

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 10 MAY 2022

WORCESTERSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

Summary

1. The Independent Chair of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) has been invited to present the WSCP Annual Report 2020-2021 (Appendix 1).

Background

2. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 places 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. Within Worcestershire the three safeguarding partners are supported in fulfilling this responsibility through the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP).
3. The three safeguarding partners are also required to publish a report at least once in every 12-month period detailing their progress. This report should include an update on a number of areas as set out in Chapter 3 of Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018) including how effective the arrangements have been in practice, evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies on outcomes for children and families from early help to looked-after children and care leavers, an analysis of where further progress still needs to be made and ways in which the partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision.
4. The report is made publicly available through publication on the Partnership website. In addition, it will be subject of scrutiny within both the NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group and West Mercia Police and shared with all other relevant partner agencies. There is also a statutory requirement to share this report with both the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care.
5. This is the second annual report published by the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership since it replaced the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board on 30 September 2019.

Partnership arrangements

6. Strategic decision making for the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) takes place within the Executive meeting. The Executive is a

small group made up of the safeguarding partner representatives and chairs of the sub-groups and meets regularly to ensure prompt responses to emerging themes. These meetings are independently chaired. The WSCP Executive also provides the forum for escalation and joint problem solving, for example when Police identified a backlog of referrals within their Harm Assessment Unit, senior partners were able to discuss the current position and the potential impact on other partners and areas of business, offer support and gain reassurance. Similarly, the Executive facilitated a joint problem-solving approach to an escalation from Health colleagues in relation to an aspect of information sharing.

7. During this reporting year there have been a number of national and local developments to which the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) has responded. In May 2021 Sir Alan Wood published his follow up report on the new multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements. As a result of this report the WSCP Executive have agreed to develop high-level indicators for children's safety within Worcestershire, beyond the current management information we gather. Further, the Executive Group has identified a need to strengthen links with other local partnerships to better understand issues being identified in relation to the safety of children and young people within Worcestershire, and their responses.

8. In July 2021 Worcestershire Children First received an Ofsted visit, in line with the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. Worcestershire Children First were praised for the improvements shown in Children's Services, and particularly the strong progress in improving the quality of practice for children and families in receipt of services at its 'Family Front Door'. Ofsted further noted that *"The local authority and wider partnership have planned and delivered a well-coordinated and effective response to the pandemic"*. An example of this was the Safeguarding Babies Programme, led by Worcestershire Children First and supported by the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership, which was introduced in response to national concerns about the increased risk to babies during the Covid period.

GET SAFE

9. During this reporting period the GET SAFE Partnership Group has completed a problem profile of Child Exploitation in Worcestershire, the findings of which will be used to support the effective use of resources, commissioning of services and inform multi-agency training. It has also been used to develop an action plan to build upon the work done during 2019 and 2020 to introduce the GET SAFE approach in Worcestershire. We are seeing the growth of a network of services that support children and young people at risk of exploitation. The West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner supported CLIMB service, local Community Safety Partnership provision for young people, supported by third sector agencies and charities and early help offers within schools and colleges are all contributing to keeping children and young people in Worcestershire safe from exploitation. During 2021 guidance has been developed for professionals working with GET SAFE risks and/or vulnerability for young people aged 16-25 years, so bridging that period into adulthood. Young people from local youth groups in Worcestershire have also been engaged on the design and development of this 16-25-year agenda, the accompanying guidance and the new GET THERE website: [Get There | Worcestershire County Council](#). GET THERE is an important development in the Worcestershire response to exploitation of

young people within this age group to reduce an area of vulnerability which has been long recognised nationally.

Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures Group (QAPP)

10. The WSCP Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures (QAPP) Group has worked extensively to ensure that the Levels of Need Guidance is well understood and properly applied by all agencies prior to any referral, and that the multi-agency child protection processes that support the Family Front Door functions are of a high quality, and this will remain a priority for the group. This group also uses a range of performance indicators to understand the quality of multi-agency practice as the child or young person's case continues through the child protection system and has completed various targeted multi-agency audits to support that understanding and promote learning across the partnership. This work was recognised by Ofsted inspectors, who noted that *"Leaders have established a positive culture of commitment to continuous improvement across this service area, supported by particularly strong quality assurance arrangements."* The QAPP Group has also developed and used an on-line feedback form to capture the experience of families who have received a service from partners, completed an audit of safeguarding arrangements within individual agencies working with children and young people across Worcestershire, and supported the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group in embedding learning from reviews into multi-agency practice.

Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Group

11. This year the Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Group has conducted three rapid reviews of serious cases which have resulted in the commissioning of two child safeguarding practice reviews. These reviews are ongoing. The CSPR Group has also implemented learning from previous serious case reviews and child safeguarding practice reviews, details of which are provided in the main report. In September 2021 the National Review Panel published a report entitled 'The Myth of Invisible Men' which set out the findings from its thematic review on safeguarding children under one from non-accidental injury caused by male carers. As national learning, the local response is being supported by the CSPR Group and will form part of a wider 'Keep Me Safe' strategy.

12. The partnership has published one Child Safeguarding Practice Review during this period. This review, published in April 2021, related to the tragic death of a 17 year old child 'Sarah'. Full details of that review and of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership response to the findings can be found here: [CSPR-Sarah.pdf \(safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk\)](#)

Head Teachers Education Safeguarding Steering Group

13. The Education Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group has supported the links between education settings and the Worcestershire Family Front Door, the development of the yearly audit of safeguarding arrangements in schools, the development of Worcestershire early help processes and their relationship to the work of schools and early help services (which attracted positive feedback from Ofsted), the monitoring of developments in relation to Elective Home Education across the county and any impact of Covid on this, and the development of a safeguarding training pathway and audit for early years settings. In May 2021

Worcestershire was one of the areas visited by Ofsted as part of their rapid review of sexual violence and sexual harassment in schools and colleges, prompted by the 'Everyone's Invited' website. The group has supported a comprehensive response to the findings of this review, details of which are provided within the main report.

Conclusion

14. With the ongoing national focus on the safeguarding of children and young people, and current reviews into both individual safeguarding incidents and overall structures and approaches (the transition from Clinical Commissioning Groups to Integrated Care Systems, and the HM Government commissioned independent review of children's social care being two examples) the next twelve months will be a time of significant change for child safeguarding partnerships. Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership will need to ensure that all agencies continue to work together to develop our multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements, and to ensure we use the learning from these various reviews to strengthen the way in which we safeguard and protect children and young people. Further, we need to focus on those arrangements continuing to work effectively and remain connected as individual agencies embed these national changes within their own services.

Purpose of the Meeting

15. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- consider the information in the report
- determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny, and
- agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 - Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020/21 available via the following link: [Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020 - 2021 \(safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk\)](https://safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk/Annual-Report-2020-2021)

Contact Points

Alyson Grice/Alison Spall, Overview and Scrutiny Officers Tel: 01905 844962/846607
Email: scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children's Services) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.