

Minutes of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny

Panel

County Hall, Worcester

Tuesday, 10 May 2022, 2.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Kyle Daisley (Chairman), Cllr Tracey Onslow (Vice Chairman),
Cllr Dan Boatright, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Steve Mackay and Cllr Tony Muir

Also attended:

Cllr Andy Roberts, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families
Det Sgt Steve Wiggins, West Mercia Police
Steve Eccleston, Independent Chair, Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership
Jane Stanley, Healthwatch Worcestershire

Emma Brittain, Director of Early Help, Children in Need and Family Front Door, Worcestershire Children First
Ammanda Walsh, Group Manager for Get Safe, Worcestershire Children First
Lucy Gaitens, Get Safe Link Worker, Worcestershire Children First
Samantha Morris, Overview and Scrutiny Manager
Alison Spall, Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Available Papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 March 2022 (previously circulated).

(A copy of document A will be attached to the signed Minutes).

527 Apologies and Welcome

Apologies were received from Councillors David Chambers, Jo Monk and David Ross, Mr Tim Reid (Church Representative) and Tina Russell, Chief Executive of Worcestershire Children First (WCF). The Chairman expressed

his disappointment that the Chief Executive of WCF had given apologies and the Director of Child Protection and Through Care wasn't in attendance.

Fostering Fortnight

The Chairman welcomed the Recruitment and Retention Team Lead - Fostering and Kinship and the Registered Manager for Fostering, who advised the Panel of the numerous events taking place as part of Fostering Fortnight in Worcestershire to promote fostering across the region and build networks. They showed a short video 'Out there' which highlighted the significant impact that foster carers can have on a young person's life, and the personal fulfilment that foster carers can gain from the role. The Chairman thanked the team and encouraged Members to attend and support the open morning taking place on 21 May.

528 Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip

Cllr Tracey Onslow declared an interest in Agenda Item 5 (Get Safe and Get There) as she was the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner. Cllr Kyle Daisley declared an interest in the same item as he was a Special Constable in the Warwickshire Constabulary.

529 Public Participation

There was one public participant, Katrina Kear-Wood. Ms Kear-Wood asked questions relating to Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report and the Refresh of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.

The Chairman thanked Ms Kear-Wood for her questions and advised that she would receive a written response.

530 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Chairman raised an issue in connection with the Minutes of the 23 February 2022 meeting. After the minutes of this meeting had been agreed by Members of the Panel and signed as a correct record by the Chairman at its meeting on 10 March 2022, Dr Nokes (who had submitted public participation at the 23 February meeting) requested an amendment to the Minutes relating to her submission. The request was reviewed by the Deputy Monitoring Officer, and although it was not usual practice, it was agreed on this occasion that an amendment (to add the word **lawful**) could be made to the following sentence:

'She outlined her experiences over the last 4 years in which she had been forced to go to mediation twice to secure a **lawful** EHCP for her son...'

The Panel discussed this matter, and on being put to a vote it was agreed that the minutes of the 23 February 2022 Panel meeting should stand as previously agreed, and that the word 'lawful' should not be added.

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 March 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

531 GET SAFE and GET THERE

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility (CMR) for Children and Families, the Director of Early Help, Children in Need and Family Front Door (the Director) and partnership representatives had been invited to update the Panel on developments relating to GET SAFE and GET THERE for 2021-22.

GET SAFE was Worcestershire's multi-agency partnership and collaborative approach to tackling criminal exploitation of children and young people. In December 2021 this approach had been strengthened with the launch of the GET THERE initiative which supported 18–25-year-old care leavers and young adults with challenges faced in the transition to adulthood, recognising risks and vulnerabilities and building safety.

The CMR stressed the importance of the whole Council's support for this partnership initiative. The Director introduced Det Sgt Steve Wiggins from the West Mercia Police, the Group Manager for Get Safe and a Get Safe Link Worker from WCF. She also passed on the apologies of Supt Rebecca Love, who had been planning to attend.

The GET SAFE Group Manager highlighted the different statutory and voluntary agencies which were involved in the Partnership. A Strategic Partnership group met quarterly and focused on ensuring the strategic response was on track and the annual action plan was driving forward the delivery of the Strategy, addressing any issues that arose. There was also an Operational group who delivered actions and progress against the GET SAFE action plan. The Operational group, based in WCF, was made up of a team of practitioners and they worked directly with young people where criminal exploitation had been identified.

The Group Manager explained the benefits of the 'contextual safeguarding' approach and the GET SAFE risk assessment which was available for use by all practitioners. The importance of working within the community to raise awareness of criminal exploitation was also highlighted, and for instance, during the recent location of the Knife Angel in Worcester City Centre, the GET SAFE team had been proactively involved.

The Panel was informed of the format and purpose of the weekly multi-agency GET SAFE meetings, with a focus on reviewing the risk assessment forms completed by professionals and then agreeing an appropriate response pathway. The importance of identifying and recognising vulnerabilities and then sharing that information across all partners was crucial to ensure that a co-ordinated approach across all agencies could be undertaken. In Autumn 2021, the implementation of the West Mercia Police knife crime prevention and awareness programme, 'Steer Clear' was also incorporated into these meetings.

The GET SAFE Link worker then provided details of two recent case studies which herself and one of her colleagues had been involved with. She explained the process of how she receives a new referral from the weekly GET SAFE

meeting and then what her role involved, including regular contact meetings and interventions with the CYP as a trusted adult, exploring options available to the CYP and completion of an intervention plan. The Director advised that the trusted adult role was important as it gave the Link Worker the flexibility to respond to the needs of the CYP within set boundaries. The outcomes and learning from these interventions were crucially fed in to inform the strategic overview process.

The Panel was provided with further details on the GET THERE initiative for 16–25-year-olds who were vulnerable to criminal exploitation, with a specific focus on care leavers and SEND young people. The Group Manager provided details of a successful event carried out in conjunction with the Heart of Worcestershire College to launch GET THERE, which had involved drama productions involving the college students. The event was well supported and demonstrably improved the young people's understanding of exploitation as well as providing useful feedback for the future direction of GET SAFE. The Director highlighted that it was planned to take this event to Malvern and to the other Districts in the County.

The Panel was informed that the three-year anniversary of the GET SAFE programme would take place in June and that all the partners agencies would be marking the milestone with promotional work highlighting the success of the programme.

Det Sgt Wiggins advised that he was in charge of a team of detective constables who worked closely and collaboratively with WCF on the GET SAFE themes. He highlighted that the GET SAFE workers were a great asset, and their trusted relationship with CYP was particularly helpful as CYP's trust in the Police was not always present. Det Sgt Wiggins confirmed that his Officers signposted individuals to the GET SAFE team.

Members asked a range of questions as follows:

- In terms of the Multi Agency Response Pathway (appendix 2), a Member raised a question as to the numbers of children and young people (CYP) who were identified as Green (level 3/2 needs) who later ended up in the 'amber' or 'red' pathway. The Director advised that the different pathways were reviewed and tracked regularly and carefully. This included the process of some CYP being stepped down to leave the portal, following a final review by the partnership meeting.
- The Director provided clarification on the specific purpose of the partnership strategic meetings as compared to the weekly Get Safe meetings and how staff fed into and received communications from each according to their role.
- A Member queried how the impact of the service was assessed, both in terms of initial identification and then at improving a CYP's situation. The Director highlighted that the sessions on awareness training for professionals had been very well attended, with staff from a wide number of agencies taking up the training. She explained that the referrals that were being received at the weekly Get Safe meeting demonstrated that the '4P approach' was being effectively implemented

in order to identify and respond to the needs of vulnerable CYP. The thoroughness of the tracking and action responses meant that outcomes for these CYP could be measured. The variety of proactive work being carried across the county, as detailed in the report, would continue to improve the identification of vulnerable CYP.

- In response to a question about online exploitation, the Director advised that this was an issue that the partnership campaigned on, particularly to educate parents and carers. The Independent Chairman of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (Independent Chairman) commented that online safety was a serious challenge particularly with the social media footprint that CYP widely used, but that the Get Safe Action Plan had a specific focus on this area. He also highlighted that Young Solutions had been engaging with CYP to find out their views on learning approaches for this area.
- A Member queried whether the contextual approach was applied in terms of the selection of location in the process of transitioning vulnerable care leavers to independent living. The Director advised that during the risk assessment process all relevant safeguarding factors were carefully taken into account.
- The issues of sexual harassment, abuse and bullying in schools was highlighted. The Director advised that there was a lot of work on these themes in safer communities' work and considerable interaction with schools and colleges about vulnerable CYP.
- A Member raised the issue of ensuring there was awareness of services for vulnerable CYP when their parents were also 'at risk' or isolated. The Director explained the current measures in place and the network of professionals involved in this process. She confirmed that they had been out to communities to raise awareness and seek to engage with vulnerable adults, and that more of this activity was needed. The Member commented that there might be a role for Councillors in this area.
- The Chairman asked how Councillors could get involved in marking the 3- year anniversary. The Group Manager explained that there were different themed communications due to be issued and she would ensure that Members were included in the distribution list to receive these.
- In respect of the GET SAFE Child Exploitation Risk Assessment (appendix 1), a Member queried whether consent being given or not led to different routes being taken. The Group Manager advised that it was a starting point for conversation and that for some CYP it could take a long time before they were comfortable to be open about their experiences. The Director assured the Panel that the assessment was completed anyway whether consent was obtained or not, but that it was important work to try and get the CYP on board with the process, to help them move forward positively.
- The Panel was informed that the feedback from parents about the GET SAFE interventions and support was very positive, with relationships having improved and CYP being 'brought back into' the family.
- The Chairman asked whether when referrals were made to CAMHS, whether there was a transfer of information so that the CYP didn't have re-tell their story again. The Panel was informed that this was the aim,

so that a complete account of the CYP background was transferred, although occasionally it was unavoidable. The Director stressed that the key emphasis of the partnership working was that sensitive information should be able to be accessed without a CYP having to be re-traumatised and that this work was ongoing.

- The Healthwatch representative added her support for the partnership safeguarding working taking place and the importance placed on the voice of young people, which was pivotal to progress matters.

The Chairman thanked all the partners for the valuable work they were doing to safeguard vulnerable CYP and for their contribution to today's meeting.

The Panel requested that they receive an update on GET SAFE and GET THERE in 12 months' time.

532 Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020-2021

The Independent Chairman of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) had been invited to present the WSCP Annual Report for 2020-21.

The Independent Chairman advised that this was the second annual report of the WSCP since it replaced the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board in September 2019. This report covered the period October 2020 to September 2021. He reminded the Panel that there were three statutory safeguarding partners in a local authority area, these being the Chief Executive of Worcestershire County Council, the Accountable Officer of Hereford and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning and the Chief Constable of West Mercia Police who have to ensure arrangements were in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. In Worcestershire the WSCP has the role of supporting the three partners to fulfil that responsibility. The three partners were required to publish a report at least once in every 12-month period to set out their progress including specific feedback such as evidence of the impact of work carried out and analysis of where further progress was still needed. There was also a statutory obligation to share the report with the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.

The Independent Chairman advised the Panel that he chaired the WSCP's Executive group which was the strategic decision-making body which met regularly to ensure that agencies were working well together and contributing effectively. A key role was for the group to identify emerging issues and problems and respond to them promptly. The Executive group was made up of representatives of the three statutory safeguarding partners and chairs of the support groups. The Executive was supported by four support groups as follows:

- Get Safe Partnership group which focused on how partners could contribute to joint working. The Group had completed a profile of child exploitation in Worcestershire for use in multi-agency training. Further

work had also been carried out on an action plan to introduce the GET SAFE approach and this had led to a network of services working together to support children and young people at risk of exploitation. Adding to this strong base, guidance had been produced during the year for professionals working with vulnerable young people in the 18-25 age group, under the GET THERE initiative. The Independent Chairman advised that he had previously run advisory sessions for councillors on child exploitation and he was planning to set up further sessions to set out the challenges ahead.

- Quality Assurance Practices and Procedures Group (QAPP) which worked to ensure that the Levels of Need guidance was understood and properly applied by all agencies and that child protection processes were of a high quality. Performance Indicators and audits were used to enable the quality of practices to be assessed and responded to effectively. During the year two serious allegations of abuse in education settings had been looked at. In conjunction with the University of Worcester, the group had also been reviewing the effectiveness of all aspects of early help services via interaction and feedback from 40 families.
- Children's Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Group which carried out three rapid reviews of serious cases resulting in the commissioning of two child safeguarding practice reviews, which were still ongoing. Learning from previous reviews had also been implemented. A Child Safeguarding Practice Review had also been published in April 2021 and the learning since followed up.
- Headteachers Education Safeguarding Steering Group which supported the links and understanding between education settings, the Family Front Door, Early Help, the audit of safeguarding arrangements in schools and monitoring of Elective Home education.

Members asked a series of questions, which are set out below:

- In respect of the visit by Ofsted in May 2021 as part of their rapid review of sexual violence and sexual harassment in schools, a Member queried why Worcestershire was selected for this visit. The Independent Chairman advised that it was a random selection process which had been directed by the Department for Education (DfE) in response to negative national headlines. Ofsted had been looking for best practice and that the zero-tolerance message was being adhered to. They were looking at whether the agencies were fit for purpose and that CYP were confident in the reporting processes. As part of the above process Ofsted had spoken to hundreds of CYP.
- Asked about his own main areas of concern, the Independent Chairman highlighted:
 - the importance of getting thresholds right so that responses were appropriate and timely. The effectiveness of the Family Front Door was paramount in this to ensure that focus was placed on those most at risk and he felt that decision-making was strong. He advised that the Get Safe Partnership group had scrutinised the Family Front Door arrangements and found them to be good.

- Being reassured that when lessons were learnt that this was then being embedded into people’s understanding and practices. He looked for evidence as to what had changed. He questioned whether there could be confidence that the same issue wouldn’t re-occur. He also queried ways in which staff knowledge could be kept updated in light of the National review Panel’s September 2021 report ‘The Myth of the Invisible Man’.
- The Independent Chairman confirmed that the representatives from alternative provision schools had been included in the Education Safeguarding steering group work.
- In response to a query about the completeness of information able to be supplied by agencies during a rapid review, the Independent Chairman advised that full information was not always available, but with an understanding of the culture of Worcestershire Children First, he was very confident of the honesty and transparency that was embedded within the organisation and had never been unconfident on this matter.
- The question was raised as to whether the Independent Chairman was assured that all was being done to keep children safe in Worcestershire. He responded by providing an assurance that all was being done that could be done and that the systems and procedures were in place to ensure this was the case.

533 Refresh of the Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23

The Panel was asked to consider suggestions for the 2022/23 Work Programme, prior to it going forward to OSPB.

The following items had been suggested by the Director of Children’s Services and the CMR for Children and Families:

- Quality Assurance in children’s services including complaints and voice of the child
- Domestic Abuse – Children and Young People

Cllr Boatright requested that an item on Autism provision and the availability of places within education settings be included on the work programme.

The Panel agreed to the above 3 items being added to the Work Programme, along with the Update on GET SAFE and GET THERE requested earlier in the meeting.

The Chairman wished to place on record his thanks to the WCF Officers, Partners and Scrutiny Team for their support during the year.

The meeting ended at 4.18 pm

Chairman