

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

23 MAY 2023

WORCESTERSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP – ANNUAL REPORT 2021 - 2022

Board Sponsor

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Author

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Priorities

This report is relevant to the following Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prevention & inequalities | <input type="checkbox"/> Homes, Communities & Places |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mental Health & Wellbeing | <input type="checkbox"/> Jobs & Opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy Living at All Ages | |

Safeguarding

This report has a direct impact on safeguarding children or adults. Yes - Children

Yearly update on how agencies are working together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Worcestershire.

Item for Decision, or Information & Assurance

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decision | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information/assurance |
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Recommendation

- 1. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to consider the report and highlight any opportunities for collaboration and support between the Board and the Partnership on shared priorities and future work.**

Executive Summary

2. The introduction of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 placed a responsibility on the three safeguarding partners in each area, these being the local authority, the local Integrated Care Board and the chief officer of police, to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.
3. The three safeguarding partners are required to publish a report at least once in every 12-month period detailing their progress, and the report should include 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, an analysis of where further progress still needs to be made, a record of decisions and actions taken by the partners in the report's period (or planned to be taken) to implement the recommendations of any local and national child safeguarding practice reviews, including any resulting improvements, and ways in which the partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision. The report is made publicly available and must also be shared with both the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care.

Main content

4. This reporting period has seen significant national scrutiny of how we work together to safeguard children and young people. The tragic deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson led to the publication in May 2022 of the national report "Child Protection in England" report, which makes eight recommendations which are fundamental to how we collectively safeguard and protect children. Further, in May 2022 Josh MacAlister's Independent Review of children's social care was published.

5. In response to these reports the government has now established a cross-departmental Ministerial Group focussed on Child Protection, supported by the newly formed Multi-Agency Safeguarding Partner Performance Board (MASPP). The work of these groups is in its early stages, however it is likely that during the forthcoming reporting period Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership collectively and the safeguarding partners as individual agencies will be asked to consider and manage potentially wide reaching changes across our multi-agency child safeguarding systems.

6. This reporting period has also seen the publication of a number of other reports which carry potential learning for all safeguarding children partnerships. The Solihull Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) report was published in February 2022, followed by the report from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Telford (July 2022), and the final report from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) in October 2022.

7. The National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel has been particularly active during this reporting period. In addition to the national review mentioned above, the Panel has also undertaken a review into safeguarding children with disabilities and complex needs in residential settings, and has published briefing papers covering bruising in non-mobile infants and children, and multi-agency safeguarding and domestic abuse, focusing specifically on children and young people affected by domestic abuse.

What have we done as a Safeguarding Partnership?

8. Following up on the Solihull Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) findings the Independent Chair of Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) wrote to each of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Partners and asked them to provide responses to the specific JTAI findings relevant to their agencies. Comprehensive responses were received from each of the three safeguarding partners which provided that reassurance, full details of which are contained within main report.

9. The WSCP Executive has examined how it can support timely information sharing between agencies, whilst also seeking to improve our position on the proportion of

referrals into the Family Front Door which meet threshold. As a result of these discussions, the safeguarding partners have agreed to fund additional resources within the Worcestershire Family Front Door. These posts will both help to manage Family Front Door referrals, particularly from those agencies with high referral volumes and low conversion rates, and provide administrative support for Operation Encompass notifications to Early Years settings in line with a current national pilot.

10. The national review of the safeguarding of children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings has examined the experiences of 108 children and young adults placed from 55 local authorities, including Worcestershire, at specific settings. A comprehensive response has been provided to the National Panel by Worcestershire Children First and was also shared with the WSCP Executive for reassurance as to the effectiveness of the local follow up.

11. WSCP has continued to develop the dataset used by the Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures (QAPP) Group to monitor the effectiveness of multi-agency contributions to child protection processes by also introducing a similar dataset within the GET SAFE Partnership Group. Also contributing to our increased understanding of child safeguarding in Worcestershire, the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust has completed the development of their WREN report which is now being shared with the WSCP on a regular basis. Further details of both reports are provided in the GET SAFE Partnership Group section of the main report.

12. In relation to strengthening WSCP links with other local partnerships, the safeguarding partners have sought reassurance from both Community Safety Partnerships within Worcestershire as to their approach to considering the need to safeguard children and young people within their current priorities and any future priority setting. Comprehensive reassurance has been provided by both Community Safety Partnerships, and details of this are again provided within the GET SAFE Partnership Group section.

13. Work is also being completed with the Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB) to ensure that the current Worcestershire Child Exploitation processes align with the Complex Adult Risk Management (CARM) Framework being introduced by colleagues within the Adults Board.

14. In relation to online exploitation across Worcestershire, processes for the sharing of information by Police with Children Social Care prior to enforcement action, normally the execution of a warrant at a home address, have been reviewed and support systems developed for children and parents after online Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) warrants have been completed. This is to minimise the potential impact on innocent occupants who do not have access to the Criminal Justice care process.

15. Keeping children safe online remains a complex area for professionals, with a significant proportion of all offenders coming to the notice of Police being under the age of eighteen and linked with watching extreme online content, and there continues to be an increasing demand generally across all forms of online exploitation and abuse.

16. As part of the follow up to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review 'Sarah', published in August 2021, a multi-agency audit has been completed which demonstrated that child protection procedures are followed and strategy meetings are convened appropriately with the correct agencies in attendance, and that missing intervention or MACE meetings are not being used in place of child protection procedures, but instead complement them. Learning from this audit has been passed to the GET SAFE Operational Group to

progress and a short briefing has been produced which is available on the WSCP website and can be viewed here: [GET SAFE - Using Child Protection Procedures in Child Exploitation Cases \(office.com\)](#)

17. There have been a number of different initiatives organised during this reporting period designed to engage with young people on GET SAFE and GET THERE, including successful events run at the Malvern Theatre and the Swan Theatre in Worcester by the GET SAFE Team working with Ready Steady Worcestershire, the Steer Clear initiative which delivers workshops to young people and their families about the dangers of carrying knives, and a visit to Worcestershire of the Knife Angel, which is the National Monument Against Violence and Aggression. Further, inputs to over six thousand Year 9 and Year 10 pupils about the Steer Clear programme are being planned. Finally, The GET SAFE Team have also been taking part in the Anti-Violence Bee tour of Worcestershire, which is an initiative aimed at educating and engaging with young people about the dangers of carrying weapons.

18. The WSCP Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures (QAPP) Group has also supported the embedding of the learning from the 'Sarah' review. A set of questions designed to clarify how individual agencies had responded to the recommendations from this review was circulated, and from the various responses WSCP were able to secure assurance that the learning from the 'Sarah' child safeguarding practice review has been acted upon by local agencies across Worcestershire, and examples of the detailed responses received are provided within the full report.

19. The QAPP Group has also completed a multi-agency audit of the services provided to children with special educational needs and disabilities. This audit considered the children's experiences of those services and how they have had their voices heard and responded to and followed the Joint Target Area Inspection (JTAI) methodology. The audit returns identified a number of areas of good practice within the work of the various agencies, however as with all multi-agency audits, areas for improvement were also identified. A learning briefing was produced and circulated to practitioners, and can be read here: [Multi-Agency Audit: Voice of the Child and SEND \(office.com\)](#)

20. The QAPP Group has also reviewed the experiences of children when there has been initial identification of need and risk. All the children subject of the audit had a recent Family Front Door referral that progressed to Strategy Discussion and Section 47 Assessment with an outcome of an Initial Child Protection Conference. Overall, this audit evidenced assurance of the correct decisions and actions being taken to safeguard children, appropriate information sharing and partnership engagement.

21. In addition to its work in the above areas, the QAPP Group has continued to monitor the journey of the child through the safeguarding system from Early Help to Child Protection using our core set of multi-agency key performance indicators.

22. This year the Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Group has completed six rapid reviews which has resulted in the commissioning of one child safeguarding practice review. This review is ongoing. In each case the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel has agreed with the decision of the WSCP Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group.

23. The CSPR Group has continued its work to implement learning from both national and local reviews and an example of this is the development of a 'Keep Me Safe' Strategy. This strategy has now been completed and is available on the NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Service website

[\(Keep Me Safe Strategy 2022 09 26.pdf \(hwics.org.uk\)\)](#). It outlines the agreed priorities, aims and objectives for the period 2022-2025. Those priorities are informed by emerging themes or concerns, identified from local and national reviews or through the child death overview process. As part of this work the first local guidance document, 'Keep Me Safe when I am Sleeping' is nearing completion and will be available to practitioners across Herefordshire and Worcestershire shortly. This work also supports a recommendation from the most recent Herefordshire and Worcestershire Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) report (April 2019 – March 2021) in relation to the clarity of safer sleeping advice available to professionals. The next strand of the 'Keep Me Safe' Strategy, is 'Keep Me Safe when I am Crying', which will aim to reduce serious harm to babies as a result of shaking.

24. The partnership has published one Child Safeguarding Practice Review during this period. This review, published in September 2022, related to the sad death of a six week old baby. The review can be read in full here: [CSPR - Baby D \(safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk\)](#).

25. The Education Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group has continued to contribute positively to the work of the wider safeguarding partnership. Tackling child-on-child abuse has remained an area of focus for this subgroup. In last year's report we highlighted the ongoing audit of specific cases where young people had reported child-on-child abuse. This has now been completed and learning briefings have been developed for professionals. These have been circulated across all agencies via our WSCP newsletter ([Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership - September 2022 Newsletter \(office.com\)](#)) and was also disseminated to all schools and colleges via the Worcestershire Education Safeguarding Team. It is of note that Worcestershire's response to concerns raised following the 'Everyone's Invited' website in early 2021 has been recognised within the national follow up report "*Multi-Agency Response to Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Learners: emerging practice*" published in July 2022 ([DfE external document template \(govdelivery.com\)](#)).

26. One of the priorities for this subgroup in this reporting period was to promote system learning from Ofsted complaints. In response to this a briefing on key learning themes from complaints received via Ofsted has been produced and circulated to head teachers.

27. The Education Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group has also focused on the relationship between education settings and the Worcestershire Family Front Door and the need to promote the knowledge and understanding of the Levels of Need Guidance through regular joint audit activity and clear guidance and dissemination of learning. From September 2021 a system of multi-agency auditing has been developed to examine cases which have been referred to the Worcestershire Family Front Door from education settings, but which have then been assessed as having a level one or level two outcome.

28. Activity within the partnership to capture the voice of children and families is monitored within the Executive Group via regular reporting by the various subgroups on their activities in this area. A report from the Association of Safeguarding Partners (TASP) recommended that good independent scrutiny of local child safeguarding arrangements should include opportunities for children and young people to lead or co-lead safeguarding initiatives focused on improving outcomes for children. The safeguarding partners have therefore written to the Worcestershire Youth Cabinet requesting an opportunity to discuss this further. This is an area for development in the coming reporting period.

29. In addition to the audit work and learning briefing in the area of children with special educational needs and disabilities (covered in the QAPP Group section of this report), our audit which focused on identification of need and risk also incorporated a multi-agency feedback survey with the families of the children and young people involved. Overall, we saw the majority of families reporting positives in respect of multi-agency working and how partners work together to support families when children are identified as being at risk of harm and child protection planning is required.

30. All the above activity is funded jointly by Worcestershire Children First, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire and West Mercia Police. Since the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership was formed in September 2019 the three safeguarding partners have been able to retain contributions at the same level, and indeed suspend those contributions during the Covid period. Due to the recent general increase in costs however, the partners have taken the decision to increase their individual contributions by 2% for the forthcoming financial period.

Conclusion

31. There has been a great deal of positive work completed across all of the partnership's subgroups, and we can say with confidence that we have a far stronger understanding of the effectiveness of our multi-agency work to keep children and young people safe. We have also identified areas where further improvements are possible, and we will continue to focus on these.

32. With the current volume of national reviews, learning and recommendations, it is important that Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership remains focused on those aspects that can add real value to our local responses to children and young people who are suffering, or at risk of harm, and the families and carers who are trying to support them. The need to make clear and informed decisions on what we prioritise within our partnership will be vital to ensure the work of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership remains effective during a period which will undoubtedly bring competing demands and expectations.

33. During the 2023/24 period we will continue our work and commitment to our programme of activity through our Executive and subgroups, our partnership news bulletins and annual partnership meeting.

Impact on health disparities

34. The work of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership is not directly focused on reducing health disparities generally or within specific groups or communities.

Legal, financial and HR implications

35. None

Contact point and partnership working

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Background Papers

36. In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Worcestershire Children First) the background paper to this report is the full Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Annual Report October 2021 – September 2022, which can be found via the following link: <https://www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/WSCP-Annual-Report-Oct-2021-Sept-2022.pdf>