

Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership

Annual Report

2019 - 2020



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SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

Contents

1.	Foreword	3
2.	Executive Summary	4
3.	Introduction	7
4.	Key Facts about Worcestershire	8
5.	Background	9
6.	The Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive Group	12
7.	The Wider Partnership	15
8.	The GET SAFE Partnership Group	16
9.	The Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures Group	21
10.	The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group	26
11.	Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews	29
12.	Updates to Published Arrangements	30
13.	The Head Teachers Safeguarding Group	31
14.	Conclusion	32
Appendix A – WSCP – Budget Details (2019 – 2020)		34

1. Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce the first Annual Report of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP), which came into being in September 2019 as the successor to the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board.

The transition was a successful one, with the WSCP building upon the achievements of the Board to further embed safeguarding and promote wellbeing across the county. The Safeguarding Partners as defined by Working Together 2018; Worcestershire County Council, West Mercia Police and the Clinical Commissioning Group, have demonstrated a renewed commitment to effective partnership working with a robust yet compact structure that focuses on key safeguarding processes and issues.

The new arrangements have allowed continuity of focus on exploitation, assurance and review, and have maintained the involvement of a wider partnership via a streamlined sub-group structure.

This has been achieved against a background of unparalleled challenge in the form of the Covid-19 pandemic, which required a flexibility and willingness to innovate to meet changing demand, increased uncertainty and new safeguarding pressures. The WSCP responded positively to the situation, meeting regularly as an executive and adopting a responsive and agile approach.

The situation remains challenging and the partnership will maintain its strong commitment to the children and young people of Worcestershire as we head into 2021.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Derek Benson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Derek Benson,
Independent Chair WSCP**

2. Executive Summary

The introduction of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 placed a responsibility on the three safeguarding partners in each local authority area, these being the local authority, the local clinical commissioning group and the chief officer of police, to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. As a result, the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) formally replaced the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) on 30th September 2019. The three safeguarding partners are also required to publish a report at least once in every 12-month period detailing their progress.

These new arrangements have been designed as significantly more streamlined than the previous Board arrangements and have proved to offer a dynamic and effective means of decision making and oversight. This is supported by the very strong involvement across all WSCP sub-groups of the wider partnership agencies where their representatives' skills, knowledge and time are invaluable to ensuring an efficient and effective multi-agency child safeguarding system across the county.

Oversight and direction for the new arrangements, is provided by the Executive Group, which is independently chaired. One of the main areas of focus for the Executive Group during 2020 has been to shape the partnership response to the challenges created by Covid. The Executive Group were able to track the responses of each of the agencies to the virus and the impact on their services as it progressed and identify and discuss any cross cutting impact on those services and the effectiveness of multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements.

The partnership responded rapidly to emerging risk when concerns were raised as to the national increase in the number of babies being seriously harmed during the Covid period as a result of the disproportionate impact restrictions were having on those with babies in the home. As a partnership we endorsed a 'safeguarding babies' initiative and lead communications to communities and professionals. The partnership moved quickly to identify those families with babies who may need additional support and put in place a comprehensive visiting and information campaign.

Through the Executive Forum we have also created a working group of Police and Social Care staff to audit and analyse Domestic Abuse and referrals to our 'front door' and a task and finish group working locally with West Mercia Police representatives on their Early Help strategy.

With the impact of the pandemic likely to continue well into the next reporting period, the Executive Group is focused on ensuring the continued development and effectiveness of our partnership response to the emerging threats to the safety of children and young people across Worcestershire.

The Executive Group will also be focusing on the ability of the partnership to develop their services in a co-ordinated way, as competing demand on priorities, timelines of service improvement plans and organisational reviews within each agency will not always correlate with those of other partners. This is particularly important when considered within the context of emerging or increasing risks to our children and young people.

'GET SAFE' was introduced by Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board shortly before the transition to the new arrangements and has been further developed by the GET SAFE Partnership Group within the WSCP arrangements.

Our GET SAFE programme is an innovative and child-focused approach to tackling the many forms of child criminal exploitation. It has brought together child safeguarding agencies from across Worcestershire to design and implement enhanced multi-agency processes for the identification, assessment, planning and response to this problem, based on a contextual safeguarding framework. The work has been informed by feedback from local young people who have been helped by these services and has had a positive impact on the timeliness and effectiveness of our collective response to children and young people at risk of exploitation within Worcestershire.

Although the GET SAFE programme has brought significant improvements, the partnership recognises there is still more to do in this complex area. In the coming twelve months we will continue to develop our understanding of exploitation in Worcestershire, and the knowledge and understanding within our multi-agency workforce and community services. We will strengthen our engagement work with young people to keep them safe and aware of the risks in their communities and online. This work will be supported by the Climb programme and Community Link Workers. We will continue to learn from what children and young people are telling us and develop a transition pathway for young people into adulthood where there is continued vulnerability.

As a partnership we are committed to service development. The role of the Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures Group (QAPP) is to support this commitment by delivering a multi-agency programme of quality assurance through focusing on three key areas of audits, service user feedback and key performance indicators.

To capture service user feedback on their personal experience of the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements QAPP has developed an online survey for families who receive a service in relation to child safeguarding. QAPP has identified other opportunities for multi-agency service user feedback and as a result has included a question on the impact of multi-agency working to the service user feedback section of the case file audit template, and is using Child Protection Conference feedback as another opportunity to gather information.

QAPP has worked to strengthen links between the work of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Group and its own audit work, checking that the learning from two recent serious case reviews has reached front line practitioners.

The data set used by QAPP identified changes in the volume and appropriateness of referrals from partner agencies into the Family Front Door during this reporting period. This has been used to inform the response of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership to these changes, via the QAPP Group.

The QAPP Group has mapped out key learning and development opportunities for the partnership and following the initial disruption to delivery due to Covid we have resumed our training offer with courses being delivered through virtual platforms.

In the coming twelve months the QAPP Group will be focusing on the quality and application of the Levels of Need Guidance for contacts to the Family Front Door by promoting awareness of the threshold guidance and early help offer. We will ensure our multi-agency audit programme is consolidated following the disruption due to Covid, and that learning is shared across the partnership. We will also use what children and families are telling us about our practice to inform improvements in our multi-agency safeguarding practice. Finally, we shall continue to develop our multi-agency learning and development opportunities in line with requirements as identified from audit activity and child safeguarding practice reviews.

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Group oversees the management of rapid review processes and the commissioning of child safeguarding practice reviews within Worcestershire. The CSPR Group is also responsible for ensuring that child safeguarding practice reviews are completed to a high standard and within agreed timescales, and that the recommendations and learning resulting from these reviews are fully implemented.

This year the CSPR Group have conducted three rapid reviews under the new arrangements which has resulted in the commissioning of one child safeguarding practice review. This review is ongoing, the timetable having been disrupted by the restrictions resulting from the pandemic and the impact on partner agencies capacity and availability during the periods of greatest demand. The review has now resumed as a result of partners agreeing an innovative approach to multi-agency practitioner learning events which allows for wide partnership engagement, discussion and challenge using a virtual forum.

The CSPR Group now works closely with the Quality Practice and Procedures Group (QAPP) to share the learning from reviews to inform the multi-agency learning and development programme and then check that learning has reached those who work directly with children and families. This will remain an area of focus for the CSPR Group over the next year. In addition, the need to change the way in which we work as a result of the pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to explore how we can conduct certain aspects of the review process whilst minimising the impact on partners' time and resources via the use of remote technology. There is now an opportunity to make such efficiencies permanent where we are confident they do not impact on the quality of the review.

Since being introduced in September 2019, there has been only one change to our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements as originally published. This change was made in April 2020 when the Head Teacher Education Safeguarding Steering Group was incorporated into the arrangements as a sub-group of the WSCP. Although partners had always sought to involve the Education sector within the arrangements, this has strengthened the partnership links with schools and early years settings in Worcestershire and provided them with greater access to and involvement in the work of the partnership. The partnership believes this better reflects the vital role that education has in safeguarding.

The group works closely with the QAPP Group, for example by supporting audit activity, with the recent Section 175 audit of schools safeguarding arrangements an example of this. This achieved a 100% return rate and highlighted the very positive contribution schools are making to promoting early help across Worcestershire. An audit report on schools' attendance at strategy meetings has also been provided, from which further advice has been provided to schools on their attendance and how they can contribute to strategy discussions.

In the coming year the Head Teachers Safeguarding Group will be promoting the use of school early help offers and early help assessments to ensure support and intervention for families at the appropriate level. The Group also aim to increase the frequency of the joint Education and Children Social Care Family Front Door auditing process to provide close monitoring of the impact of measures in support of this work.

Conclusion

This period has been challenging for all safeguarding children partnerships as the impact of the pandemic arrived at a formative time for the new partnerships and before new ways of working could be fully embedded. That said, it has also provided the opportunity of exploring new approaches to partnership working which we are now keen to make permanent within our arrangements.

The wider Worcestershire Safeguarding Children partners have all, both individually and collectively, fully committed to making our safeguarding arrangements work in these most challenging of times. This has meant the WSCP has been able to continue to develop its own effectiveness whilst at the same time, and most importantly, work together to safeguard children and young people across Worcestershire.

3. Introduction

The arrangements for Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) were first published in June 2019 and formally replaced the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) on 30th September 2019. These arrangements can be read in full via the following link;

<https://www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Worcestershire-Safeguarding-Children-Partnership-Plan-FINAL.pdf>

The **safeguarding partners** in relation to a local authority area in England are defined under the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act, 2017) as:

- (a) the local authority
- (b) a clinical commissioning group for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area
- (c) the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area.

Within Worcestershire these organisations have delegated responsibility for the arrangements to;

- The Director of Social Care and Safeguarding within Worcestershire Children First (Local Authority).
- The Head of Quality and Safeguarding, Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Adults and Children (NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group).
- The South Worcestershire Local Policing Commander (West Mercia Police).

In order to bring transparency for children, families and all practitioners about the activity undertaken, Chapter 3 of Working Together to Safeguarding Children (July 2018) requires the three safeguarding partners to publish a report at least once in every 12-month period. The report must set out what they have done as a result of the arrangements, including;

- How effective the arrangements have been in practice.
- Details of and learning from any child safeguarding practice reviews.
- Evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families from early help to looked-after children and care leavers.
- An analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities.
- A record of decisions and actions taken by the partners in the reporting period (or planned to be taken) to implement the recommendations of any local and national child safeguarding practice reviews, including any resulting improvements.
- Ways in which the partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision.
- Any updates to the published arrangements and the proposed timescale for implementation.

This report details the progress of the Worcestershire safeguarding partners and relevant agencies as required by Working Together. Where appropriate, this has been set out within a summary of the activity of each of the partnership's sub-groups to provide a more detailed understanding of delivery across the arrangements.

The last published Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board annual report covered the period 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019. This first report of the WSCP will therefore also cover the period April – September 2019 where the WSCB was still in place. This is to provide the continuity required in relation to the reporting on multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements in Worcestershire and to provide the background and context against which the safeguarding partners began the new arrangements.

4. Key Facts about Worcestershire

Context and Local Demographics

Worcestershire is a largely rural county in the West Midlands made up of the six districts of Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, Worcester, Wychavon and Wyre Forest. Wychavon district has the largest proportion of the total population in the county and Malvern Hills the smallest. In June 2019, the population of Worcestershire was estimated to be around 592,057, an increase of 0.6% from the previous year. Although increasing, the overall population growth had slowed compared to the previous year.

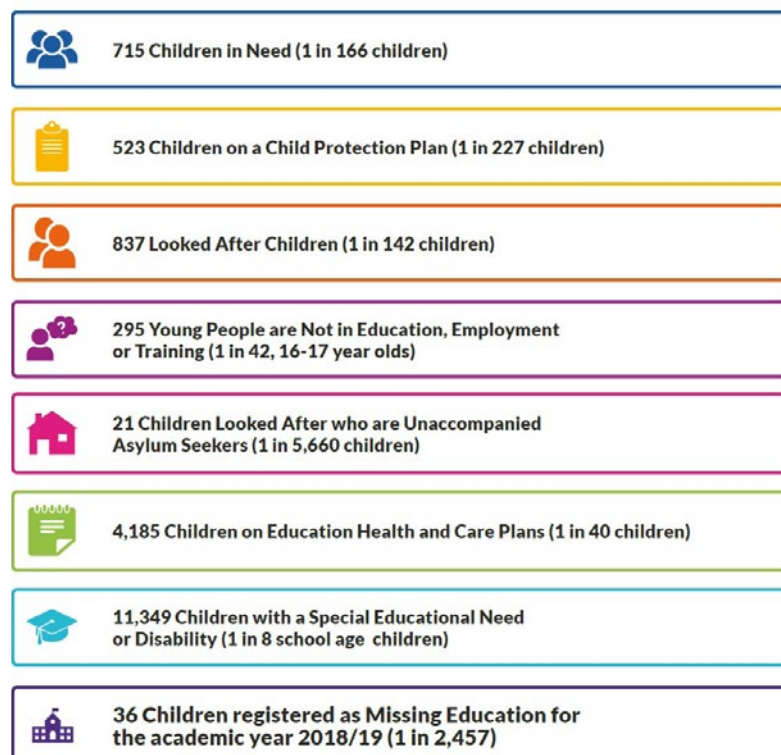
Between 20-24% of the population in each of the six districts are children and young people (0-19 age group). Redditch has the highest proportion with 24%.

4.3% of the Worcestershire population is from a minority ethnic group, with the largest proportion (2.4%) being of Asian heritage.

Worcestershire is a relatively affluent county with a growing economy and performs well on many measures of health and wellbeing compared with other areas of the country. That said, according to the Government's Indices of Deprivation which uses various measures including income, employment, education, health, barriers to housing and services, crime, and living environment, nearly 28000 Worcestershire residents do still live in one of the top 10% of deprived areas of England.

The latest available figures (from 2016) show that in Worcestershire 14.1% (16,250) of children live in poverty related to low income, which is where the income of the household is less than 60% of the national average. Worcestershire is below the average of similar local authorities (which is 13%), but better than the England average of 17%.

The current numbers of Worcestershire children and young people with levels of vulnerability are shown below. These figures are provided by Worcestershire Children First from their in-year monitoring as at 31st December 2020, except Children with SEND.



5. Background

In planning and designing the new child safeguarding arrangements the Worcestershire safeguarding partners had a comprehensive understanding of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board from their close involvement within it. This understanding was supported by a series of external inspections which provided an independent perspective on the strengths of partners and aspects of the multi-agency arrangements, and areas for focus and development.

These reports are available online and include:

Ofsted – Focused Visit of Worcestershire Children First Social Care – June 2019

Within this most recent report Ofsted noted that;

“Progress has been made in many areas of children’s services in Worcestershire since the last inspection, when the local authority was judged to be inadequate in all key areas of practice in 2016. Effective work by senior management and staff, together with commitment and investment by political leaders, has led to improved responses to the needs of children and families. As a result, outcomes for many children and their families are better, and there is evidence of a sustained trajectory of improvement.

A strengthened front door multi-agency response (MASH) and improved children in need and child protection practice identify risk of harm and, in most cases, ensure timely and effective interventions. The local authority understands the risks of exploitation better and has ensured that practice in this area has improved.”

Ofsted also noted that;

“Senior leaders have successfully created a more stable and permanent workforce and are ensuring that caseloads for social workers are reducing.”

From a partnership working perspective the key area highlighted related to early help.

Inspectors noted that *“despite a focus by the local authority on the importance and need for partnership working, the early help partnership remains insufficiently robust. The engagement with partners to deliver early help to families and to ensure that this help is timely therefore needed to improve”.*

NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group

The NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group commissions NHS services from a number of providers. Two of these providers, the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust and the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, were recently inspected by the Care Quality Commission. Both providers are named as relevant agencies within the safeguarding partners’ arrangements and the outcomes of their inspections are summarised below.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust –

The CQC report was published in January 2020 and awarded the Trust a ‘Good’ rating. Specific to the area of safeguarding, the Trust also received a ‘Good’ rating with CQC making the following observations;

“Safeguarding adults, children and young people was given sufficient priority. The trust safeguarding team supported staff across the trust to ensure safeguarding was assessed, recorded and communicated to the relevant services. The safeguarding team had a proactive relationship with external stakeholders such as the local authority and police to keep patients and families safe.”

"The trust monitored and reviewed incidents consistently. There were policies and processes in place to support the review of incidents and the trust shared lessons learnt with staff."

"We found the trust to be open and transparent about safety and risk. They were aware of the main risks to the trust, including patients, families, staff and partners. When something went wrong, there was a thorough review and lessons learnt."

It is of particular note that the specialist community mental health services for children and young people provided by the Trust were rated as 'Outstanding' during this inspection, with CQC noting that;

"Staff treated patients with compassion and kindness and respected their privacy and dignity. They were passionate about working with the patient group and supported them to manage their care and treatment in ways in which they would understand. Staff were highly motivated to develop and adapt treatments that met patients' individual needs. Staff had excellent knowledge of their patients, which meant they understood their individual needs. They actively involved patients and families in their care decisions from the start of their treatment."

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust –

This CQC report was published in September 2019 and awarded a grading of 'Requires Improvement'.

Since the publication of the CQC report on the Trust in June 2018 which provided both an overall grading and grading for safeguarding services of 'inadequate', Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust has been on an improvement journey with strong support from the NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group. The impact of this and the hard work of all involved was reflected in the follow up CQC inspection which took place in May and June 2019 and published in September of that year. Both the overall grading, and that of the safeguarding services was adjudged to be 'requires improvement', which indicated a positive direction of travel but with further work remaining. This most recent CQC inspection report noted;

"We saw general improvements in the safety of services provided in most areas, however there were some regulatory breaches found regarding staff training, staffing levels, and carrying out timely assessment of patient' needs. There was a clearer focus on patient safety, but some areas still needed to improve."

West Mercia Police

West Mercia Police was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) in 2019, with the report published in September of that year. HMICFRS concluded that West Mercia Police 'requires improvement' in the area of reducing crime and keeping people safe, which incorporates child safeguarding arrangements. The report noted;

"The force needs to improve the way in which it protects vulnerable people. The workforce has a good understanding of vulnerability. This includes the importance of identifying and safeguarding vulnerable people. But the force is missing opportunities to make arrests in some domestic abuse cases."

HMICFRS also noted that;

"Officers told us that they regularly look for hidden vulnerability. During our inspection, there was evidence of this. For example, officers looked for signs of exploitation when dealing with vulnerable victims."

In relation to Worcestershire's Family Front Door, HMICFRS noted that;

"Partners have been co-located for approximately four years, but the unit still does not fully operate as a MASH. Staff report that the local safeguarding children board is aware of the shortcomings of these arrangements. But full MASH processes have not been put in place."

HMICFRS also noted the introduction of care home co-ordinators to share intelligence and assist in improving outcomes for 'looked after' children, and that those co-ordinators work with social services, the local authority missing co-ordinator, and care home managers and staff.

Finally, it was noted that the force's management of sex offenders is effective, as is its approach to identifying those who share indecent images of children online. It also demonstrates a proactive approach to reducing this threat.

Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership will continue to monitor and support the development of safeguarding services for children and young people within Worcestershire, and the information provided by the various inspections of single agencies supports the partnership in identifying those areas of multi-agency work which require particular focus.

6. The Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive Group

Strategic decision making for the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) takes place within the Executive meeting. This is a significantly more streamlined model than existed within the previous Board arrangements and have proved to offer a dynamic and effective means of decision making and oversight, with each of the representatives within the Executive Group involved as equal partners. This is supported by the move to monthly meetings, promoting regular and focused discussions and decision making.

The Executive Group is independently chaired. The Chair provides a high level of challenge to the partners, and this includes a robust steer on their views of progress and where improvements need to be made, as well as information on emerging best practice and potential opportunities presented as a result of work completed in other areas.

The new structure has also provided the safeguarding partners with the ability to drive improvements through the sub-groups, which have a wide ranging cross partnership membership. Three of the four sub-groups are chaired by a member of the Executive Group so providing strong links to the wider partnership arrangements.

WSCB Period – (Transition April–September 2019)

As part of the transition to the new Safeguarding Children Partnership arrangements, the WSCP Executive began meeting within its current format on 24th May 2019. A transition plan which covered all aspects of the move to the new model was used, and delivery of this was driven by the Executive. A broad range of areas had to be considered, for example membership, independent scrutiny, funding, information sharing agreements, communication and administrative support.

Prior to the new partnership arrangements, the WSCB conducted its multi-agency audit activity through their Monitoring Effectiveness Group (MEG) and learning from reviews was introduced into practice through the Improving Frontline Practice Group (IFPG). Both functions were absorbed into the Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures Group (QAPP) which first met in July 2019. Details of the work of the QAPP group since then are provided below.

Between April and July both the MEG and the IFPG continued to support the Board in meeting its statutory requirements to ensure efficient and effective child safeguarding arrangements. As a direct result of learning from multi-agency case file audits the neglect strategy and toolkit were formally launched across the Partnership. These provided a pathway and tools to support improvements in timeliness of decision making, SMART planning, and understanding the child's lived experience. In introducing these additional resources for practitioners of all agencies, there was a recognition that the use of chronologies and consideration of previous history remained an area of focus, as was the tendency to 'start again' and to respond to individual incidents as they occur rather than looking at the cumulative impact of neglect on children over time.

The IFPG worked hard to ensure the new joint adult and children safeguarding website was ready for launch on 20th May 2019. The group also supported the development and introduction of the updated Early Help Pathway. Finally, in June 2019 two events were held at the Artrix Theatre, Bromsgrove. The Geese Theatre production company were commissioned by the IFPG to present a performance which followed the stories of two families where children are potentially at risk, and the agencies working with them. The aim of these events was to bring the learning from recent serious case reviews to managers and practitioners across the partnership.

The final meeting of the full Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board took place on 12th June 2019. At this meeting the final arrangements for the transfer of responsibilities from the existing WSCB sub-groups to the new WSCP arrangements. Also of note at this meeting, the new shared website for the WSCP and Worcestershire Safeguarding Adult Board received final agreement and sign off. This website has continued to evolve over the last eighteen months and can be visited at <https://www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk/>.

Progress and Achievements

One of the main areas of focus for the Executive Group during 2020 has been to shape the partnership response to the challenges created by Covid. With a more focused Executive Group within the new arrangements the safeguarding partners, under the scrutiny of the independent chair, were able to track the responses of each of the agencies to the virus and the impact on their services as it progressed, and identify and discuss any cross cutting impact on those services and the effectiveness of multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements. The Executive Group were able to move quickly to a two-weekly meeting in order to do this, so ensuring decision making and responses remained current and relevant. Organisations responded to requests for information in a timely way, and this has led to the safeguarding partners being able to secure reassurance that appropriate responses were in place to best protect children.

Since inception the Executive Group has also agreed terms of reference for the various sub-groups, provided oversight of the WSCP budget, supported sub-group work at a more strategic level where funding and/or resource decisions are required (i.e. the Get Safe Problem Profile, understanding wider partnership engagement with Early Help services, our approach to Section 11 audits and child safeguarding practice reviews during the Covid period) and considered the implications of the learning from National Review Panel reports from a partnership perspective.

The partnership also demonstrated this ability to respond rapidly to emerging risk for example when in September 2020 we received a letter from Vicky Ford MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, raising concern to the national increase in the number of babies being seriously harmed during the Covid period as a partnership we endorsed a 'safeguarding babies' initiative and lead communications to the community and professionals. Within Worcestershire, in the first nine months of 2020 the Worcestershire Family Front Door had received 682 concerns relating to children under one year old, an increase of 36% on the same period last year, reflecting the challenges some families were facing and the concerns of practitioners across partner agencies.

The partnership, in recognising the disproportionate impact Covid restrictions were having on those with babies in the home and who often rely more than most on social contact and the support of others to help at a busy time in any family's life, moved quickly to identify those families with babies who may need additional support, and put in place a comprehensive visiting and information campaign. Health Visitors, School Health and Parenting teams continued to offer support to families during the pandemic, whilst adapting how services were being delivered in order to keep families and team members safe.

The Safeguarding Babies initiative saw an additional visit to family homes and invites were extended to meet at one of the Family Hubs across the county. Parenting sessions by group video calls were also increased to offer further support. In addition, a number of agencies were involved in visiting as many families with babies as possible to make sure they have the support they needed, or they knew where to go to access it.

As part of this programme a professional survey was also developed to give us valuable understanding and learning from the visits on the accessibility and effectiveness of Early Help. The outcome of the survey will inform our further work.

Evidence of Impact

The impact of the Executive Group can be seen through the rapid and flexible response to the effects of the pandemic on multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements as they emerged, and the assurance provided that efficient and effective child safeguarding was being maintained within Worcestershire despite the mounting challenges faced by partners.

The sub-groups are tasked with the delivery of the partnership activity. The opportunity for them to secure the necessary support where barriers are met to progress in a timely manner, examples of which are provided in the section above, is further evidence of the impact of the Executive Group.

Through the Executive Forum we have created a working group of Police and Social Care staff to audit and analyse Domestic Abuse and referrals to our 'front door' and a task and finish group working locally with West Mercia Police representatives on their Early Help strategy. This is a further example of the Executive supporting partnership collaboration and facilitating progress, and highlights how this smaller forum lends itself to open 'critical friend' challenge and conversation that can then be developed within the wider services.

Voice of the Child/Family

The Executive Group monitors the activity of the sub-groups to ensure the views of children, young people and their families are being collected as part of that sub-group's work on the wider quality assurance programme, and that these are being used to influence the various partnership workstreams.

Areas for Development

With the ongoing challenges presented by the pandemic and the impact of this likely to continue well into the next reporting period, the Executive Group is focused on ensuring the continued development of our partnership response to the emerging threats to the safety of children and young people across Worcestershire, and the effectiveness of our partnership arrangements in being able to respond to those.

The Executive Group will also be focusing on the ability of the partnership to develop their services in a co-ordinated way, as competing demand on priorities, timelines of service improvement plans and organisational reviews within each agency will not always correlate with those of other partners. This is particularly important when considered within the context of emerging or increasing risks to our children and young people.

7. The Wider Partnership

Representatives of the wider partnership agencies are directly involved within the work and decision making of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership through their membership of and contribution to the various sub-groups. There is very strong relevant agency representation across all WSCP sub-groups where their representatives' skills, knowledge and time are invaluable to ensuring an efficient and effective multi-agency child safeguarding system across the county. This also provides a comprehensive reach across the child safeguarding system, and ensures all relevant agencies are directly involved in any decision making in relation to partnership activity. The detail of this work is set out within the sub-group information below.

Representatives of our wider partnership agencies are also directly involved within the work and decision making of the safeguarding children partnership at a strategic level through a wider partnership forum. The first of these was held in February 2020 where representatives of all the relevant agencies met to review the progress of the partnership against the published arrangements. Unfortunately, Covid-19 has delayed the follow up event due to the barriers to bringing partners together in a meaningful forum, however the safeguarding partners are committed to hold the next event as soon as it is possible to do so.

8. The GET SAFE Partnership Group

GET SAFE is the Worcestershire name for our multi-agency support and protection for children and young people at risk of exploitation.

The GET SAFE approach was introduced by Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board shortly before the transition to the new arrangements and has been further developed by the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership.

The GET SAFE Partnership Group is a sub-group of the WSCP and is chaired by Superintendent Stephanie Brighton, South Worcestershire Local Policing Commander (West Mercia Police). The Group is committed to making children safer in Worcestershire and has developed a strong and recognisable brand to do this as well as information resources for young people and families in each area of the GET SAFE risks.

GET SAFE stands for: Gang-related activity, Sexual Exploitation, Trafficking, Modern day Slavery, Absent and Missing, Forced Marriage, Honour Based Violence and Female Genital Mutilation, and Criminal Exploitation.

Our GET SAFE programme is an innovative and child-focused approach to tackling the many forms of Child Exploitation. We are a learning partnership and GET SAFE has been shaped not only by agencies and professionals, but also by the children and young people whose lives we must all strive to make safer and better. The GET SAFE Partnership is committed to tackling Child Exploitation and supporting victims and their families who experience this.

It is also important to recognise that GET SAFE is not just about working with those children and young people at risk of significant harm from exploitation. The GET SAFE programme is designed to work across the levels of need as set out in the Worcestershire Multi Agency Levels of Need document (see **Figure 1** below). As well as statutory intervention for those at risk of greatest harm, GET SAFE also involves supporting those at risk of exploitation via our local early help offer with a number of agencies working together to safeguard the child from exploitation, or a single agency providing support to reduce the risk from potentially exploitative situations. Finally, at a universal level, all services should be working to keep all children and young people safe from exploitation through support, education and early identification.

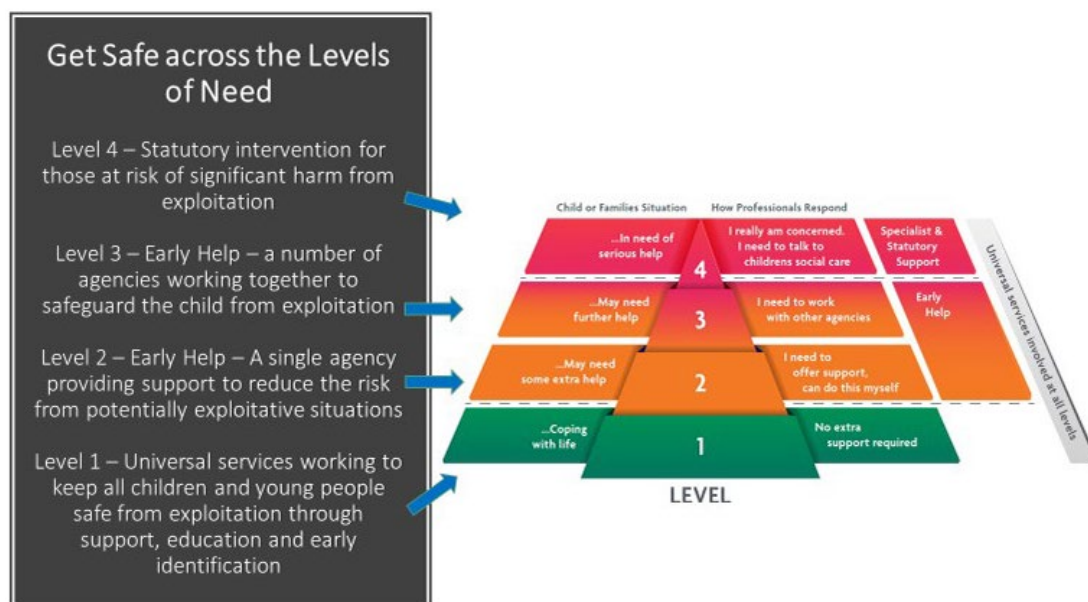


Figure 1

Further information on the Worcestershire Multi Agency Levels of Need document can be found here (<https://www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Levels-of-Need-Document.pdf>).

WSCB Period – (April–September 2019)

The concept of broadening the focus of the partnership from child sexual exploitation to wider forms of exploitation under the GET SAFE banner was introduced in 2018, and during the period to which this report applies Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board worked hard to turn this concept into the well developed framework that we now have.

Between April and September 2019 partners agreed the terms of reference and membership for the new GET SAFE Partnership Board, in July the GET SAFE action plan was developed and agreed and within that plan the development of the GET SAFE pathway continued. In addition to the transition to new arrangements on a strategic level, Board partners continued to strengthen the more tactical aspects of Worcestershire's response to exploitation, for example an update to the Worcestershire Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Pathway and development of a wider exploitation screening tool.

This work meant the GET SAFE framework could be formally launched in June 2019, through a comprehensive social media campaign and briefings to partners. With the Education sector having such an important role in protecting young people from exploitation, school and college representatives supported this launch by sharing information across our educational settings.

Progress and Achievements

The GET SAFE Partnership Group and linked GET SAFE Operational Group have both been very active during 2019/2020, and the achievements of partners within these groups can be summarised as follows;

- We have developed a new 'linked' GET SAFE Assessment.
- We have developed a GET SAFE portal for practitioners to refer any concerns using the GET SAFE assessment tool.
- We have produced a practitioner's guide which can be used to help complete the GET SAFE risk assessment; **Child Exploitation I Assessment Tool Practice Guide**.
- We now have a Get Safe Response Pathway to guide practitioners in their response to concerns; (<https://www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/7.-GET-SAFE-response-pathway.docx>)
- We have promoted GET SAFE on a regional and national stage.
- We have published the 2020-2022 GET SAFE Strategy document; (<https://www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/3.-WSCP-Child-Exploitation-Strategy-2020-2022-V02.pdf>)
- We have maintained a virtual library of information for professionals, accessible via an updated GET SAFE website.
- Multi-agency child criminal exploitation training has been funded by the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and is now being delivered within Worcestershire.
- Through the West Midlands PCC, funding has been received for a GET SAFE Community Worker, who will work with those children and young people within the 'amber' risk cohort. This funding is to run for a twelve month period beginning 1st November 2020.

- Through the Youthscape Project which has recently been launched with Lottery Community Funds and in partnership with six member organisations and positive activities providers, Young Solutions are now running a Youth Loneliness Project in each District of Worcestershire. As part of the digital element of the project the providers are working with their members on local issues including GET SAFE. Young Solutions have also just started a phone survey of members and have included a question on GET SAFE in the questionnaire to capture as much information as possible.

Evidence of Impact

As a result of the development of the processes to tackle child criminal exploitation in Worcestershire, the multi-agency GET SAFE team can now see new GET SAFE risk assessments in the portal daily and they meet to look at the needs of newly referred young people once a week within the MASH (multi-agency safeguarding hub), with any required Child Protection responses having already taken place outside of this meeting. The response pathway and GET SAFE flags are decided upon within this meeting which in turn informs the initial response to that young person.

That response is based on a contextual approach to tackling child criminal exploitation, a concept which underpins the GET SAFE process. A '4P' plan is developed for every child identified as being at risk of child criminal exploitation. This plan covers the areas of **Prepare, Prevent, Protect, Pursue** with the appropriate agencies contributing to each element, so ensuring that the risks are not just tackled from the perspective of the victim, but also activity is undertaken to target and disrupt any offender(s) and address any ongoing risks at locations linked to the case such as outdoor areas, businesses or schools.

These enhanced multi-agency processes for identification, assessment, planning and response have had a positive impact on the timeliness and effectiveness of our collective response to children and young people at risk of exploitation within Worcestershire.

Voice of the Child/Family

The GET SAFE Partnership Group received a report which brought together the learning from four separate surveys of young people within Worcestershire who had experience of or been vulnerable to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

The report analysed the feedback provided by these young people and outlined the key messages from partners' engagement with them, giving services the opportunity to learn from these young peoples' experiences. The report also set out what support young people thought would help reduce their vulnerability to CSE and fed back on some of the existing services and support in Worcestershire that are contributing to tackling this issue.

The key messages from this report were;

- Child Exploitation cannot be solved in isolation. Effective information sharing, education and service development is essential to the protection of children.
- Relationships are key to engagement – engagement and trust-building are the foundation of direct work. Involving young people in setting the agenda and pace of direct work can facilitate engagement.
- The role of a trusted adult is critical for young people to discuss their experiences of exploitation.
- Children need to understand exploitation and the different ways this can happen, this needs to be relevant to their experiences in society.
- Enabling resilience, growth and recovery is one of the main aims of all support work and is only possible when a relationship has been established and the young person's safety has increased so that they are in a more stable environment.
- Parents and carers should be seen as safeguarding partners and provided with support. Young people and their families need support to be able to strengthen and rebuild their relationships with each other.

The feedback from these young people has been used to support the development of good practice within Worcestershire and the GET SAFE agenda across partner agencies. Further, future surveys are to be expanded to capture the voice of the child in all areas of child exploitation in line with the GET SAFE agenda.

Finally, through school's involvement with GET SAFE a leaflet was designed by pupils at a local school providing information for other children and young people on recognising GET SAFE risks and how to keep safe (**Figure 2** below).



Figure 2

Areas for Development

Although the GET SAFE programme has brought significant improvements to our multi-agency approach to responding to child criminal exploitation within Worcestershire, the partnership recognises that we can still improve how we approach this complex area, so better safeguard our children and young people. In the coming twelve month period we will;

- Continue to develop our understanding of exploitation in Worcestershire to inform multi-agency responses and disruption activity.
- Continue to increase the knowledge and understanding of exploitation across our multi-agency workforce and community services to support early identification of risk and knowledge of how to respond.
- Build on our early identification and engagement work with young people to keep them safe and aware of the risks in their communities and online using a contextual safeguarding approach. This work will be supported by the Climb programme and Community Link Workers.
- Continue to promote multi agency learning on the impact and effectiveness of our interventions, support and response to exploitation in Worcestershire, and how we can continue to build on and strengthen this. In doing this we will learn from what children and young people are telling us about the services we provide.
- Develop a transition pathway for young people into adulthood where there is continued vulnerability and risk and the need for ongoing service provision.

Full information on the GET SAFE programme can be found via the following link;

<https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/getsafe>

9. The Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures Group

As a partnership we are committed to service development and consider ourselves a 'learning partnership'. The role of the Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures Group (QAPP) is to support this commitment by delivering a multi-agency programme of Quality Assurance through focusing on three key areas, these being audits, service user feedback and key performance indicators (**Figure 3**). The findings from these activities, along with any identified areas of learning from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Sub-Group informs the multi-agency programme of learning.

The QAPP is currently chaired by Dan Adams who is the Principal Social Worker and Group Manager for Safeguarding Quality Assurance with Worcestershire Children First.



Figure 3

The QAPP is structured to work on a quarterly cycle, as follows;

Quarterly Meeting 1:

- Review the QAPP Dashboard/Data
- Identify audit activity based on the dashboard information
- Review learning/findings from previous audits

Quarterly Meeting 2:

- Policies and Procedures
- Learning and Development

Quarterly Meeting 3:

- Audit Activity meeting. This is either as a group, identified agencies or single agency audit, and covers the audit work completed by agencies against the theme identified in meeting 1.
- QAPP is therefore scheduled to meet monthly, although it has reverted to bi-monthly meetings since April 2020 in response to the WSCP Executive decision at that time to suspend multi-agency audit activity in recognition of the impact and additional demands placed on partner agencies in responding to Covid-19. This decision is being kept under constant review.

Progress and Achievements

Development of Dashboard

The QAPP Group has established a core set of multi-agency Key Performance Indicators and these tell the journey of the child through the safeguarding system from Early Help to Child Protection. These are reviewed and monitored within QAPP, key areas are then identified, and fed back to partner agencies.

A key area of focus has been the increase in contacts and referrals at the Family Front Door. QAPP has regularly reviewed the data trends and the partnership agreed a communication strategy to be disseminated within individual agencies. This emphasised the need for professionals to review the Levels of Need Guidance and discuss possible referrals with their agency safeguarding leads, promotion of individual agencies own Early Help offer and the wider communication of the availability of Early Help Services such as Starting Well, Healthy Minds and Reach 4 Wellbeing.

Auditing

The second area of our Framework is multi-agency audits. Although the QAPP audit activity has been disrupted by the pandemic, we have still been able to undertake some focused multi-agency audits, albeit not to the scale that would have been completed, these have been:

- Family Front Door Strategy Discussions (Police, Education, Health & Social Care).
- Police Contacts (Police & Social Care).
- Education Referrals/Thresholds (Education & Social Care).

The next audit phase was to focus on the quality of referrals to the Family Front Door. Unfortunately however, this audit was placed on hold as a result of the increasing demand on partners' resources as the impact of Covid increased. That said, as a result of the increasing number of referrals since March 2020 and the decrease in the proportion meeting threshold for intervention significant focus from QAPP has remained on improving the quality of these referrals to the Family Front Door.

As a result of audit activity during 2018 and 2019 issues in relation to recording and invitations to strategy discussions were identified in January 2020. The Worcestershire Health and Care Trust were able to update QAPP on the addition of a public health nurse to the Worcestershire Family Front Door, and the very positive impact this was having to address learning from that audit activity.

QAPP has also worked to strengthen links between the work of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Group and its own audit work. Two recent serious case reviews have resulted in actions to check that the learning from those reviews has reached practitioners across agencies. The QAPP has therefore developed an on-line questionnaire which has been distributed within the relevant agencies to audit the extent to which learning has been embedded.

Learning & Development

QAPP has reviewed the multi-agency training guidance, which is provided to assist agencies in the development and management of their own child safeguarding training programme. This guidance is now available on the partnership website.

The QAPP Group has mapped out the key areas of the learning and development opportunities for the partnership, and following the initial disruption to delivery as a result of Covid, we have resumed our training offer, with courses being delivered through virtual platforms such as Webcast and Microsoft Teams.

QAPP Group members have been involved in the planning and offer of the following multi-agency training opportunities;

- 1. Levels of Need Guidance/decision making** – This course is designed to support practitioners in the correct use of the Worcestershire Levels of Need guidance to support quality referral and intervention at the appropriate level, and high quality referrals to the Family Front Door. It is being presented jointly by Children Social Care, Police and Health representatives.
- 2. Management of Allegations** – This course is delivered with the support of the Worcestershire Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- 3. Signs of Safety** – Introducing practitioners to this model of assessment, QAPP members reported positive feedback from attendees as it supports their work at children's multi-agency meetings. Feedback from schools was that this training was of particular help as it promoted commonality of language between partners at multi-agency meetings.

Feedback from courses....

"well delivered" "Found the trainer had a very engaging tone, didn't feel spoke at, but well taught" "liked the variation of being in small groups and presenting to others"

"the virtual learning environment was effective in meeting the learning outcomes" "format of the presentation was good" "slido enabled interaction" "the officers did really well and had obviously planned the webinar effectively to protect the speakers"

"Thank you for the power-point from this morning's training. It was very insightful, informative, and useful" and "It helps me to understand the right steps that are taken when an allegation is made"

QAPP is now developing a fourth learning opportunity for partners, this covers multi-agency meetings which will include the legal frameworks, how to prepare, how to present key information and individual agency responsibilities within the meeting and on-going plans. This offer will include briefing leaflets for partners on Child Protection, Children Looked After and Child in Need meetings and pathways and will be delivered alongside multi-agency workshops.

Learning from Serious Case Reviews

In response to the need for reassurance that learning from two recent serious case reviews has reached practitioners and been embedded into practice, QAPP members developed an online survey for staff to complete. This survey, which has been circulated among partner agencies, explores practitioners' knowledge of the Mental Capacity Act when applied to 16 and 17 year olds, and consideration of parental alcohol use within assessment processes. Results from this questionnaire are still awaited at the time of writing.

Audit of Partner's Safeguarding Arrangements

The Children Act 2004 places on a statutory footing the obligation for named agencies and individuals to co-operate to safeguard children and promote their welfare. Section 11 of the Act makes clear to whom this duty applies and indicates that they must make arrangements for ensuring that 'their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children'. The Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership published arrangements sets out the functions of the partnership, one of which is to 'Review and evaluate effectiveness of multi-agency practice in relation to high-quality and timely decision making, assessment and planning to protect children from harm'. The 'Section 11' audit of individual partners safeguarding arrangements is an important contribution to this.

The last Section 11 audit of agencies in Worcestershire was completed in 2018. The partnership recognised that a further audit was needed, but that it should also acknowledge the current demands on partner agencies as a result of Covid-19. To balance these competing requirements, an online version of the Section 11 audit has been developed by QAPP members which focuses on five key areas of practice within each agency. This has now been circulated to partner agencies for completion.

Policies and Procedures

A key area of QAPP Group work is ensuring the partnership has the right multi-agency policies and procedures. These are available to all partners through the West Midlands Safeguarding Procedures website, accessible through the following link; <https://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/>

During this period, QAPP members have completed focused work on the following policies:

- i. Self-Harm and Suicidal Behaviour
- ii. Children Missing Education
- iii. Exploitation Procedure

There has been partnership expertise provided through QAPP to inform and develop these policies from the Safeguarding Education Lead, the Children Missing Education Lead Officer, the Designated Doctor, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust, CAHMS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services), and Police.

Evidence of Impact

Evidence of the impact of the QAPP work is contained within the information on progress and achievements as set out above and will be further supported by the responses to the various audit activities once received.

The data set used by QAPP has been able to identify the changes in the volume and appropriateness of referrals from partner agencies into the Family Front Door over this twelve month period, which has in turn informed the response of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership via the QAPP Group to these changes.

Voice of the Child/Family

Service user feedback is the third strand of our quality assurance framework and as such we have developed and agreed a set of questions to hear families feedback on experiencing multi-agency working; we are undertaking a targeted piece of work through QAPP where we will seek feedback from families who have accessed individual agencies Early Help offer. To do this QAPP has developed an online survey for families who receive a service in relation to child safeguarding to capture feedback on their personal experience of the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements on an individual level. An online approach was decided upon after consultation with parents, who said they would prefer this method of feedback to being asked in person. Parents have also asked for feedback on how their answers are used to influence practice.

QAPP has also completed a group mapping exercise to identify opportunities for multi-agency service user feedback. Each representative reported on how their own agency captures feedback from the families they are working with and from this exercise it was clear that feedback is specific and pertains to their own agency involvement.

QAPP recognised the need to identify appropriate opportunities to seek feedback from children and families that properly reflected the quality of the multi-agency response they had received from their own perspectives. Within current practices, case file audits and thematic Child Protection Conference feedback provide such opportunities, and QAPP have therefore included a question on the impact of multi-agency working to the service user feedback section of the case file audit template, with QAPP to identify the appropriate agency to seek service user feedback from the family.

As a result of the above mapping exercise the Worcestershire Children First case file audits now include an audit area on partnership working and a question to families about their experiences of partnership working. Further, service user feedback from child protection conferences will be undertaken twice annually, with a targeted focus on partnership working.

Areas for Development

Quality and application of the Levels of Need Guidance for contacts to the Family Front Door –

QAPP members will continue to work to address the decrease in the proportion of contacts to the Family Front Door that meet threshold by promoting awareness of the threshold guidance and early help offer.

Audits – Ensure our audit programme is consolidated and we consistently complete multi-agency audits, and that learning is shared across the partnership.

Service User Feedback – Embed our approach to Service User Feedback and ensure a consistent approach to this. We must then be confident that what children and families are telling us about our practice is used to inform improvements in our multi-agency safeguarding practice.

Learning & Development – Continue to develop our multi-agency learning and development opportunities in line with requirements as identified from audit activity and child safeguarding practice reviews.

Section 11 Audit and survey of practitioner learning from recent serious case reviews – The QAPP group will need to analyse the results from this audit work and provide the appropriate support to address any identified areas for development.

Our Next Steps

1. Completion of the Section 11 Audit and develop our findings and action plan.
2. Continued scrutiny and focus using our Key Performance Indicators on multi-agency practice.
3. Review the accessibility and effectiveness of the Worcestershire Early Help Offer including Covid learning.
4. Targeted Service User Feedback by partners where families have accessed their early help offer/support.
5. Continued offer of the Learning and Development opportunities and development and launch of multi-agency meeting briefings and workshops.
6. Multi-agency audit programme which includes:
 - a. Family Front Door strategy discussions.
 - b. Education audit on referrals/thresholds.
 - c. GP's referrals into Early Help.
 - d. Safeguarding Babies Programme.

10. The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Group oversees the management of rapid review processes and the commissioning of child safeguarding practice reviews within Worcestershire. The CSPR Group is also responsible for ensuring that child safeguarding practice reviews are completed to a high standard and within agreed timescales, and that the recommendations and learning resulting from these reviews are fully implemented. The CSPR Group is chaired by Ellen Footman who is Head of Quality and Safeguarding, Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Adults and Children with the NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group.

There is a very clear criteria for when rapid reviews and child safeguarding practice reviews should be completed, and these are set out in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (July 2018). These reviews are undertaken when a child has died or been seriously harmed, and abuse or neglect is known or suspected. Child safeguarding practice reviews are not inquiries into how a child died or was seriously harmed or about who is culpable. The purpose of a review is to identify any learning from these cases and then use that learning to improve both individual agency and multi-agency working to more effectively safeguard children, for example through policy development and the commissioning of multi-agency training.

As part of the CSPR Group's responsibility for reviews, members also consider national reviews when published and any implications their recommendations may have for safeguarding practice within Worcestershire.

WSCB Period – (April–September 2019)

The WSCB Serious Case Review (SCR) sub-group continued to meet and manage serious case reviews and learning reviews within Worcestershire until it formally transferred that responsibility to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Group in July 2019. During that period the SCR sub-group developed the terms of reference for the new CSPR Group, continued to support the implementation of the Regional CSPR and rapid review procedures and embed learning from serious case reviews within the multi-agency workforce. This work was continued within the new CSPR group, and details of this are set out below.

In July 2019 Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board completed two serious case reviews. A summary of the learning from each of these reviews can be found via the following links;

Serious Case Review 'Hetty' – <https://www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Summary-of-the-learning-in-respect-of-the-death-of-Hetty.pdf>

Serious Case Review 'Isaac' – <https://www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Isaac-Serious-Case-Review.pdf>

During this period a learning review that had not met the criteria as a serious case review was also completed and published. The learning from this review, 'Harry', can be found here;

<https://www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Briefing-14-Learning-from-a-case-review-Harry.pdf>

Progress and Achievements

This year the CSPR Group have conducted three rapid reviews under the new arrangements which has resulted in the commissioning of one child safeguarding practice review. This review is ongoing, the timetable having been disrupted by the restrictions resulting from the pandemic and the impact on partner agencies capacity and availability during the periods of greatest demand. This review has now resumed as a result of partners agreeing an innovative approach to multi-agency practitioner learning events which allows for wide partnership engagement, discussion and challenge using a virtual forum.

The CSPR Group has continued to implement learning from previous serious case reviews which were completed prior to the introduction of the new arrangements. Examples of this work include the development and distribution of a learning briefing for practitioners covering the Mental Capacity Act 2005, and specifically the relevance of that legislation to 16 and 17 year olds. A copy of that learning briefing can be found here; (<https://www.safeguardingworcestershires.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Childrens-MCA-Learning-Briefing.pdf>).

In response to learning from another serious case review, the CSPR Group commissioned and supported the review of the multi-agency pre-birth pathway. The updated pathway can be found here; (<https://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/local-content/0gjN/pre-birth-unborn-tools-and-pathways/?b=Worcestershire>)

With the introduction of the new arrangements in October 2019, developing the links between the various sections of the arrangements has been an important part of the ongoing work. The CSPR Group now works closely with the Quality Practice and Procedures Group (QAPP) to share the learning from reviews to inform the multi-agency learning and development programme. The QAPP Group is also responsible for audit work and this now includes activities to ensure that learning from reviews has been embedded within partner agencies and has reached those who work directly with children and their families.

Links have also been established between the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB) to ensure that arrangements are in place to promote shared learning between the two partnerships.

Evidence of Impact

Working with the QAPP Group, the first of the online questionnaires for practitioners has been developed and circulated. This will provide a very strong indication of the effectiveness of the dissemination of learning from recent serious case reviews and child safeguarding practice reviews by checking practitioners' awareness and understanding of the areas of learning, for example in relation to the Mental Capacity Act, and therefore the impact on practice across the wider partnership. This questionnaire has been shared within all partner agencies, and the responses will be used to identify where further work is needed to ensure that learning does reach those working with children, young people and families.

Voice of the Child/Family

Within any child safeguarding practice review it is essential that the views of the child and family feature strongly within the process and are reflected within the final report and conclusions. The CSPR Group ensure that the engagement with families is central to the review and that their views are properly reflected within the final report.

Areas for Development

Learning from child safeguarding practice reviews – Responding to the results of the multi-agency audit of learning from reviews will form an important part of the work for the CSPR Group over the next year as it is fundamental to the value of any review process.

Efficiency of child safeguarding practice review processes – The need to change the way in which we work as a result of the pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to explore how we can conduct certain aspects of the review process whilst minimising the impact on partners' time and resources via the use of remote technology. There is now an opportunity to make such efficiencies permanent where we are confident they do not impact on the quality of the review.

11. Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) currently has two child safeguarding practice reviews (CSPR's) in progress. Both reviews are being overseen by the Worcestershire Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group on behalf of the WSCP.

In relation to the first review, the independent reviewer was commissioned in November 2019 and the review was progressing as normal until March 2020 when it was placed on hold as a result of the Covid restrictions and the impact on front line services in responding to increased operational demand. The decision has since been taken to recommence this review, a virtual learning event for practitioners involved in the case has now been held, and it is anticipated that this review will be published in early 2021.

In relation to the second review, the decision to commission a CSPR into this case was only taken in late August 2020. The terms of reference, which include the timescales for this review and the commissioning process for an independent author have been agreed by the Worcestershire Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group, and the review is now underway.

No serious case reviews or child safeguarding practice reviews have been published since the introduction of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership arrangements.

12. Updates to Published Arrangements

Since the inception of the new arrangements in September 2019, there has been only one change to our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements as originally published.

This change was made in April 2020 when the decision was taken to incorporate the Head Teacher Education Safeguarding Steering Group into the arrangements as a sub-group of the WSCP. Although partners had always sought to involve the Education sector within the arrangements, this has strengthened the partnership links with schools and early years settings in Worcestershire and provided them with greater access to and involvement in the work of the partnership. The partnership believes this better reflects the vital role that education has in safeguarding, which was central to the debate that took place during the consultation phase of the new legislation and their subsequent omission as a safeguarding partner.

Details of the work of the Head Teachers Safeguarding Steering Group are provided below.

13. The Head Teachers Safeguarding Group

The Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group consists of representatives of the seven phases of education settings. The group quality assures the safeguarding work of the education sector across Worcestershire and provides a direct link for that work into the wider safeguarding partnership. The group uses key performance indicators, the Section 175 safeguarding audit returns and direct feedback from schools to understand both the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, and the resulting outcomes for children.

Membership includes representatives from the following schools' areas:

- Early Years
- First Schools
- Independent Schools
- Primary Schools
- Middle Schools
- Secondary Schools
- Further Education
- Special Schools
- Alternative Provision

Progress and Achievements

Although relatively new to the arrangements and having been at the centre of the county's response to Covid-19, the Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group has still been able to make a very positive contribution.

A representative of the Group presented the results of the most recent Section 175 audit to the Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures Group (QAPP), with a 100% return rate from schools. This report covers all areas of safeguarding, but of particular note was that 191 schools were involved in promoting an Early Help offer, with 134 displaying this on their website.

An audit report on schools' attendance at strategy meetings has also been provided, and from this audit further advice has been provided to schools on their attendance and how they can contribute to strategy discussions.

Evidence of Impact

Education representatives have been particularly focused on ensuring the quality of referrals from schools and colleges to the Worcestershire Family Front Door through the correct application of the threshold guidance. Prior to March 2020 the success of this work was evident with over 60% of all referrals from schools meeting the threshold for social work intervention, higher than any other agency. Although that figure has reduced since March during what has been a very challenging period for schools, work is continuing through both the QAPP and Head Teachers Safeguarding Group to ensure a return to the previous level.

Areas for Development

The Head Teachers Safeguarding Group recognise the important role they have in supporting the QAPP Group to increase the proportion of referrals into the Family Front Door (FFD), as significant proportion of the referrals to the FFD are from schools.

In support of this, the Group will also be promoting the use of school Early Help offers and Early Help assessments to ensure support and intervention for families at the appropriate level.

Finally, the Group aim to increase the frequency of the joint Education and Children Social Care FFD auditing process to provide close monitoring of the impact of measures to ensure intervention at the appropriate level of need for the child/young person.

14. Conclusion

This period has been challenging for all safeguarding children partnerships as the impact of the pandemic arrived at a formative time for the new partnerships and before new ways of working could be fully embedded.

That said, it has also provided the opportunity of exploring new approaches to partnership working which we are now keen to make permanent within our arrangements. More regular, focused Executive meetings have improved the timeliness of decision making, conducting rapid reviews and other child safeguarding practice review events via remote conferencing facilities has increased accessibility for partners and simplifies the process of bringing representatives of multi-agencies together. We have also seen how these remote conferencing facilities have been used by others within the Local Authority to brief large numbers of practitioners on various subjects, and the breadth of take up of those. As a partnership we are keen to test that as a means to provide learning briefings in relation to child safeguarding practice review findings.

The wider Worcestershire Safeguarding Children partners have all, both individually and collectively, fully committed to making our safeguarding arrangements work in these most challenging of times. This has meant the WSCP has been able to continue to develop its own effectiveness whilst at the same time, and most importantly, work together to safeguard children and young people across Worcestershire.

Appendix A – WSCP – Budget Details (01/10/19 – 30/09/20)

Income and Expenditure Account for the period 1st October 2019 – 30th September 2020	Budget Board	Training Delivery	SCR Fund	Partnership Trust	Total
	CF0153	CF0154	CF0155	CF0156	
Holding account 30 September 2019	-47,982	-97,851	-18,085	-7,528	-171,446
Income £					
WCC	-82,442	0	0	0	-82,442
Health	-68,704	0	0	0	-68,704
Police	-20,611	0	0	0	-20,611
Total Income	-171,757	0	0	0	-171,757
Expenditure £					
Salaries	92,372	0	0	0	92,372
Independent Chair (estimated and incl)	21,749	0	0	0	21,749
SCR Learning events	0	0	0	0	0
Data Analyst (Paid for Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4)	13,500	0	0	0	13,500
Administration and business costs	7,329	0	0	51	7,380
Recharges (for half year)	0	0	0	0	0
Training Expenditure	-316	18	0	0	-298
Neglect events	460	0	0	0	460
Total Expenditure	135,093	18	0	51	135,162
Net Position at 30/09/2020	-36,664	18	0	51	-36,594
	surplus	deficit	-	deficit	surplus
Holding account 30 September 2020	-47,982	-97,851	-18,085	-7,528	-171,446

PLEASE NOTE: The Holding account balance would be £208,040 if the surplus generated during 01/10/19-30/09/20.



Get Safe

Connecting Services to Keep People Safe