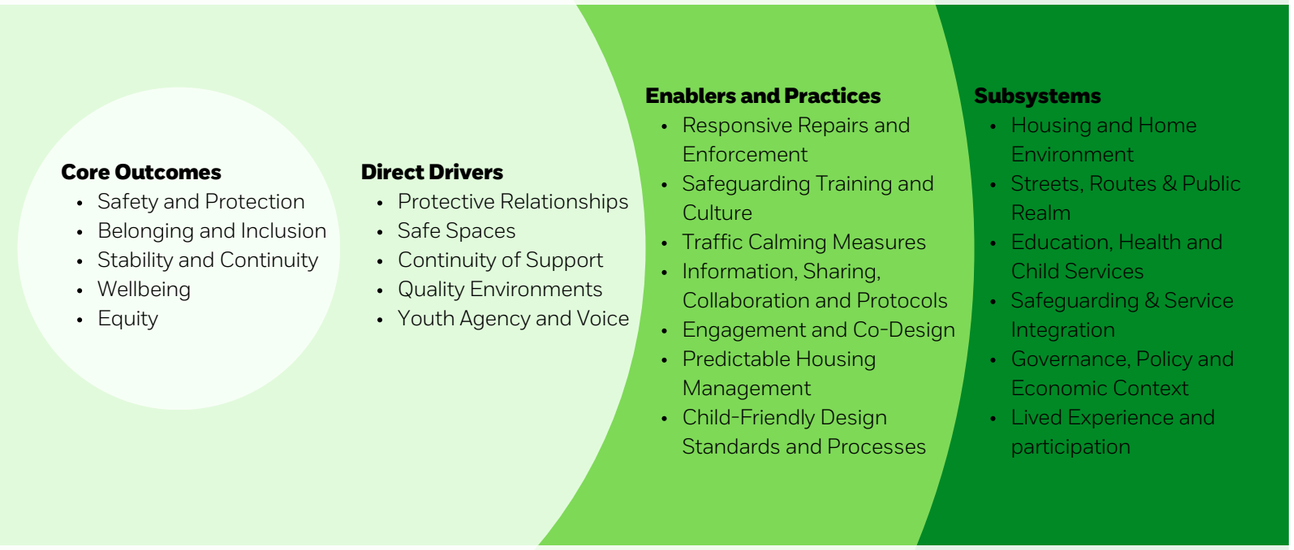
How Place Shapes Safeguarding

A Systems Response to a Systemic Problem

Creating safer communities for children is not simply a matter of reducing risk; it is about building the conditions in which children can thrive. The evidence we have reviewed and mapped shows that children's outcomes are shaped by a constellation of interconnected factors across their homes, neighbourhoods, services, and wider systems.

This summary radial map, which is derived from more detailed systems mapping, illustrates this clearly: showing how everyday decisions in design, management and services connect, revealing the hidden links that shape children's safety and helping us see where small changes can make a big difference.

Creating safer communities for children is not only about preventing harm, it is about shaping places where children can genuinely flourish. A child's life is influenced by everything around them: the home they live in, the neighbourhood they move through, the services they rely on, and the systems that surround and support their family.



Key Actors

NSPCC, Local Councils, Landlords, Developers, Design Professionals, Health and Education Providers, Community and Voluntary Sector, Legislation, Community

1
Core Outcomes

At the centre are the core outcomes every child needs: to feel safe, included, stable, healthy, and treated fairly. These outcomes are shaped by the everyday conditions children encounter. Young people themselves describe how profoundly their environments affect their sense of safety, comfort, and ability to learn and connect with their friends.

2
Direct Drivers

Achieving these outcomes requires strengthening the direct drivers of children's everyday experience. Protective relationships, safe spaces, continuity of support, high-quality environments, and meaningful youth agency all play a critical role in shaping how children navigate their world and how safe they feel within it.

3
Enablers and Practices

These drivers are only possible when the right enablers and practices are in place. Responsive repairs and enforcement, strong safeguarding cultures, predictable housing management, child-friendly design processes, and effective information-sharing between agencies all help create environments that actively protect children rather than expose them to harm. Traffic calming, co-design, and collaborative protocols further reinforce children's independence, visibility, and sense of belonging.

Children's own reflections often highlight risks and opportunities that adults overlook — especially around design, comfort, and escape routes. Their insights reveal how the built environment can either support or undermine their sense of control.

4
Subsystems

Surrounding these enablers are the subsystems that determine whether children's needs are met consistently: the housing and home environment, streets and public realm, education and health services, safeguarding and service integration, and the broader governance and policy context.

Each subsystem has the potential either to buffer children from harm or to amplify risk. When these systems work together, guided by lived experience and meaningful participation, they create the stable, predictable and nurturing environments children need.

It is easy for children's needs to fall between the gaps of these multiple subsystems and be overlooked. Meeting children's needs requires action across the whole system but there is often a lack of one body with responsibility to coordinate action to ensure their needs are being met.

This is not only to the detriment of children but, as the evidence throughout this paper demonstrates, meeting children's needs is an essential part of meeting wider community safety.

Key Focus Areas

A safe and healthy community is created through a set of interconnected conditions that shape children's physical, social, and emotional development.

These conditions operate as causal pathways, influencing how children experience their homes, neighbourhoods, and shared public spaces. Research consistently shows that protective environments tend to share several reinforcing features.

These characteristics do more than create pleasant surroundings; they actively shape children's safety, resilience and opportunities.

The following sections outline the key pathways through which housing conditions, neighbourhood operations, and children's lived experiences, child-friendly design and contextual safeguarding interact to influence safeguarding outcomes.

Housing Quality and Stability

Safe, stable homes underpin children's wellbeing and growth.

Child Participation and Lived Experience

Children's voices shaping safer, more inclusive places.

Neighborhood Operations

Daily practice that keeps environments safe and reliable.

Evidence-led Governance and Accountability

Allows early detection of risk and smarter, more coordinated decisions.

Child-friendly Design

Children have unique needs in public spaces, so design must make sure they can move and explore safely, confidently and independently in their environment.

Contextual Safeguarding

Neighbourhood systems working together to protect children.

Pathway 1:

Housing Quality and Stability

Safe, stable homes underpin children's wellbeing and growth.

Enablers & Practices	Direct Drivers	Core Outcomes
Stable, secure tenancies	Continuity of support and services	Better wellbeing and education outcomes
Housing standards and enforcement (incl. Awaabs Law)	Reduced unplanned moves and disruption	Children experience stability and routine
Proactive repairs and support for families	Safe, healthy living conditions	Children are protected from housing-related harm

Key Actors

Landlords and Housing Providers	Rapid repairs and tenancy stability reduces hazards and unplanned moves, resulting in safer routines for children.
Local Councils (Housing, EH)	Clear standards and fair enforcement improve baseline housing quality, lowering health risks linked to poor conditions.
Health Services	Clinical indicators flag unsafe homes early, targeting remediation and reducing hazards and stress-related harm.
NSPCC (Local Services, Childline, Helpline)	Through local services, Helpline and Childline, advice and referrals turn housing concerns into safeguarding action, accelerating support and stability.

Poor housing conditions are not isolated problems; they interact with health, education, and social care systems to produce cumulative disadvantage and risk.

Housing quality is among the strongest predictors of child health: damp, mould, and poor ventilation correlate with respiratory illness, anxiety and family stress. Insecure housing, frequent moves and unaffordability compound these risks, disrupting children's development and risking emotional distress.

Overcrowding and instability also increases family conflict, reduces school attendance and affects routines, limits healthcare access and heightens vulnerability to exploitation. Temporary accommodation amplifies these risks further, particularly where families share communal facilities with strangers, or live in poorly maintained housing.

Safe, stable and well-designed homes offer the opposite trajectory, by giving children the security, health and consistency they need to thrive.

CASE STUDY

PLACE/Ladywell is a modular, family-focused housing development designed to provide high-quality temporary accommodation for households experiencing disruption or instability. Its courtyard-based layout creates a protected, communal environment where children can move safely and maintain familiar routines. Shared outdoor spaces, community facilities and on-site services help reduce the isolation often associated with temporary housing and support stronger social connections among residents. By combining rapid delivery with thoughtful design, PLACE/Ladywell demonstrates how temporary accommodation can offer stability and dignity for families while responding flexibly to local housing pressures.



For other examples, see:

- Ebury Bridge Development, London (page 45)
- Marmalade Lane, Cambridge (page 46)
- Shaping Tottenham, London (page 47)
- Unlocking Doors, London (page 47)

Pathway 2:

Neighbourhood operations as daily signals

Daily practice that keeps environments safe and reliable.

The way neighbourhoods are managed, including cleaning, lighting, repairs, staff visibility acts as a positive feedback loop shaping children's sense of trust and safety. Disorder signals neglect, abandoned buildings, unmanaged open spaces, and poor lighting restrict independence and heighten fear, undermining community trust and safety. Families may internalise the chaos of their surroundings, increasing levels of abuse and neglect within the home.

Conversely, neighbourhoods that are well looked-after, where paths, parks and shared spaces are clean, inviting and visibly cared for, help children feel that their surroundings are safe and dependable. Tim Gill's 'Urban Playground' establishes that maintained environments reinforce children's confidence to be out in their neighbourhood, supporting everyday autonomy and positive social connection. These operational choices directly influence whether neighbourhoods function as protective or harmful contexts.

Enablers & Practices	→	Direct Drivers	→	Core Outcomes
Consistent cleaning and upkeep of shared space		Environments remain safe, orderly and welcoming		Children experience stability, security and continuity
Responsive repairs and regular maintenance		Quick identification and response to issues		Children are protected from everyday risks
Visible, safeguarding-trained staff oversee daily operations		Reporting mechanisms are clear and accessible		Children's wellbeing and confidence are supported

Key Actors

Landlords and Property Managers	Visible, safeguarding-trained stage, cleaning and responsive repairs keep spaces orderly, reducing everyday risks.
Local Councils (Public Realm)	Coordinating lighting, routes and parks create predictable journeys, increasing children's confidence.
Voluntary and Community Sector	Community presence and positive activation deter misuse, making places feel welcoming.
NSPCC (Training & Helpline)	Training and clear escalation routes convert minor or more significant worries into timely protective responses.

YOUTH VOICE: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"If people don't care about litter, they probably don't care about people either."

J, West Midlands

Pathway 3:

Child-Friendly Design

Design choices for child-friendly environments which enable independence and a sense of belonging.

YOUTH VOICE: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I like some colour, like blues or yellows. And you should be able to personalise the space."

G, Pembrokeshire

Enablers & Practices	Direct Drivers	Core Outcomes
Consistent cleaning and upkeep of shared space	Environments remain safe, orderly and welcoming	Children experience stability, security and continuity
Responsive repairs and regular maintenance	Quick identification and response to issues	Children are protected from everyday risks
Visible, safeguarding-trained staff oversee daily operations	Reporting mechanisms are clear and accessible	Children's wellbeing and confidence are supported

Key Actors

Developers and Asset Owners	Briefs, budgets and long-term stewardship align design intent with delivery and ongoing use.
Local Councils (Planning, Policy)	Child-friendly standards and approvals set consistent expectations for safety and inclusion.
Design Professionals	Spatial strategies, legible routes and detailed design enable everyday independence.
Community and Youth Sector	Co-design spotlights lived experience, supporting design that reflects real movement and use.
NSPCC (Policy, Influence, Insights)	Evidence and guidance strengthen child-safety expectations and inform iterative improvements.

Design decisions shape children's everyday reality from how they move, play and socialise, to how they feel in their neighbourhoods. When places are planned with clear sightlines, walkable routes, inclusive public spaces and reduced traffic, they signal that children belong and are considered.

Child-friendly public realm design also relies on the smaller spatial cues that help children navigate their surroundings with ease. Playable thresholds, the semi-public spaces between the home and the street where children can pause, play, watch others and gradually build confidence, create gentle, everyday opportunities for exploration. Small play pockets and spaces with natural visibility further support independence by making routes feel legible and predictable.

Access to social infrastructure such as parks, youth clubs, community centres and informal gathering places strengthens children's sense of connection and belonging, offering places to meet friends, be active and feel part of community life. When these elements are thoughtfully integrated and well maintained, neighbourhoods become places where children can move freely, feel supported by their environment and experience safety as a foundation for thriving.

CASE STUDY: BRENT CROSS TOWN, LONDON





Brent Cross Town embeds child-focused design at the heart of its masterplan, creating a neighbourhood where families can thrive. The development integrates 50 acres of parks, multi-use games areas and nature trails, ensuring that green space, play and everyday exploration are accessible to all ages. As a car-lite neighbourhood, it prioritises sustainable travel, encouraging walking, cycling and public transport, and reduces reliance on cars. Streets are designed around the needs of pedestrians and children, with safe, legible routes and strong visual connections between homes and public spaces, enabling children to move independently without the risks associated with heavy traffic. Imaginative play facilities, nature trails and water features, and biodiverse, child-friendly landscapes such as meadows, species-rich lawns, woodland planting and native hedges that encourage exploration and learning. The space hosts a number of community-focused activities in the park, such as youth summer programmes, sports sessions and initiatives supporting girls' access to physical activity.

For further inspiration take a look at the following case studies:

- Marmalade Lane, Cambridge (page 46)
- Child Friendly Leeds, Leeds (page 44)
- Cardiff Child-Friendly Mobility, Cardiff (page 44)
- Hackney Child Friendly Spaces Framework, London (page 45)
- Young Futures Pilot Hubs (page 47)

Pathway 4:

Child Participation and Lived Experience

Children's voices shaping safer, more inclusive places.

YOUTH VOICE: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I need to see my own mark on my space, that's what makes me feel safe."

J, West Midlands

Enablers & Practices	→	Direct Drivers	→	Core Outcomes
Mechanisms for children to share concerns		Identification of hidden risks and opportunities		Children's wellbeing improved through empowerment
Child and youth consultation		Children's agency and voice		Children feel included and valued
Participatory audits and co-design		Solutions are tailored to children's needs		Environments reflect children's needs

Key Actors

Landlords and Property Managers	Simple, safe feedback routes resolve issues visibly, building trust in management.
Local Councils (Planning, Youth Engagement)	Youth audits and co-design surface blind spots, aligning changes with lived reality.
Voluntary and Youth Sector	Outreach to under-represented groups broadens insight, producing more inclusive solutions.
NSPCC (Training, Helpline, School Services)	Safe participation protocols and support routes manage disclosures, combining empowerment with protection.

Children interpret safety through emotional and sensory cues:

- Visibility: "Can I see and be seen?" Blind spots, stairwells, and alleyways are common fear points.
- Predictability and comfort: Lighting, temperature, noise, and colour influence confidence
- Social presence: Trusted adults nearby reduce perceived risk.
- Belonging: Inclusive design signals ownership
- Independence: Low-traffic design, clear routes and safe crossing and movement determine autonomy

Child participation in design reveals risks that may be invisible to adults. When their insights shape decisions, services and environments become more relevant, inclusive and effective. Participatory processes amplify children's agency and lead to solutions grounded in lived realities.

Crucially, when children feel ownership over these spaces, through opportunities to shape, care for or contribute to them, they develop a deeper sense of stewardship, responsibility and pride, strengthening their connection to the places they use every day.

CASE STUDIES

Grosvenor launched a Mayfair Youth Forum (MYF) in partnership with 2-3 Degrees with a diverse group of young people (14-18) from Westminster. This was delivered through a skills development programme alongside sessions from the Voice.Opportunity.Power youth engagement toolkit. Across an 8-month programme with a focus on Grosvenor Square in Mayfair, young people were given strategic influence over plans for the area, including a seating installation. This was delivered through a skills development programme alongside the "Voice Opportunity Power" sessions . The sessions were hosted both of online and in-person, and encouraged conversation about the ongoing management of a place as well as specific design proposals. By delivering this programme through a flexible, youth-led approach with a smaller 'core cohort' of young people, Grosvenor ensured good attendance and contributions from the wider cohort and helped establish an ongoing relationship with the young people in the area.





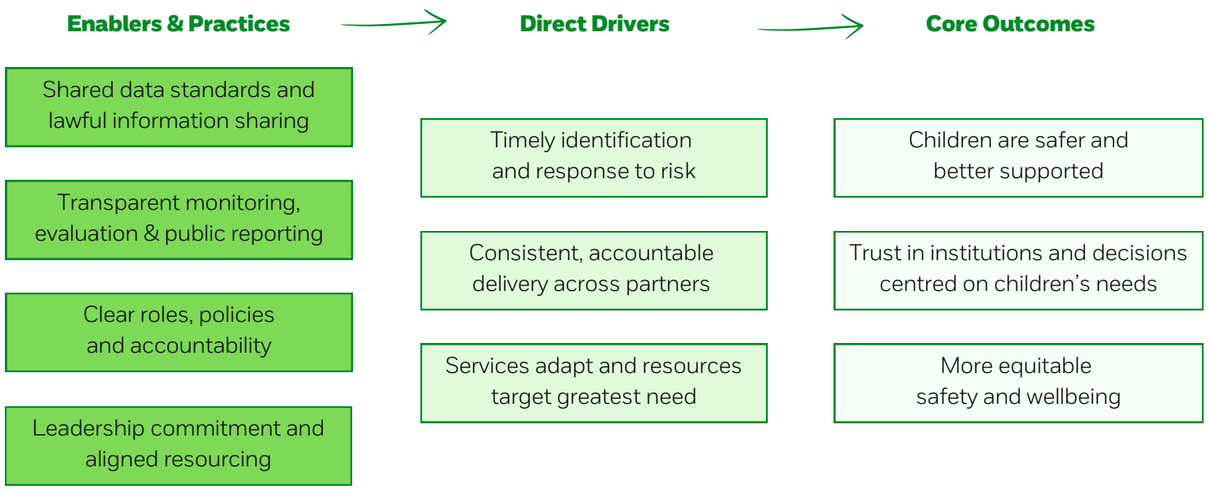
For further inspiration take a look at the following case studies:

- Bristol City Youth Council, Bristol (page 44)
- Earl's Court Inclusivity Safety Toolkit, London (page 44)
- Ebury Bridge Development, London (page 45)
- Young Futures Pilot Hubs (page 47)

Pathway 5:

Evidence-Led Governance and Accountability

Allows early detection of risk and smarter, more coordinated decisions.



Key Actors

Developers and Asset Owners	Operational and property data inform risk prioritisation, delivering consistent and targeted fixes.
Local Authorities	Governance, agreements and oversight align agencies to produce timely, consistent child-centred decisions.
Health & Education	Attendance and clinical indicators sharper early identification, informing coordinated support and review.
Police	Intelligence sharing within agreed protocols accelerates protection while maintaining proportional, child-focused responses.
Voluntary and Youth Sector	Trusted insight and feedback strengthens datasets, grounding decisions in lived experience.
NSPCC (Policy, Training, Helpline, Data and Insights)	Common standards, routes and learning loops connect partners and improve practice over time.

Robust data and effective information sharing allow early identification of risks, targeted interventions and services that adapt over time.

When agencies collaborate around evidence, learning becomes continuous and responsive, drawing on frontline practice, children's accounts and safeguarding data to build a shared understanding of what works. Strong leadership and clear accountability are essential to turn this learning into consistent action.

When organisations adopt child-safety policies, monitor outcomes transparently and align responsibilities across partners, they create the conditions for lasting change. Effective governance reduces fragmentation, builds trust and ensures that children's needs remain central to decision-making.

Together, evidence-driven practice and coordinated leadership create systems that can improve protection, strengthen support and promote equitable outcomes for children.

CASE STUDIES



The Flourishing Index is a system that allows Related Argent and Barnet Council to measure how effectively Brent Cross Town is supporting the wellbeing of those who live, work and study here. The partnership is working with Buro Happold and the University of Manchester to apply a scientific research approach to social observation in order to be able to quantify wellbeing. Read the full case study on page 45.



The NSPCC provides a unique data-driven perspective on child protection through its Insight Briefing series. These briefings combine quantitative data from thousands of contacts with qualitative insights from children and concerned adults. This information can be used to inform design and operational decisions to ensure the built environment responds to the specific need of the site and its local need and demographics.

Other examples include:

- Westminster Data-Led Interventions, London (page 47)
- Youth Endowment Fund, UK-wide (page 47)

Pathway 6:

Contextual Safeguarding

NSPCC DEFINITION

"Contextual Safeguarding" extends the practice of safeguarding beyond the immediate family to a whole set of contexts children find themselves in. Organisations and adults in these contexts are responsible for identifying and acting on risks within and between them.

Neighbourhood systems working together to protect children.

Enablers & Practices	Direct Drivers	Core Outcomes
Safeguarding culture embedded in neighbourhood management	Timely identification and response to safeguarding risks	Stronger community trust and collective resilience
Clear safeguarding protocols and regular training	Consistent application of safeguarding practices	Children are protected from harm in daily environments
Multi-agency collaboration	Effective information sharing and escalation procedures	Reduced incidence of safeguarding concerns

Key Actors

Owners & Housing Providers	Everyday management insights flag hotspots and escalation disrupts exploitation in shared spaces.
Local Councils / Safeguarding Partnerships	Shared protocols align agencies, delivering timely and consistent responses across places.
Police	Intelligence-led problem solving prioritises protection, strengthening community trust.
Health & Education	Early indicators guide coordinated support, addressing risks before crisis.
Voluntary and Youth Sector	Trusted relationships surface concerns early, keeping actions proportionate and local.
NSPCC (Training, Helpline, Policy)	Common language, training and referral pathways knit the system together, speeding up protection.

At the NSPCC, we recognise that keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility.

For property owners and managers, this includes the contextual safeguarding of all residents and visitors, including children and young people who may not be directly known to them. Creating a protective environment requires empowering all adults on site to act as child safety ambassadors: to recognise signs of concern and to know how to respond.

This is achieved through:

- Policies that set clear expectations for behaviour, reporting and accountability.
- Training that equips staff and contractors with the skills to identify and respond to concerns.
- Awareness campaigns that build a culture of vigilance and shared responsibility.

Case Studies



Clarion Housing's partnership with the NSPCC places safeguarding training at its core, creating a consistent, organisation-wide approach to recognising and responding to concerns. The programme began with customer-facing teams, including housing officers, Clarion Futures staff and others working directly with residents such as repairs teams and safeguarding teams, who completed the NSPCC's short "It's Your Call" module alongside monthly live workshops delivered by Clarion's learning team with NSPCC specialists.

Between December and March 2025, around 300 staff took part, and the overwhelmingly positive feedback led Clarion to roll the training out across the entire business. The sessions not only strengthened staff confidence but also helped link Clarion's frontline teams more closely with NSPCC expertise, embedding a shared understanding of how to spot concerns, respond appropriately and support young people and families across their organisation.

Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding in the built environment is everyone's responsibility.

No single organisation can create safe places for children on its own. Safety emerges from how planning, design, construction, management, community support and statutory services interact over time.

The following roles describe how different contributors influence children's safety and wellbeing, not as isolated duties, but as interconnected parts of a wider safeguarding ecosystem.

Across this system, the NSPCC can play a distinctive convening role, helping organisations from the private and public sectors to align their efforts, share insight and strengthen safeguarding practice.

We all have a role to play in building safer communities for children.

Chris Sherwood, NSPCC CEO

Shaping Place

Organisations can collectively shape the design and quality of neighbourhoods.

Developers, Owners, Local Authorities, Housing Providers, Asset Managers

- Embed child-safety objectives and KPIs into briefs, planning conditions, design reviews and post-occupancy evaluation.
- Commission child-safety impact assessments and ensure findings shape design and management.
- Use procurement, commissioning and social value commitments to require inclusive design competence, safeguarding awareness and meaningful youth engagement.
- Invest in public-realm improvements, safe routes, play spaces and community infrastructure through planning obligations, capital programmes and partnership funding.
- Establish governance structures that support long-term stewardship and ensure children's needs remain visible over time.
- Align planning, design and operational expectations so safeguarding is embedded across the full lifecycle of a place.

Built Environment Professionals (Architects, Designers, Engineers)

- Translate safeguarding principles into spatial strategies, layouts and technical details.
- Ensure visibility, legibility, accessibility and inclusive play are embedded from concept to technical design.
- Advise clients on how design choices affect children's safety, independence and wellbeing.

Managing Place

The day-to-day experience of safety is shaped by those who manage homes, streets and shared spaces.

Housing Providers, Asset Managers, Local Authorities, Contractors

- Maintain predictable, fair and transparent management to reduce fear and strengthen belonging.
- Ensure repairs, lighting, cleaning and landscape care support children's safe movement.
- Provide safeguarding training for all staff, including concierges, caretakers, and contractors.
- Manage youth engagement programmes and respond to emerging risks.
- Ensure construction phases are safely managed, with clear diversions, secure hoardings and appropriate conduct on site.

Supporting Children

Children's safety also depends on the wider safeguarding system that surrounds them.

Police, Health, Education, Local Authorities, Housing Providers

- Detect early signs of harm, neglect or exploitation.
- Share intelligence on local risks that can inform design, management and community safety strategies.
- Coordinate safeguarding responses across agencies.
- Make sure information flows are coherent, especially for children who move frequently or live in temporary accommodation.
- Provide insight into how neighbourhood conditions affect attendance, wellbeing and independence.

Schools and Early Years Settings

- Understand children's daily routes, fear points and mobility patterns.
- Provide trusted insight into how the built environment affects children's safety and confidence.

NSPCC

- Provide policy guidance, safeguarding training and professional support.
- Offer insight into local risks through Childline, Helpline and service data.
- Deliver school visits and local programmes that help children stay safe.
- Act as a connector across the system, helping organisations understand their shared responsibilities and align their efforts.

Shaping Community

Children's sense of safety is shaped not only by physical design but by the relationships and social infrastructure around them.

Communities and Young People

- Bring lived experience of risk, belonging and daily movement that professionals may miss.
- Act as co-design partners and provide ongoing feedback that supports continuous improvement.
- Help sustain positive use of space through community leadership and peer networks

Developers, Owners, Local Authorities, Housing Providers, VCSE and Youth Services

- Facilitate inclusive participation and ensure seldom-heard groups are represented.
- Establish youth boards, resident panels and community governance structures.
- Support community capacity and long-term stewardship arrangements that prioritise children's safety.
- Build trusted relationships that help identify emerging risks early.

NSPCC

- Strengthens community engagement by providing tools, training and approaches that help organisations involve children safely and meaningfully.
- Brings partners together, ensuring that community insight informs planning, design and management decisions.

Embedding child safety across the development lifecycle

The RIBA Inclusive Design Overlay sets out how inclusivity and accessibility should be embedded across the full lifecycle of a project, from visioning, and briefing through to long-term operation and maintenance. It emphasises early engagement, iterative design, accountability, and the idea that inclusion and accessibility is not a single design decision but a continuous process.

Using this framework as a guide, the following structure shows how child safeguarding can be integrated into each stage of development.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Asset Managers
2. Contractors
3. Communities
4. Design Professionals
5. Developers
6. Health, Education & Social Work
7. Housing Providers
8. Local Authorities
9. NSPCC (& other Voluntary and Youth Services)
10. Owners
11. Schools & Early Years Settings
12. Young People

See overleaf for further details on each stage.



0. Strategic Definition

Setting safeguarding ambition and establishing child safety as a core project value.

1 3 4 5 7 8 9 10 12

1. Preparation & Briefing

Gathering evidence and shaping safeguarding requirements throughout the project.

1 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 12

2. Concept Design

Embedding safeguarding principles into early spatial strategies.

1 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

3. Spatial Coordination

Defining layouts to ensure safe, inclusive movement and use.

1 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Technical Design

Detailing safeguarding into the fabric of the environment.

1 4 5 6 7 11

5. Manufacturing & Construction

Managing safeguarding risks during delivery, to those working on and passing by the site.

1 2 4 5 7 9

6. Handover & Use

Ensuring safe transition into use. Provide clear information on safety features.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 9 10 11 12

7. Use / In Use

Long-term governance, monitoring and continuous improvement.

1 2 3 6 7 8 9 10 11 12



0. Strategic Definition

Setting safeguarding ambition and understanding children's needs

At this earliest stage, safeguarding, inclusions and accessibility are established as core project values.

- Define safeguarding, children's independence and wellbeing as explicit project outcomes.
- Understand the local context: children's mobility, access to services, environmental risks and barriers.
- Identify often excluded groups, including disabled and neurodiverse children and those facing disadvantage.
- Commit to early and ongoing engagement with children and young people.
- Set expectations for governance and accountability across client, design team and delivery partners.



1. Preparation & Briefing

Gathering evidence and shaping safeguarding requirements.

This stage translates ambition into a brief that guides design and procurement.

- Conduct child-safety impact assessments, either standalone or a distinct requirement of Equality Impact Assessment, to understand how proposals may affect children's safety and independence.
- Map children's routes, fear points and independence zones to identify where design can reduce risk.
- Engage children and young people using trusted, age-appropriate methods.
- Translate safeguarding insights into clear design requirements: visibility, safe crossings, inclusive play, accessible routes, car-lite movement.
- Embed safeguarding expectations in procurement and commissioning.
- Define measurable outcomes for safety, independence and wellbeing.



2. Concept Design

Embedding safeguarding principles into early spatial strategies.

- Prioritise clear sightlines, overlooked spaces and predictable routes.
- Establish car-lite movement networks and safe pedestrian priority.
- Identify opportunities for micro-play, doorstep spaces and informal social areas.
- Ensure green space is within minutes of homes.
- Apply universal design principles and best-practice accessibility and inclusive design standards e.g., BS 8300 1&2 and PAS 6463.
- Begin designing out entrapment and isolation risks.



3. Spatial Coordination

Refining layouts to ensure safe, inclusive movement and use.

- Coordinate building entrances, routes and public spaces to maximise natural surveillance.
- Ensure accessible, legible routes for disabled and neurodiverse children.
- Refine play and social spaces to support safe, everyday use.
- Confirm that management and maintenance needs are integrated into spatial decisions.
- Test children's journeys through the site using real movement patterns.



4. Technical Design

Detailing safeguarding into the fabric of the environment.

- Specify lighting, materials and boundaries that support visibility and safety.
- Ensure inclusive wayfinding, signage and sensory environments.
- Finalise details that remove entrapment points and ambiguous semi-private spaces.
- Design for maintainability: durable materials, accessible lighting, clear lines of sight.
- Coordinate with operational teams to ensure design supports safe long-term management.



5. Manufacturing and Construction

Managing safeguarding risks during delivery

- Protect pedestrian routes with safe, well-lit, clearly signed diversions.
- Provide safeguarding-aware training for site workers.
- Manage hoardings, temporary lighting and site boundaries.
- Coordinate with schools, youth services and community organisations.
- Monitor temporary conditions to ensure they remain safe throughout the build.



6. Handover and Operation

Ensuring safe transition into use

- Check the safeguarding, access and inclusion operations and maintenance requirements are assigned and managed
- effectively to retain inclusive design principles.
- Provide clear information on safety features, routes and reporting mechanisms.
- Ensure staff responsible for management understand safeguarding expectations.
- Walk the site with children and families to identify any remaining concerns.
- Confirm that maintenance and monitoring plans are in place before occupation.



7. Use / In Use

Long-term governance, monitoring and continuous improvement.

- Establish youth councils, resident panels and community boards to sustain children's influence over time.
- Monitor wellbeing and safety indicators: lighting failures, maintenance issues, perceptions of safety, children's independent mobility.
- Embed safeguarding responsibilities in long-term management agreements.
- Review and adapt safeguarding measures as communities change.
- Support community capacity and leadership to sustain positive use of space.

Measures of Success

A framework for assessing progress over time.

A child centred approach to housing, neighbourhood design and management needs measurable outcomes that reflect both environmental conditions and children's lived experience.

The following checklist provide eight indicator areas all of which need to be progressed to deliver safer communities for children. Options for metrics for the indicators are suggested, but are not exhaustive; the choice and scale of interventions will vary according to setting of use and data availability.

1. Child Wellbeing Metrics Embedded Into Operations

Embedding child focused indicators into routine monitoring ensures that wellbeing is treated as a core performance measure rather than an optional add on. This can draw on emerging tools such as Related Argent's Flourishing Index, which tracks physical, social and emotional wellbeing across the neighbourhood.
Embedding these into estate management, planning reviews and annual reporting creates accountability for long term outcomes.

- [ ] Independent mobility
- [ ] Access to green space
- [ ] Perceived safety
- [ ] Social connection
- [ ] Opportunities for play & engagement

2. Reduction in Systemic Risks

Success includes measurable reductions in systemic risks such as unsafe housing and temporary accommodation. Tracking these indicators demonstrates whether structural risks are being addressed at their source.

Property owners and managers targeting safer communities for children should aim for measurable reductions in areas including:

- [ ] Families living in damp, mould affected or overcrowded homes
- [ ] The number of children placed in temporary or unsuitable accommodation
- [ ] Repeat complaints or unresolved hazards

3. Visible Safety Signals

Neighbourhoods should show clear, observable signs of care and predictability. These signals shape children's daily sense of safety and autonomy and may be achieved through:

- [ ] Well maintained lighting in shared spaces and active frontages
- [ ] Visible, trusted staff presence
- [ ] Reduced sign of disorder eg vandalism, litter or abandoned buildings
- [ ] Consistent operational routines that children recognise and trust

4. Youth Engagement

Children and young people should experience tangible improvements in autonomy, belonging and connection. These outcomes can be measured through activities including:

- [ ] Participatory mapping
- [ ] Youth audits and surveys
- [ ] Qualitative feedback sessions

5. Cross Sector Collaboration

Effective safeguarding requires coordination across housing, planning, education, health, policing and the voluntary sector. Collaboration ensured risks are identified early and addressed holistically. Indicators include:

- [ ] Joint protocols and shared data
- [ ] Multi agency case reviews
- [ ] Co-designed interventions with local communities
- [ ] Regular partnership meetings with clear governance

6. Child Friendly Standards

Embedding child-friendly standards ensures consistency across developments and over time. Success includes the integration of child centred principles into:

- [ ] Local planning policy
- [ ] Design codes and SPDs
- [ ] Estate management standards
- [ ] Procurement and contractor requirements

7. Sustained Stewardship

Child friendly environments require long term care, not one-off interventions. This ensures that protective environments are preserved as neighbourhoods evolve. Indicators include:

- [ ] Dedicated stewardship teams
- [ ] Long term maintenance budgets
- [ ] Community governance structures
- [ ] Ongoing monitoring of safety, cleanliness and usability

8. Child Wellbeing Over Time

The NSPCC's own indicators, covering abuse prevalence, neglect, emotional wellbeing and help seeking, provide a broader measure of whether environments are reducing harm and strengthening protective factors.
Tracking these metrics can translate into real changes in children's lives.

- [ ] Regular NSPCC training for all staff
- [ ] Policy checks and updates
- [ ] Data insights

Call to Action

Children’s safety must be a core priority in every place you design, build or manage.

The evidence is clear: when children are considered from the start, risks fall and communities thrive. When they’re overlooked, harm becomes predictable.

Throughout this document we have highlighted ways all property professionals can embed child-safety throughout the whole development lifecycle, and we hope this has inspired you to take action.



Industry leaders shape the environments children grow up in. Progress depends on embedding children’s safety into everyday practice, consistently and for the long term – the NSPCC is here to help you on that journey.

Chris Sherwood, NSPCC CEO

Call to Action

The call to action for industry leaders is clear and direct:

Give Voice and Ensure Visibility

Engage children, listen to them and make their needs and aspirations visible in every brief and operational decision. If children are not named they are much less likely to be protected.

Put Child Safety First

Build safety in from the outset, supported by clear standards and co-design with young people. Commit to:

- child friendly design standards
- co-design with young people
- long-term stewardship plans that keep spaces safe.

Check Your Policies

Assess your organisation’s safeguarding position. What risks exist and how you can act to reduce them? The NSPCC can help you understand your baseline and strengthen your approach (see page 50 for more detail).

Everyone’s Responsibility

Equip every professional and contractor with the skills to play their part in keeping children safe in their community. Ensure all staff and contractors receive NSPCC safeguarding training and know how to recognise and respond to concerns.

By acting now, the sector can reduce predictable harm, improve asset performance and help build safer, more inclusive communities for future generations.

Case Studies

Using this table as a guide, take inspiration from a number of existing projects demonstrating the six key pathways highlighted in this report.

	Housing Quality and Stability	Child-Friendly Design	Neighbourhood Operations	Contextual Safeguarding	Child Participation and Lived Experience	Evidence-Led Governance and Accountability
Bairns' Hoose (Scotland)				×	×	×
Barking Riverside (London)		×	×	×	×	
Birmingham Children & Young People's Partnership (Birmingham)			×	×		×
Brent Cross Town (London)		×	×			×
Bristol City Youth Council (Bristol)					×	×
Cardiff Child-Friendly Mobility (Cardiff)		×	×			
Child Friendly Leeds (Leeds)					×	×
Clarion Housing's NSPCC Safeguarding Training (UK-wide)			×	×		×
Earl's Court Inclusive Safety Toolkit (London)			×	×	×	
Ebury Bridge Development (London)	×		×		×	×
The Flourishing Index (UK-wide)						×
Grosvenor Square (London)		×			×	
Hackney Child-Friendly Places SPD (London)		×	×			×
Health Spot (London)			×	×	×	
Marmalade Lane (Cambridge)	×	×	×		×	
"Ok to Play" Research (Bristol)		×	×		×	
PLACE/Ladywell (London)	×	×	×			
Positive Space Community Charter (UK-wide)			×		×	×
Shaping Tottenham (London)	×		×	×	×	
Unlocking Doors – Pan London Housing Reciprocal (London)	×		×	×		
Westminster Data-Led Interventions (London)			×	×		×
Young Futures Pilot Hubs (UK-wide)		×			×	
Youth Endowment Fund – Place-Based Model (UK-wide)			×	×	×	×

Bairns' Hoose – Scottish Barnahus (Scotland)
Bairns' Hoose is Scotland's adaptation of the Barnahus model, which brings together services such as health, justice, recovery and protection in a child-centred setting. The approach is designed to reduce the number of times children have to share their experiences and to ensure that support is coordinated around their needs. Bairns' Hoose aims to provide a more trauma-informed and integrated response for children who have experienced or witnessed harm, or who require support linked to their behaviour.



Barking Riverside (Barking & Dagenham, London)
Barking Riverside integrates youth voice into the design and stewardship of one of the UK's largest regeneration sites. Through the Barking Riverside Community Development Trust, young people participate in shaping public-realm priorities, including safe walking and cycling routes, play-on-the-way features and riverside spaces designed for intergenerational use. Engagement programmes with local schools and youth groups have informed decisions on lighting, accessibility and the design of safe gathering spaces. The development's long-term stewardship model ensures young people continue to influence how spaces are managed and activated, supporting a sense of belonging and improving safety for children and adolescents across the neighbourhood.

Birmingham Children and Young People's Partnership (Birmingham)
The Birmingham Children and Young People's Partnership brings together agencies across the city to improve outcomes and reduce risks for children and young people. By coordinating work across education, health, safeguarding and community services, the partnership creates shared priorities and clearer pathways for identifying concerns early. This collaborative structure helps ensure that responsibility for children's safety and wellbeing is distributed across the system rather than held by any single service. The approach strengthens accountability, supports smoother transitions between services and enables more consistent responses to the challenges children and young people face across the city.

Brent Cross Town (Barnet, London)
Brent Cross Town embeds child-focused design at the heart of its masterplan, creating a neighbourhood where families can thrive.

The development integrates 50 acres of parks, multi-use games areas and nature trails, ensuring that green space, play and everyday exploration are accessible to all ages. As a car-lite neighbourhood, it prioritises sustainable travel, encouraging walking, cycling and public transport, and reduces reliance on cars. Streets are designed around the needs of pedestrians and children, with safe, legible routes and strong visual connections between homes and public spaces, enabling children to move independently without the risks associated with heavy traffic.

To ensure accountability and drive positive social outcomes, Brent Cross Town is guided by a Flourishing Strategy, which sets design expectations beyond statutory planning requirements and establishes clear standards for the supply chain. Central to this is the Flourishing Index (see page 45).





Bristol City Youth Council (Bristol)
The Bristol City Youth Council is an elected body that enables young people aged 11–18 to influence local priorities and represent their peers. Members campaign on issues that matter to young people and contribute to youth scrutiny processes within the council. The Youth Council forms part of Bristol's wider approach to youth participation, providing a structured route for young people to engage with decision-makers and contribute to policy discussions.

Cardiff Child-Friendly Mobility (Wales)
As part of its UNICEF Child Friendly City commitments, Cardiff has invested in improving the safety and accessibility of routes used by children travelling between schools, parks and neighbourhoods. Enhancements include upgraded lighting, clearer signage, widened pavements and expanded cycling infrastructure, all designed to reduce exposure to traffic and support independent mobility. These improvements form part of the city's wider active-travel strategy, which prioritises walkability and safe movement for children and young people. The programme strengthens children's autonomy, improves access to everyday destinations and contributes to a more inclusive and connected urban environment.

Child Friendly Leeds (Leeds)
Child Friendly Leeds is a city-wide initiative launched in 2012, inspired by the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities framework. It aims to place children's rights, voices and experiences at the centre of local decision-making. Through extensive engagement, children and young people helped shape a set of 12 "wishes" that articulate what they want Leeds to be like as a place to grow up. The initiative works across the council and with partners to promote children's participation and to encourage organisations to consider children's needs in their policies, services and environments. Child Friendly Leeds has become a long-standing platform for youth engagement and partnership working across the city.

Clarion Housing's NSPCC Safeguarding Training (UK-wide)
Clarion's partnership with the NSPCC placed safeguarding training at its core, creating a consistent, organisation-wide approach to recognising and responding to concerns. The programme began with customer-facing teams, including housing officers, Clarion Futures staff and others working directly with residents such as repairs teams and safeguarding teams, who completed the NSPCC's short "It's Your Call" module alongside monthly live workshops delivered by Clarion's learning team with NSPCC specialists. Between December and March 2025, around 300 staff took part, and the overwhelmingly positive feedback led Clarion to roll the training out across the entire business. The sessions not only strengthened staff confidence but also helped link Clarion's frontline teams more closely with NSPCC expertise, embedding a shared understanding of how to spot concerns, respond appropriately and support young people and families across their organisation.

Earl's Court Development Company Inclusive Safety Toolkit (Kensington and Chelsea, London)
The Earl's Court Development Company (ECDC) developed its Inclusive Safety Toolkit as part of a wider shift toward co-design after early engagement revealed significant concerns among local residents about safety, trust and the future character of the site. Recognising that everyone wants somewhere safe and inclusive—whether women and girls, young people, parents, older residents or disabled people—ECDC set out to build a more representative and participatory model of design.

Working with ZCD Architects, ECDC convened the Public Realm Inclusivity Panel (PRIP), an intergenerational group that includes young people, older residents and people with diverse lived experiences, to surface fear points, blind spots and movement patterns that shape how safe or unsafe public spaces feel. Panel members were paid for their time, given training in design processes, and supported in acting as "critical friends" to the development process. The Inclusive Safety Toolkit now translates their lived-experience insights into a clear safety-mapping process that shapes decisions on lighting, maintenance, inspections, play design, and day-to-day estate management.

By grounding the toolkit in lived experience and giving local people, including young people whose perspectives are often missing, a direct role in shaping safety priorities, ECDC has been able to rebuild a more constructive dialogue with the community. The process has strengthened engagement, improved the specificity and usefulness of feedback, and created a clearer shared understanding of what a welcoming, inclusive public realm should look like as the development progresses.

Ebury Bridge Development (Westminster, London)
For the Ebury Bridge estate regeneration, Informal, youth-centred engagement was based around understanding what young people enjoy and building events that aligned with these activities. This encouraged attendance amongst young people and created a more informal and comfortable environment for conversations on regeneration. Following consultation, a group of young people remained involved over several years, demonstrating long-term stewardship and that when a project feels relevant to local young people, they are more likely to be engaged. The council used these insights to shape social value commitments from partners, to ensure that everyone involved in the project prioritised youth voices and local needs and understood their roles and responsibilities.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA), undertaken by Mott MacDonald, was used as a live analytical framework rather than a compliance tool, to identify how different groups, including young people, might be affected by the development. The EqIA was used as an iterative decision-support tool to consider equity implications at key stages of the project and supported improvements to engagement and design as the scheme progressed.

The Flourishing Index (UK-wide)
The Flourishing Index is a system that allows Related Argent and Barnet Council to measure how effectively Brent Cross Town is supporting the wellbeing of those who live, work and study here. The partnership is working with Buro Happold and the University of Manchester to apply a scientific research approach to social observation in order to be able to quantify wellbeing.

Where existing wellbeing measures fixate on the individual, this will systematically examine how communities feel socially and realise their potential collectively, looking at measures such as safety, trust and participation. This will be one of the first times a neighbourhood has created a tool for measuring how happy people are in their local area from the outset of the urban regeneration project, and at this scale. A mix of research methods is being used to collect data including face-to-face and online surveys, local observations and the latest sensor technology to monitor movement and activity.

This wellbeing-focused measurement framework goes beyond traditional economic indicators such as GDP or employment. It captures behavioural and experiential dimensions, including mental, emotional and social wellbeing, through longitudinal data collected across the project lifecycle. This approach enables the development team to understand how the neighbourhood affects residents over time and to adapt design and operations to support long-term wellbeing.

Grosvenor Square (Westminster, London)
Grosvenor launched a Mayfair Youth Forum (MYF) in partnership with 2-3 Degrees with a diverse group of young people (14-18) from Westminster. This was delivered through a skills development programme alongside sessions from the Voice.Opportunity.Power youth engagement toolkit. Across an 8-month programme with a focus on Grosvenor Square in Mayfair, young people were given strategic influence over plans for the area, including a seating installation. This was delivered through a skills development programme alongside the "Voice Opportunity Power" sessions . The sessions were hosted both of online and in-person, and encouraged conversation about the ongoing management of a place as well as specific design proposals. By delivering this programme through a flexible, youth-led approach with a smaller 'core cohort' of young people, Grosvenor ensured good attendance and contributions from the wider cohort and helped establish an ongoing relationship with the young people in the area.

Hackney Child-Friendly Places SPD (Hackney, London):
Hackney's Child-Friendly Places SPD sets out a clear and ambitious framework for embedding children's wellbeing, safety and independence into urban planning and design. It establishes strong expectations around walkability, family-appropriate housing and safe, legible routes, ensuring that neighbourhoods enable children to move confidently and independently. The SPD highlights the importance of walkable street networks, strong visual connections between homes and public spaces, and micro-scale design features, such as thresholds, small play pockets and informal social spaces, that support everyday freedom and play. It also addresses inclusive layouts, overlooked or under-used spaces, active frontages and child-friendly routes, creating a consistent set of policy standards that safeguard children's needs and shape more supportive, liveable neighbourhoods across the borough.

Health Spot (Poplar, London)
Health Spot is a youth-centred primary care model developed by Poplar HARCA's Spotlight youth service in partnership with NHS providers, Docklands Outreach and Safe East. The initiative brings GP services directly into youth centres, responding to concerns raised through trusted relationships between youth workers and young people about confidentiality, complex appointment systems and the lack of a supportive adult to help them navigate healthcare. By locating clinical services within safe, familiar environments that young people already use, Health Spot removes key barriers to access. Youth workers play an active role throughout the process, using their established relationships to bridge the gap between healthcare and vulnerable young people. By combining clinical expertise with youth work practice, the model delivers accessible, timely and non-judgemental support, offering a distinctive approach to improving health access for young people who are often underserved by traditional services.

Marmalade Lane (Cambridge)
Marmalade Lane, Cambridge's first cohousing community, demonstrates how neighbourhood design can actively support children's independence and everyday safety. By restricting cars to the periphery, the development creates traffic-free, green communal spaces where children can move, play and socialise freely. Shared gardens, courtyards and outdoor rooms encourage informal supervision and strengthen neighbourly connections, while collective management of spaces ensures they remain well-maintained and welcoming. Resident-led governance further enhances safety and social cohesion, giving families a direct role in shaping the environment and fostering a strong sense of community ownership.



"Ok to Play" Research (University of Bristol, Bristol)
The "Ok to Play" project is a hyper-local, resident-led initiative that reimagines everyday neighbourhood spaces, such as thresholds, doorsteps, pocket parks and pavements, through co-designed, creative interventions that encourage outdoor play, social connection and children's independence. By working directly with families and local communities, the project transforms overlooked micro-spaces into playful, welcoming environments that support children's confidence and mobility. Its approach demonstrates how small-scale, low-cost design changes can have a significant impact on children's daily experiences and strengthen community cohesion.

PLACE/Ladywell (Lewisham, London)
PLACE/Ladywell is a modular, family-focused housing development designed to provide high-quality temporary accommodation for households experiencing disruption or instability. Its courtyard-based layout creates a protected, communal environment where children can move safely and maintain familiar routines. Shared outdoor spaces, community facilities and on-site services help reduce the isolation often associated with temporary housing and support stronger social connections among residents. By combining rapid delivery with thoughtful design, PLACE/Ladywell demonstrates how temporary accommodation can offer stability and dignity for families while responding flexibly to local housing pressures.



People Positive Engagement Charter , Grosvenor (UK-wide)
Grosvenor's People Positive Engagement Charter and accompanying toolkit outlines principles and guidance for engaging communities in place making and managing. It sets expectations around listening first, being inclusive, collaborating with communities and being accountable to communities, including young people. The charter emphasises long-term stewardship and encourages developers to consider how community perspectives can shape both the creation and the ongoing life of neighbourhoods.

Shaping Tottenham (Haringey, London)
Haringey's 10 year place-making strategy to improve Tottenham used in-depth residential engagement to understand both the strengths of the area and the issues that require focused attention. This engagement identified a strong sense of community but raised concerns around a lack of affordable housing, poor living conditions, crime and the lack of safe community spaces. To reach communities that are often distrustful of public bodies, the local authority partnered with VCSEs to leverage their trust-based relationships. Peer-to-peer engagement was also used, where young people were trained to consult their peers on key topics. This approach produced more authentic insights than usual consultation methods. The findings revealed how crime affects whole neighbourhoods and communities. In response, Haringey Council will work with VCSEs, public service providers and the police to implement long-term measures that address these issues.

Westminster City Council Data-Led Interventions (Westminster, London)
Westminster City Council is exploring how it can most effectively utilise data to enable the early identification of risks such as persistent school absence, missed health appointments or emerging housing instability, with the intention of proactively offering interventions to prevent a problem developing into a crisis. This approach, trialled in other local authority areas with significant successful outcomes, includes the development of an integrated platform able to analyse the data received and flag the need for an intervention where appropriate. By improving data visibility and enabling proactive, cross-service decision-making, the system supports earlier intervention from housing, education or safeguarding teams. This joined-up approach reduces the likelihood of issues escalating and strengthens the council's ability to protect children and young people through timely, coordinated support.

Unlocking Doors, Pan London Housing Reciprocal, Safer London (London)
Safer London's Unlocking Doors is a housing reciprocal scheme connecting social housing tenancy landlords across London to ensure they can support their tenants who are at risk of violence and abuse, to find safe and stable housing. Originally focused on social housing tenants affected by domestic violence and gender-based violence, the scheme has expanded to include young Londoners and their families affected by violence and exploitation. The accompanying toolkit supports social housing landlords in facilitating property swaps and ensuring a fair process for tenants at risk of violence and abuse.

Young Futures Pilot Hubs (UK-wide)
Britain's renewed youth-club movement has emerged in response to more than a decade of decline, during which over 1,000 youth centres closed and local authority spending on youth services fell by 73%, leaving a generation of young people without dedicated places to socialise or belong. The current resurgence driven by the government-funded Young Futures programme represents a conscious effort to rebuild provision that is intentionally designed around young people's needs and identities. New centres, such as the youth-designed, socially oriented space in Preston, reflect this shift by creating environments where young people can gather on their own terms, free from the structures and surveillance associated with school or home, signalling a return to spaces that feel genuinely theirs. Meanwhile, the development of a girls-only youth club in London responds directly to the fact that in local youth centers in Tower Hamlets, over 70% of members were boys, resulting in girls feeling marginalised. These youth clubs reflect a commitment to designing environments that prioritise identity and belonging as defined by young people themselves.

Youth Endowment Fund (England and Wales)
The Youth Endowment Fund recognises that violent crime often occurs in specific local areas. To respond effectively, they identified the need to work closely with the people and organisations who live and work in those communities. Their place-based approach includes the Neighbourhood Fund, which provides targeted support to test new ways of addressing local challenges. By working in small areas, the Fund aims to improve understanding of the issues communities face, then co-design and test solutions that reflect local needs and context. The goal is to learn whether this approach can reduce crime and prevent children and young people from becoming involved in violence, particularly in areas where the risks are highest.

NSPCC Services

The NSPCC runs a number of key services to ensure children's safety. These can often overlap to provide comprehensive support and protection.

NSPCC Schools Services

The NSPCC Schools Service is the face of the NSPCC in schools. Through this service, the aim is to ensure that every child in the UK feels safe, listened to and supported, and to provide every school and all teachers across the UK and Channel Islands with the tools to do that. This is delivered through three key programmes:

- The "Speak out. Stay safe" programme is at the heart of the Schools Service, delivering safeguarding messages online or face-to-face.
- "Talk Relationships" is the NSPCC's free secondary education service for teachers and school leaders. Schools are provided with the resources and tools needed to adopt a whole school approach to sex and relationships education. The aim of this service is that all secondary school aged young people will understand healthy relationships, and how to seek help, in a safe and responsive educational environment. This service was developed using up-to-date guidance, policy and research with insights from teachers and school leaders. It was also shaped by research with young people. It is suitable for all secondary education settings in the UK.
- "Talk PANTS" Developed with children, parents, carers and teachers, and is here to help children understand that their body belongs to them, and they should tell a safe adult they trust if anything makes them feel upset or worried.

By taking on a whole-school approach, schools will provide comprehensive sex and relationships education for their young people whilst also creating an environment that prioritises their wellbeing by recognising, responding to and preventing harassment and abuse.

NSPCC Local Services

The NSPCC run local services to young people and families throughout the country. This includes:

- BabySteps – an evidence-based, holistic perinatal education programme that helps parents prepare for and navigate the transition to parenthood. Baby Steps is available to all expectant parents, regardless of whether this is their first pregnancy. Alongside traditional antenatal education content, it also provides guidance on the emotional aspects of pregnancy and new parenthood. The Baby Steps programme consists of six weekly group sessions during pregnancy, followed by three postnatal sessions which are delivered once all of the babies are born and parents are ready to restart.
- Letting the Future In – a programme designed to help children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse rebuild their lives. Children and young people aged between 4 and 17 are supported so they can recover from the impact abuse has had on their lives. Referrals can also be made for children or young people with learning disabilities up to the age of 19.
- Domestic Abuse, Recovering Together (DART™) - Over ten weeks, mothers and children aged 7-14 meet for a weekly two-hour group session. During these sessions they can talk to each other about domestic abuse, learn to communicate and rebuild their relationship.







NSPCC Helpline

A telephone and online service for adults who are concerned about the welfare of a child or young person.

Adults are provided with advice, guidance and support, and the NSPCC can take action on their behalf if they have concerns about a child who is either being abused or is it risk of abuse.



Commissioned Helplines:

The NSPCC Helpline runs specific bespoke Helplines in partnership with external agencies and operates up to 30 at one any time. Some of the Commissioned Helplines are time limited, supporting statutory agencies who are investigating a named individual, group of people or institution implicated in the abuse of children. The role of the Helpline is to provide information, support or signposting to individuals who are seeking advice about the investigation or who are seeking an alternative source of reporting, with specific referral pathways developed for each commission.

The NSPCC Helpline also runs dedicated helplines including Gangs, FGM and Whistleblowing. For these, a dedicated number is usually provided although all calls are routed through the Helpline Advisor teams. Expertise is developed in these areas and Helpline staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills to assess risks specific to these areas.

The NSPCC Helpline also works in partnership with several other organisations as part of their general safeguarding procedures. Some of these include the RSPCA, Young Minds, Jet 2 and The Football Association.

Helpline Advisor Teams

The Helpline Advisor Call Handling Teams are the initial point of contact for all child welfare concerns as well as enquiries relating to any aspect of NSPCC work including, requests for publications, e-learning and access to local services. The Helpline Advisors are also responsible for ensuring that referrals generated by the NSPCC Helpline are shared with the appropriate external agencies, including the Police and Local Authorities, as well as processing feedback from partner agencies and responding to basic enquiries.

Anyone who wishes to discuss a child welfare concern will be offered a service from a Helpline Practitioner. The options available to a service user will depend on the level of risk presented and current service demand, which will be explained by the Helpline Advisor.

Childline

Childline is the UK's free, 24-hour service for children and young people. Run by the NSPCC, Childline gives children and young people up to the age of 19 confidential support with whatever is worrying them.

We also provide direct support to children and young people who contact us. When young people get in touch with Childline, on the phone, via email or through online chat, they speak to a volunteer Childline counsellor who's there to listen. Childline counsellors are trained to make young people feel heard, empower them to make positive changes, and safeguard them against abuse or neglect.

NSPCC Training

We understand the child protection issues that companies face. We want to empower everyone in your organisation and supply chain to be confident child safety ambassadors.

We can provide training to your employees and associated organisations to develop their skills and confidence in safeguarding practices, and our Childline and Helpline services provide much needed advice to young people and adults who need us.

We have a range of online and face-to-face safeguarding training courses for anyone working or volunteering with children and young people, with sessions ranging from 30 minutes to a full day.

Of particular relevance to the property industry are our awareness training for workers who enter people's homes, working with apprentices and more general safeguarding training programmes.

A full list of our courses can be found at https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/training.

Safeguarding Advice

As the UK's leading charity working to protect children from harm, the NSPCC brings unmatched expertise, credibility and insight to safeguarding policy.

Whether you're looking to develop robust policies, respond to emerging challenges, or gain an independent, objective view of your current practices, we are here to help. Key services we can provide include:

Policy Health Check

- Review your existing safeguarding policies to ensure they are suitable, up-to-date and effective.
- A thorough check of your current safeguarding practices to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- Auditing your safeguarding case files and procedures to ensure compliance and identify any gaps.

Strategic Safeguarding Support

- Providing high-level evidence-based advice to develop and implement effective safeguarding strategies.

Site Audits

- Review your site(s) policies and practices to ensure children and young people are being considered across your estate.
- Advise and deliver a robust and consistent policy for all young people accessing or working on your sites.

Partnering with the NSPCC

At the NSPCC, we take a holistic approach to contextual safeguarding.

At the core of our approach is ensuring your company has robust safeguarding policies and procedures.

Once the right policies and processes are in place, we can move to the internal and external activities and initiatives, focusing on two key areas: Safeguarding and Local Services.

Employee Engagement is crucial to any organisation. Rather than a stand-alone activity, our approach ensures employees are engaged in every stage of this process.

We would welcome the chance to discuss this in more detail to inform a detailed strategic proposal.



YOUTH VOICE: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Some final insights from the NSPCC Young People's Board for Change

WHEN A SPACE IS MESSY AND UNCARED FOR, PEOPLE BEHAVE WORSE IN IT.

PLACES LIKE YOUTH CLUBS WORK WHEN THERE ARE DIFFERENT SPACES FOR DIFFERENT THINGS, LIKE QUIET ROOMS, PLACES TO PLAY, PLACES TO TALK.

HAVING A PLACE YOU CAN MAKE YOUR OWN REALLY HELPS YOU FEEL LIKE YOU BELONG THERE.

NSPCC

Together, we can stop child abuse and neglect – by working with people and communities to prevent it, transforming the built environment to make it safer for children, and making sure every child has a place to turn for support when they need it.

We campaign for change. We work with schools to help children understand what abuse is and support them to speak out. Childline is here, whenever young people need us. And the NSPCC Helpline is ready to respond to adults with any worry about a child. We develop services in local communities to stop abuse before it starts and help children recover, so it doesn't shape their future.

And, above all, we work together – because everyone has a part to play in keeping children safe. Every pound you raise, every petition you sign, every minute of your time, will make a difference. Together, we can change children's lives.

For further information contact **PropertyBoard@nspcc.org.uk**