

# Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership

Annual Report

2021 - 2022



**STAY · SAFE**  
**WORCESTERSHIRE**

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

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# 1. Foreword


It is again with great pleasure that I introduce our annual report for the period October 2021 to September 2022. As many of you will be aware, this twelve month period has brought significant scrutiny of how we keep children and young people safe in this country. Much of this has quite rightly been prompted by the tragic deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes in Solihull, and Star Hobson in Bradford. The National Review commissioned in relation to these two cases was published in May 2022 and makes recommendations which are fundamental to how we collectively safeguard and protect children.

In addition to the above review, we have seen the publication of Josh MacAlister's Independent Review of children's social care, also in May 2022, and a number of briefing and review papers from the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel which aim to improve multi-agency responses to perennial challenges within child protection.

There will no doubt be an expectation that safeguarding children's partnerships continue to perform a key role in ensuring that the inevitable changes that result from these and other reviews will be implemented effectively within their respective areas. These changes are likely to be numerous and complex and will need to be addressed concurrently with our safeguarding partners also working to meet the most recent budgetary challenges across the public sector, and the increased demand for services on agencies, particularly our health colleagues.

I am confident however that all our partners within the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership will welcome the opportunities these changes provide, recognising as they do that their priority is to make and keep our children and young people safe. I am also confident that with the current strength of the working relationship between our local agencies and the commitment and positivity that we see from all involved, Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership is in a very strong position to ensure the most effective response is provided at a local multi-agency level to the challenges ahead.

On behalf of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership, I would once again like to extend my thanks to our colleagues across all agencies who have shown, and continue to show such commitment to supporting children and families within Worcestershire.



**Steve Eccleston,  
Independent Chair  
Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership**

## 2. Executive Summary

The period covered by this report is one in which there has been 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. This review followed up on a government commitment to review the children’s social care system to make sure children and young people get the support they need.

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.

This reporting period has also seen the publication of a number of other reports, which although specific to particular areas, 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.

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 two briefing papers for safeguarding partnerships, the first covering bruising in non-mobile infants and children and the second 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?

Although the Solihull Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) findings related specifically to Solihull services, they also provided a valuable opportunity to secure reassurance from Worcestershire partners as to the effectiveness of our own partnership approach locally. The Independent Chair of Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) therefore 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 this report.

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 also provide administrative support for Operation Encompass notifications to Early Years settings, in line with a current national pilot. Developing our local information sharing systems alongside this pilot also helps us to deliver against recommendation 8 of the National Child Safeguarding Panel Review “Child Protection in England”, published in May 2022, which called for specific practice improvements in relation to domestic abuse, and named safeguarding partners as having an important role in this. These posts are to be filled in October 2022, and their impact will be covered in the next yearly report.

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. In August 2022 Directors of Children's Services were asked to respond to two urgent actions which the National Panel believed to be necessary as a result of emergent findings from phase one of the review. The comprehensive response provided to the National Panel by Worcestershire Children First was also shared with the WSCP Executive for reassurance as to the effectiveness of the local follow up.

During this reporting period the WSCP has added to 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 below.

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.

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.

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.

Keeping children safe online remains a complex area for professionals, for example Police recently reported to the GET SAFE Partnership Group that a significant proportion of all offenders coming to the notice of Police are under the age of eighteen and are linked with watching extreme online content, and that there continues to be an increasing demand generally across all forms of online exploitation and abuse.

As part of the follow up to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review 'Sarah', published in August 2021, the GET SAFE Partnership Group has addressed the recommendation that WSCP should seek assurance from relevant partners that child protection procedures are being followed and strategy meetings are convened appropriately, with the correct attendance from agencies and that Missing Intervention or Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings must not be used in place of child protection procedures.

The effectiveness of the multi-agency response to this recommendation has been assessed through the 'deep dive' auditing of ten randomly selected red (high risk) cases involving a range of exploitation concerns including child sexual exploitation, multiple missing episodes, county lines, and gang and weapon carrying.

The audit 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. When the risk to the child from exploitation has reached threshold for child protection then the appropriate processes are being used. In conclusion, the practice concerns identified within the "Sarah" case review in relation to these areas have been addressed through the development and introduction of our GET SAFE approach.

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](#))**

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. In March 2022 there was a successful event run at the Malvern Theatre in support of the GET THERE programme. A production was also arranged at the Swan Theatre in Worcester by the GET SAFE Team working with Ready Steady Worcestershire. The Steer Clear initiative has been launched across Worcestershire, which delivers engaging workshops to young people and their families about the dangers of carrying knives. Worcester City Council and West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion arranged for the Knife Angel, which is the National Monument Against Violence and Aggression, to be displayed in Worcester city in support of the Steer Clear message, and 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. The Anti-Violence Bee visited areas across the county throughout November 2022.

The WSCP Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures (QAPP) Group committed to supporting the GET SAFE Partnership Group in embedding 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. These covered areas such as how each organisation had disseminated the learning to their own staff, how they were assuring themselves that the learning had changed practice, how the use of the GET SAFE risk assessment and the understanding of a contextual safeguarding approach was being promoted and its use monitored, and how as an agency they were ensuring that their staff were attending and contributing to children's Looked after Reviews when required to do so. In conclusion, 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 later in this report.

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](#))**

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. The audit also identified however that although strategy discussion minutes were being shared, not all agencies had saved these to their records. Further, on occasions agencies had not liaised or updated information within the assessment between the strategy discussion taking place and the Initial Child Protection Conference. This is learning which those agencies involved have taken from this process and will address internally.

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.

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.

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.

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 \(safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk\)](#)

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 \(office.com\)\)](#)

it was also disseminated to all schools and colleges via the Worcestershire Education Safeguarding Team

The Worcestershire child-on-child abuse policy for educational settings has been updated with a risk assessment tool, and this has become a focus of safeguarding audits within individual schools by the 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 \(govdelivery.com\)\)](#)

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. This includes complaint prevention through school's approaches to the most common themes such as bullying, and opportunities for young people to raise concerns within schools so they can be addressed prior to them reaching the complaint stage.

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. There is evidence that this audit programme and associated learning is making a difference to the quality of referrals to the Family Front Door coming from educational settings. Comparisons between the first and second halves of the year show a 46% reduction in the number of referrals from those education settings audited most frequently.

The subgroup also supports responses across a range of other safeguarding areas, such as Early Help, children and young people affected by domestic abuse, and the risks relating to criminal exploitation. This has led to a strong contribution from education settings to the delivery of early help to children, young people and families across Worcestershire, consistent recording of incidents of child-on-child abuse, and a wider understanding of child criminal exploitation risks amongst those professionals who have most contact with children and young people outside the family, and of the support available via the local GET SAFE and GET THERE frameworks.

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) following their national review of the effectiveness of independent scrutiny of safeguarding children partnerships 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, and how we might use this recommendation to strengthen children and people's involvement within the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership. This is an area for development in the coming reporting period.

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 seven 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 at being at risk of harm and child protection planning is required. It should also be noted that this survey was completed with those families who were at the early stages of involvement as all had recently progressed through strategy discussion to Initial Child Protection Conference, so it is perhaps unsurprising that not all families felt that positive change had been achieved up to that point.

All of the above activity is funded jointly by Worcestershire Children First, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire and West Mercia Police, and details of the individual agency contributions can be found in Appendix A. Since Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's 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

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.

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. 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.

# 3. Introduction

As required by HM Government guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018), Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) has published the arrangements by which they fulfil their statutory responsibilities to child safeguarding. These arrangements can be read in full via the following link:

<https://www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Worcestershire-Safeguarding-Children-Partnership-Plan-Updated-January-2023.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 (now replaced by Integrated Care Boards) 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 Associate Director for Nursing and Quality (Safeguarding) NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire;
- 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 Partnership report covered the period 1st October 2020 to 30th September 2021 and can be found using the following link:

[Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020 - 2021 \(safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk\)](https://www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk)

# 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 2021, the population of Worcestershire was estimated to be around 603,675, an increase of 0.9% from the previous year.

Between 19-24% of the population in each of the six districts are children and young people (0-19 age group). Redditch has the highest proportion with 23.4%.

6.2% of the Worcestershire population is from a minority ethnic group, with the largest proportion (3.1%) 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, the latest available figures (from 2021) show that in Worcestershire 16.5% of children do live in low-income families. The England average is 18.5%.

**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 of 31st December 2022.**



**3,319 Children in Need (National Definition) (1 in 35 children)**



**715 Children in Need (Local Definition) (1 in 165 children)**



**574 Subject of a Child Protection Plan (1 in 207 children)**



**1004 Looked After Children (1 in 118 children)**



**392 Young People are Not in Education, Employment or Training (1 in 32, 16-17 year olds)**



**82 Children Looked After who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (1 in 1,455 children)**



**4,904 Children on Education Health and Care Plans (1 in 33 children & young people)**



**13,483 Children with a Special Educational Need or Disability (1 in 6 school age children)**



**139 Children registered as Missing Education for the academic year 2021/22 (1 in 636)**



**Total Worcestershire 0 - 18 Population - 119,353**

Detailed comparative analysis on the above figures from the previous year and current trends in the data are available within the Worcestershire Children First reporting mechanisms.

## 5. Background

The period covered by this report is one in which there has been 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 by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group in May 2022 of the national report “Child Protection in England”, 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. This review followed up on a government commitment to review the children’s social care system to make sure children and young people get the support they need.

Although these were two separate and distinct reports, their recommendations clearly cannot be considered in isolation. Further, if certain recommendations from these reports are to be adopted then decisions at a government level are required. In recognition of this the government has 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 it will result in Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership collectively and the safeguarding partners as individual agencies being asked to consider and manage potentially wide reaching changes across our multi-agency child safeguarding systems.

This reporting period has also seen the publication of a number of other reports, which although specific to particular areas, carry potential learning for all safeguarding children’s partnerships and therefore have to be considered locally in that context. We have had the publication of the Solihull Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) report in February 2022, and the report from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Telford (July 2022). The learning opportunities from both of these reports for Worcestershire have been considered in depth by the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP), and further details of this will be provided later in this report. Further, in October 2022 the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) published its final report. This is outside the reporting scope of this annual report but will need to be considered in a similar way by the WSCP in the coming year.

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 two briefing papers for safeguarding partnerships, the first covering bruising in non-mobile infants and children and the second multi-agency safeguarding and domestic abuse, focusing specifically on children and young people affected by domestic abuse. Each of these make recommendations which need to be carefully considered in the context of local practice and opportunities for improvement within that.

In addition to national learning and recommendations, WSCP has continued to review specific incidents as required by the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children and draw local learning from those. We remain focused on using that learning to improve the ways in which we work together to safeguard children and young people, and examples of this are provided throughout the report.

# 6. The Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive Group

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 it meets regularly to ensure prompt responses to emerging themes. These meetings are independently chaired.

## Areas of Focus for 2020/2021

The previous WSCP yearly report highlighted that within this reporting period the Executive would be focused on the following areas:

1. ensuring the learning and recommendations from both national and local reviews are used to strengthen the way in which we safeguard and protect children and young people.
2. as individual partners undergo structural changes, our multi-agency arrangements remain connected and continue to be effective.
3. develop high-level indicators for children's safety within Worcestershire and seek to strengthen the WSCP links with other local partnerships.
4. from the parallel national review completed by Kantar Public the Executive will work with the wider partnership agencies to consider what Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership can learn from the findings of the research and how we can use that learning to improve outcomes for children at risk.

## Progress, Achievements and Evidence of Impact

### *1. Using learning and recommendations from national and local reviews to strengthen the way in which we safeguard and protect children and young people.*

In February 2022 the joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) report for Solihull was published. Although the findings related specifically to Solihull services, they also provided a valuable opportunity to secure reassurance from Worcestershire partners as to the effectiveness of our own partnership approach locally. The Independent Chair of WSCP therefore wrote to each of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Partners and asked them to provide responses to the specific JTAI findings relevant to their agencies.

The Chief Executive of Worcestershire Children First and Director of Children's Services was asked to respond to one aspect of the Solihull JTAI findings of particularly relevance to our own local child safeguarding system, that being the need to ensure that there is sufficient multi-agency capacity within the MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) to meet children's needs promptly, and also to confirm that the findings had been noted and actively considered within Worcestershire Children First.

The comprehensive response detailed both the findings and follow up action in relation to the above questions, and in addition set out other activities undertaken by Worcestershire Children First within an internal self-assessment process in response to the published JTAI report.

### **Key points from that response are set out below, (all data relates to position as of April 2022):**

- **Timeliness of decision making of contacts** – Key Performance Indicators tell us that throughout 2020/2021 we have seen a rise in contacts to our Family Front Door consistent with the picture seen regionally and nationally. In 2019/2020 (pre-Covid period) we received 9900 contacts, during 2020/2021 this rose to 13,900. There has been an additional slight rise this year with 14,200 so whilst contacts are stabilising, they are stabilising to post COVID levels only, with on average over 4400 additional contacts this year. Given the substantial rise in contacts received, the timeliness of decision making in the target 24-hour period being

maintained at 80% average is a sustained improvement on the 78% through 2020/2021 and 72% through 2019/2020.

- **Timeliness of assessments** – Key Performance Indicators tell us that the Family Front Door has undertaken 2,857 social work assessment during 2021/2022 and closed 2,722. This level of demand is returning to pre-Covid 2019/2020 figures following a substantial rise in 2020/2021 which saw an additional 600 Social Work Assessments received and 400 closed in that year. The management of workflow by staff and managers over this high demand two-year period has been exceptional and senior managers have identified any build up through the proactive review of weekly and monthly data. Timeliness of Social Work Assessments has therefore remained a strength with Worcestershire Children First timeliness being in line with all the “good” Local Authorities in our region.

The Chief Constable of West Mercia Police was asked to provide a response in relation to the quality of information held on Police systems, specifically that links to connected individuals are present and accurate, and multiple records held against the same person are avoided, so that risk to children can be clearly seen, recognised, and shared when appropriate. This was a particular issue identified within the Solihull JTAI report in respect of West Midlands Police systems.

Again, a detailed response has been received which sets out the current position as it exists within West Mercia Police, and their response to this. Although it is clear from the response that data quality, as within any system, presents an ongoing challenge which requires a continuing rather than a ‘one off’ solution, West Mercia Police has recognised the importance of removing multiple records for the same individual and how this relates directly to keeping children and young people safe.

#### **The following measures were set out as being in place:**

- Staff are required to undergo regular mandatory training around data protection, security and entry and the systems we utilise for the storage and retrieval of information are regularly audited to minimise the potential for error and duplication. This is important not only for the partnership in Worcestershire but also as a significant amount of locally held Police data is transferred to the Police National Database so that it is available for use by forces across the country where there is a legal basis to do so.
- West Mercia police employ a Records and Data Manager who has a team of staff engaged daily in the process of merging and managing duplicate nominals and addresses across our systems.
- The Athena (Police data recording system) team provide monthly reports of conflicts within the system to enable the Records Team to correct these. There is a reporting route for staff who identify duplicates or errors whilst carrying out their daily business to allow similar correction and finally there is an automated system which sits across all systems and conducts searches for anomalies and inconsistencies within the data to flag these as a concern.
- The Records and Data Management Team have links into the Crime Bureau, Intelligence Processing Unit, Criminal Justice, Custody and Operational Communications Centre, all areas where the bulk of data entry is conducted in order to ensure that processes are continually refined where repeat duplication occurs and this in turn is shared with Learning and Development to ensure changes in practice are reflected in future training programmes.

West Mercia Police were able to provide reassurance that they are performing well against the other police areas which use the Athena system, and the need to match and merge records remains high and will continue to be treated as a priority.

The Accountable Officer for NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) was asked to provide reassurance that the Solihull JTAI finding on the strength of communication between health agencies within the MASH (Solihull) had been noted by health agencies in Worcestershire. Further, that local practice was being reviewed in light of this finding to ensure communication between health agencies within our own Family Front Door, and their access to health information held about children is effective, and where



necessary appropriate action is being taken to use this learning to improve practice.

A response was received which confirmed that immediately following the publication of the Solihull JTAI report the NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) had asked Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (HWHCT) (who lead on the health economy response in the Worcestershire Family Front Door), and the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust (WAHT) who support this work, to review local practice in light of the findings from the JTAI in relation to health agencies. The responses from both Trusts were provided with the CCG's response, and these demonstrated comprehensive internal reviews had been completed. In relation to the specific point raised by the Safeguarding Partnership both Trusts provided details of their arrangements for communication between health partners, and access to health information.

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust reported that they receive requests for information to be shared via the MASH Portal. Attendance is then as requested, except for cases involving unborn babies. The Named Midwife for the Trust attends the weekly MASH meeting where unborn babies are discussed. The Trust submits information for the MASH requests in accordance with the requested timeframes.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust reported that they can access Emergency Department records as well as their own and have some access to GP records. Health information is provided into MASH discussions and strategy meetings.

Discussions within the Executive meeting prompted by this JTAI reassurance process has identified that GP's access to strategy discussion and child protection conference minutes remains an issue within the health system. IT solutions are being explored, however it has been agreed that this will continue to be monitored through the Executive Group, with continued activity to establish how we can best ensure that information is shared from the health representative directly involved in the child protection process to the child's GP.

Linked with capacity within the Family Front Door/MASH, the Executive members have discussed how the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership can support timely information sharing between agencies, whilst also improving our position on the proportion of referrals to the Family Front Door which meet threshold.

Information sharing was discussed specifically in relation to Operation Encompass notifications (children living with domestic abuse), and the opportunity to be involved in a national pilot to include Early Years settings within this. More details of Operation Encompass and how it relates to Early Years settings are provided within the Headteacher Safeguarding Steering Group section of this report, but in summary developing our local information sharing systems alongside this national pilot helps us to deliver against recommendation 8 of the National Child Safeguarding Panel Review "Child Protection in England", published in May 2022, which called for specific practice improvements in relation to domestic abuse and named safeguarding partners as having an important role in this.

The proportion of referrals into the Worcestershire Family Front Door which meet threshold is an issue that our Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures (QAPP) Group has been working hard to improve for some time through training, briefings, audits and other activity, but which remains an area where further progress is still required.

As a result of these discussions, the safeguarding partners have agreed to fund two additional posts from the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership budget within the Worcestershire Family Front Door. These posts will provide services which both manage Family Front Door referrals, particularly from those agencies with high referral volumes and low conversion rates, and also provide administrative support for Operation Encompass notifications to Early Years settings. These posts are due to be filled in October 2022, and their impact will be reported on in the next yearly report.

In February 2022 members of the WSCP Executive Group attended a briefing by the National Child Safeguarding Review Panel in relation to a review that had been commissioned on the safeguarding of children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings. The review was to focus on three residential settings in the Doncaster area and was to be completed in two phases. The Phase One report, which has since been completed

and was published in October 2022, was to examine the experiences of 108 children and young adults placed from 55 local authorities at Fullerton House, Wilsic Hall and Wheatley House specialist, independent, residential settings between 1 January 2018 and 21 March 2021. Worcestershire was one of those 55 local authorities. The full Phase One report can be read here:

Safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings - Phase 1 report (publishing.service.gov.uk)

In August 2022 Annie Hudson, Chair of the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, wrote to all Directors of Children's Services asking that they respond to two urgent actions that the Panel believed to be necessary as a result of emergent findings from phase one of the review. The comprehensive response provided to the National Panel by Worcestershire Children First was also shared with the WSCP Executive for reassurance as to the effectiveness of the local follow up.

In addition to their national reviews, at the very end of this reporting period (29th September 2022), the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published two briefing papers, both of which contain recommendations for safeguarding partners. The two papers, 'Multi-agency safeguarding and domestic abuse' and 'Bruising in non-mobile infants' will need to be considered and responded to locally during the forthcoming reporting period.

Similarly, outcomes from the work of the cross-departmental Ministerial Group focussed on Child Protection, supported by the newly formed Multi-Agency Safeguarding Partner Performance Board (MASPP) will no doubt contain recommendations for local safeguarding partners and partnerships, and it is anticipated that the co-ordination of the response to these, once known, will form a key area of work for the WSCP Executive and subgroups in this coming year.

## ***2. As individual partners undergo structural changes, our multi-agency arrangements remain connected and continue to be effective.***

This reporting period saw fundamental changes to one of the three safeguarding partners. On 1st July 2022 the NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB) took over from NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). It should be recognised that within this substantial change programme there was a seamless transition of engagement with, and support to the WSCP Executive and its various subgroups.

Recent planned reductions to public sector funding have been well publicised. Although the details of these were announced outside the period covered by this report, individual agency responses to these and particularly any impact on our multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements as a result of cost saving decisions being made will need to be carefully monitored over the coming twelve months.

## ***3. Develop high-level indicators for children's safety within Worcestershire and seek to strengthen the WSCP links with other local partnerships.***

During this reporting period the WSCP has added to 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 below.

Within the Worcestershire Children and Young People's plan 2022 – 2024 WSCP has been asked to monitor and report on two of the key performance measures, these being to work towards reducing the number of repeat Child Protection Plans within a two-year period, and the timeliness of care proceedings against the 26 weeks target. These measures have now been incorporated into the QAPP Group dataset and will be monitored via that subgroup.

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 below.

Within the area of GET SAFE, work is 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.

#### **4. Response to Kantar Public national review**

This is dealt with in the 'Wider Partnership' section below.

## **Areas for Future Focus**

During the 2022/2023 reporting period, the WSCP Executive will be focussed on the following areas:

- Ensure that any recommendations that result from the work of the cross-departmental Ministerial Group focussed on Child Protection, supported by the newly formed Multi-Agency Safeguarding Partner Performance Board (MASPP) are properly considered and implemented within Worcestershire.
- Consider the various National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel reports, reviews and briefing papers and through clear decision making provide direction on those recommendations that will add most value to our current multi-agency child safeguarding systems within Worcestershire. In this way we can be sure we are using our partners' time and resources in the most targeted way, and where it can best help to improve how we keep children and young people safe in Worcestershire.
- As agencies face increasing budgetary challenges through the coming year, the WSCP Executive must remain aware of the potential impact on, and contribution to the work of the Partnership, and provide support where possible to ensure there is no reduction in the effectiveness or quality of our current multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements.
- Monitor the impact of the additional funded posts within the Family Front Door on the proportion of multi-agency referrals meeting threshold, and the timeliness of Operation Encompass referrals to schools and early years settings.

## 7. The Wider Partnership

A full Partnership event was held in May 2022 which provided the opportunity for all agency representatives and members from the various subgroups to meet and discuss the work of the WSCP. The meeting was organised in two sections; for the first part members of the Executive and each of the subgroups gave a short presentation on the progress of their respective groups. The second section of the meeting then considered the work of those subgroups and our own arrangements against the findings within both Sir Alan Wood's report "Expert review of new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements" (May 2021), and the Kantar Public report "multi-agency reform: Key behavioural drivers and barriers" (December 2021) which had been commissioned by the Department for Education, Department for Health and Social Care and the Home Office to run alongside Sir Alan Wood's review. Attendees considered our own partnership position against the Kantar Report's 'four key barriers to effective partnership work' these being:

- understanding the benefits of partnership working and how to achieve it
- creating appropriate policies and procedures
- communicating policies and procedures
- committing to delivering the goals of multi-agency working for safeguarding children

Partners were then asked to reflect on their own work and that of their subgroups within the WSCP, whether any of those barriers could be recognised within that work and if so, what changes could be made to overcome them.

This type of event provides an excellent opportunity for our partnership members to hear about the other strands of work within the WSCP, including progress and challenges, and how both national and local developments are influencing the work of both the Partnership generally, and their own subgroup. Further they provide an opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of our own arrangements and how we are working within those, so recognising any opportunities for improvement, as national and local best practice develops.

## 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 Partnership Group is a subgroup of the WSCP and is chaired by Superintendent Rebecca Love, South Worcestershire Local Policing Commander (West Mercia Police).

### Areas of Focus for 2021/2022

The 2020 - 2021 yearly report identified the following areas of focus for the GET SAFE Partnership Group for this reporting year:

1. Our partnership approach to prevention, protection, and pursuit in relation to online exploitation across Worcestershire.
2. Mapping out all diversionary activities available to victims or those that are at risk of exploitation, to ensure that the different agency offers provide efficient and comprehensive support across all age groups.
3. Ensuring all recommendations from the 'Sarah' Child Safeguarding Practice Review are embedded in practice. This will include an audit of cases discussed at MACE to ensure that where a young person meets the threshold for child protection, the appropriate processes are used.
4. Providing continuous professional development for practitioners around changing and emerging risks, local problem profile findings, the national picture of exploitation and the voice of the child.
5. Ensuring all identified Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) concerns are shared via the GET SAFE Portal and so contribute to our local understanding of risk and harm.
6. Strengthening the influence of children and young people's views on GET SAFE services with a particular focus on commissioning processes.
7. Ensuring that the GET SAFE approach is fully supported and embedded within other local partnership groups where their priorities and activities contribute to keeping children and young people safe from exploitation.

### Progress and Achievements

In relation to the areas of focus for this reporting period, the achievements of the GET SAFE Partnership Group are set out below.

#### ***1. Our partnership approach to prevention, protection, and pursuit in relation to online exploitation across Worcestershire.***

This includes the development of guidance for staff on what they should know in relation to their role in keeping children safe online, and guidance on messaging to parents, children and young people. The latter is to be supported by consultation with young people via Young Solutions. There is already guidance for parents, carers and young people on staying safe online within both the GET SAFE and GET THERE websites, and schools across Worcestershire provide education and support on this subject through their curriculum content, internal policies and staff training. During the 2022/2023 period the Partnership would like to explore the extent to which children and young people find this information both accessible and useful, and if not, how partners can make the help offered more relevant to their needs.

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. Police representatives provided an update to the GET SAFE Partnership Group in July 2022 during which they highlighted that it would

be preferable for them to be engaging with social services earlier in the process when taking enforcement action. This has led to Police changing their operating procedures so that strategy discussions are taking place sooner. This has been supported by the development of an information sharing protocol between Police and Worcestershire Children First to cover these specific circumstances.

Police have also reported that further challenges identified around online safety are that a significant proportion of all offenders coming to the notice of Police are under the age of eighteen and are linked with watching extreme online content, and that there continues to be an increasing demand generally across all forms of online exploitation and abuse.

The need to build confidence in professionals when talking to children and young people about sexual relationships and pornography has also been identified, and the setting up of a Digital Safety Conference that would cover online exploitation/fraud/sexting etc to support this is being explored by Police.

## ***2. Mapping out all diversionary activities available to victims or those that are at risk of exploitation, to ensure that the different agency offers provide efficient and comprehensive support across all age groups.***

This work has been progressed via the GET SAFE Partnership Group action plan. Young Solutions has been commissioned to complete a piece of work which will contribute to this mapping exercise, looking at the services that could be in place in September 2023 under the newly commissioned Youth Offer for Worcestershire (formally the Positive Activities programme). This work is ongoing.

On a more tactical level, the GET SAFE Operational Group has developed an easy-to-use guide for practitioners from all agencies which introduces the GET SAFE Team and their contact details and sets out the GET SAFE and GET THERE external services for children and young people across Worcestershire. This is further supported by a breakdown by district of a list of diversionary activities which can be accessed via the GET SAFE website.

## ***3. Ensuring all recommendations from the 'Sarah' Child Safeguarding Practice Review are embedded in practice. This will include an audit of cases discussed at MACE to ensure that where a young person meets the threshold for child protection, the appropriate processes are used.***

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review 'Sarah', published in August 2021, made a number of recommendations the majority of which have been followed up within our Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures (QAPP) Group, and further details of that work is provided within the QAPP Group section of this report.

It was agreed however that the response to one of the key recommendations would be led by the GET SAFE Partnership Group, this being that the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership should seek assurance from relevant partners that child protection procedures are being followed and strategy meetings are convened appropriately, with health, police and children's social care in attendance as a minimum, as well as other agencies who should be included. The use of Missing Intervention or Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings must not be used in place of child protection procedures.

The review made clear that where a child has reached the threshold for statutory intervention then child protection procedures in line with the Children Act 1989 should be used.

It was agreed that we would assess the effectiveness of the multi-agency response to this recommendation through the 'deep dive' auditing of cases. The aim of the audit was to provide reassurance to both the GET SAFE Partnership Group and the wider Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership that the practice concerns identified in the "Sarah" case review had been addressed through the development and introduction of our GET SAFE approach, which followed the death of Sarah. An audit tool was developed and used by representatives of Worcestershire Children First, West Mercia Police and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust to examine whether child protection procedures were being used in cases where child exploitation was the primary concern and the threshold for statutory intervention had been reached. A random selection of ten red (high risk) pathway



children were used. The cohort audited had a range of children and young people who were already within the child protection process or categorised as a Child in Need or a Child Looked After. Ages ranged from 11 years to 17 years, and a range of exploitation concerns including child sexual exploitation, multiple missing episodes, county lines, and gang and weapon carrying were included.

The key findings from this audit are set out below.

- The audit highlighted that child protection strategy discussions and Section 47 enquiries were being used across all ten cases as appropriate. There was evidence in one case of information shared in a MACE meeting being escalated up into a review strategy discussion which is good practice.
- For some of these children multiple strategy meetings were held, highlighting that the MACE process was not used instead of a strategy meeting but as well as. It was also noted that strategy meetings feed in well to MACE meetings.
- The audit highlighted consistent partnership engagement, and that information sharing was appropriate and evidenced in all ten strategy discussions and review strategy discussions.
- Good practice was noted in the breadth of partners being invited to strategy discussions. Police, Health and Education were part of all the strategy discussions and additional partners such as Youth Justice, SEND Team and community paediatricians were invited where appropriate.
- The Worcestershire Children First GET SAFE team were also shown to be regularly invited, attending and contributing to the contextual safeguarding information in these cases. This was highlighted as invaluable in terms of information they held about associates of concern and links to other young people at risk of exploitation.
- The cases all had the correct GET SAFE flags attached so identifying the exploitation risk and vulnerability. From a Health perspective, all ten sets of records had the correct exploitation alert attached.
- Cases had MACE meetings and evidence of reviews as appropriate or were too early in the assessment process for MACE to have yet happened, so demonstrating that child protection and GET SAFE procedures are understood and in practice are being run concurrently.
- Children and young people's vulnerabilities were discussed and shared in the strategy discussions, and this ranged from school attendance to health concerns and protective factors. Capacity and consent however were not a focused conversation in the strategy discussion.
- In none of the cases audited was the child found to have been left unsafe, and no immediate remedial actions were needed.

As with all detailed reviews of individual cases, areas were identified which can be used to improve our practices. The following are some examples of learning from this audit.

- The partnership needs to better identify trafficking as part of harm and abuse and the need to agree in the action plan who will complete/lead on the National Referral Mechanism. The first opportunity to do this may well be within the strategy discussion.
- The interim safety plans were not consistently evidencing partnership actions for all partners. Actions were predominantly Childrens Social Care and section 47 focused in terms of joint or single agency enquiries.
- Consent was not routinely considered or discussed in strategy meetings. This could be due to the risks to the young person overriding the need to gain consent. However, it could possibly have been an identified action from the meeting that the young person would receive feedback as to the decisions taken. Mental capacity should be considered in all strategy meetings where there are concerns about exploitation and consent. This also needs to be recorded to evidence professionals have considered it.

- Action Plans need to be SMART with the timescales recorded for all professionals, and all agencies attending should be clear about when the actions they are recommending are to be implemented.

In conclusion, the audit demonstrated that child protection procedures are followed and strategy meetings are convened appropriately, with Health, Police and Children’s Social Care representatives in attendance as a minimum, supported by other agencies as required, and that missing intervention or MACE meetings are not being used in place of child protection procedures, but instead are being used to complement those procedures. When the risk to the child from exploitation has reached threshold for child protection then the appropriate processes are being used.

Learning from this audit has been passed to the GET SAFE Operational Group to progress, and a short briefing has been produced and circulated to practitioners. It has also been made available on the WSCP website and can be viewed here:

[GET SAFE - Using Child Protection Procedures in Child Exploitation Cases \(office.com\)](#)

**4. Providing continuous professional development for practitioners around changing and emerging risks, local problem profile findings, the national picture of exploitation and the voice of the child.**

The Exploitation and Vulnerability Training, which continues to be funded by the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner, is the primary source of multi-agency professional development on child criminal exploitation. The report on this training for 2021/2022 showed that Worcestershire has contributed 41% of all attendees to this training, which is available to all areas across West Mercia. During that period 2681 delegates from Worcestershire representing 69 different organisations attended 106 sessions. Worcestershire’s continued positive engagement with this training has been made easier by the excellent working relationships developed between key individuals within the various partner agencies as well as the many administration officers who have marketed and distributed the training. We have also shared learning from our work on exploitation and the recommendations of the ‘Sarah’ child safeguarding practice review as opportunities to develop the content of the course.



**Final Figures for Worcestershire**

Number of	Worcester 2021/22												Year End
	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	
Delegates	429	333	95	28	73	214	259	225	172	310	231	312	2,681
Sessions	9	10	8	4	9	9	14	4	3	17	8	11	106
Organisations	9	9	7	4	3	5	9	3	2	4	7	7	69

**5. Ensuring all identified Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) concerns are shared via the GET SAFE Portal and so contribute to our local understanding of risk and harm.**

The development of the GET SAFE dataset during this reporting year has supported our understanding of the areas in which our child criminal exploitation concerns are being identified and by which agencies, and so where best to focus effort. This is an area of work which is also regularly reviewed by the Operational Group. Now the GET SAFE Partnership Group has this overview of reporting both on a district and agency basis, the next step is to understand how effectively that information is being used to match local resources and responses to emerging themes and need. This is an area that the GET SAFE Partnership Group will be exploring in greater detail in the coming reporting period.

The multi-agency child exploitation dataset has been further enhanced in this reporting period by the work undertaken by Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust. In support of GET SAFE, this team undertook a review of their systems and processes in place to identify any opportunities to make the identification of children and young people presenting to their services with GET SAFE vulnerabilities more robust. This has led to the development of the WREN report which identifies key words such as 'gun', 'gang', 'weapon', 'knife', 'overdose' etc in the attendance of the child /young person at a Trust facility. This report is then reviewed daily to ensure that all respective safeguarding actions and referrals have been completed for the child /young person. The aim of this intense review and scoping is to ensure no child or young person attending 'slips through the net'. During 2021/22 over 3000 children on the WREN report were reviewed, and the data and themes identified from this report are shared with GET SAFE Partnership Group on a quarterly basis, so adding an additional dimension to the multi-agency picture.

The GET SAFE portal is also being promoted via the Exploitation and Vulnerability training package as highlighted above, and via schools and colleges by the Education Safeguarding Team. Further, within the QAPP Group 'Sarah' CSPR review, single agencies have been asked for and provided details of how they have promoted the use of the GET SAFE risk assessment tool within their own organisation. Details of this and some examples of those responses from partners are provided within the QAPP Group section of this report.

#### ***6. Strengthening the influence of children and young people's views on GET SAFE services with a particular focus on commissioning processes.***

Direct engagement activity with children and young people is covered later in this report. The GET SAFE Partnership Group has not been involved in any commissioning of services during this reporting period.

#### ***7. Ensuring that the GET SAFE approach is fully supported and embedded within other local partnership groups where their priorities and activities contribute to keeping children and young people safe from exploitation.***

The three safeguarding partners wrote to the Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Chairs to seek assurance on how both the North and South Worcestershire CSP's were considering the need to safeguard children and young people within their current priorities and any future priority setting. The following assurance was provided.

### **South Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (SWCSP)**

Protection and safeguarding of children, young people and adults features in a number of the key priorities within the South Worcestershire Community Action Plan 2021-2024.

In relation to modern slavery, exploitation and child exploitation the SWCSP support the delivery of the Serious and Organised Crime Joint Action Group (SOCJAG) through increased understanding of structures, objectives and providing a support provision against these. We consider actions and outcomes from SOCJAG and Serious and Organised Crime focus groups to identify and provide support when appropriate from SWCSP. All partners and front-line staff receive a basic level of training and awareness.

SWCSP actively contributes to multi agency tasking and enforcement activity. This is measured by the number of positive enforcement actions taken. SWCSP is also supporting, promoting and delivering SCWSP funded GET SAFE and adult exploitation projects and representatives attend and contribute to GET SAFE strategic and operational meetings.

The SWCSP also provides youth mentoring and intervention in schools and out in the community with the aim of prevention, or to divert and raise awareness to ensure children and young people are safe and are given the right information to make their own informed choices. We work with and for young people and provide intelligence on local concerns for a number of issues including vulnerability and possible safeguarding concerns.

## **North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP)**

The protection and safeguarding of children and young people features in a number of the key priorities in the NWCSP Plan 2021-2024.

NWCSP has identified Reducing Violence and Abuse as a priority with specific reference to reducing sexual violence against women and girls and child sexual exploitation. Further, within this priority the Community Safety Partnership has a commitment to reduce Anti-Social Behaviour and nuisance particularly focusing on work with young people on street in local neighbourhoods who are at risk of being victims of crime or drawn into criminality.

NWCSP has also identified Protecting Vulnerable Communities as a priority, which includes a focus on reducing child criminal exploitation, county lines and modern slavery. As part of this priority the Partnership also has a focus on preventing violent extremism and the radicalisation of young people and vulnerable adults.

To support actions around these priorities NWCSP has allocated between £60 - £70,000 per year to projects and initiatives to protect children and young people from harm and deter them from being drawn into crime. These initiatives include commissioning outreach and detached youth work, delivering group work with at risk young people, providing therapeutic 1-2-1 mentoring, working in schools, delivering awareness raising assemblies and targeted youth club sessions.

NWCSP is represented on the GET SAFE Strategic and Operational groups and is also represented at the North Worcestershire Serious and Organised Crime Joint Action Group (SOCJAG) Focus Group and the Worcestershire Channel Panel. The District Council safeguarding leads are also members of NWCSP and ensure partnership co-ordination and co-operation across all safeguarding forums and multi-agency groups across the county.

## **Worcestershire Safeguarding Adult Board**

Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB) has recently introduced a Complex Adult Risk Management (CARM) process which provides a framework to facilitate effective working with adults where certain criteria apply, for example where they are at risk of harm due to their complex needs, but where the risks cannot effectively be managed via other processes or interventions, such as a section 9 care and support assessment or a section 42 safeguarding enquiry under the Care Act 2014. Further information on the CARM process can be found here: <https://www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk/documents/carm-final-v2-aug-2022-2/>

We know that exploitation does not end when people reach 18, and some young adults will continue to experience exploitation or have vulnerabilities and need ongoing support from professionals post 18 years and longer term. Further, previous national learning has shown us that the transition point for young people who are at risk of, or suffering, exploitation from child safeguarding processes to adult services can leave that young person at increased risk. Members of the GET SAFE Partnership Group are currently working with representatives from the Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB) to ensure that the GET THERE and GET SAFE processes are harmonised with the CARM framework to ensure there is a smooth transition of the management of risk between child and adult safeguarding services.

## Evidence of Impact

During this reporting period through the work of the GET SAFE partners we have seen systems developed to minimise the potential impact on children and their carers who do not have access to the Criminal Justice care process after online Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) warrants have been completed.

We have also developed our understanding of the profile of child criminal exploitation across Worcestershire through the introduction of a multi-agency GET SAFE dataset to the Partnership Group.

The GET SAFE Partnership Group has also secured assurance that when a child criminal exploitation risk reaches the appropriate threshold, then that child/young person's safety will be managed through the appropriate child protection procedures. This is evidence of significant progress in the development of our approach to child exploitation involving the risk of significant harm to that child or young person, which in turn reflects very positively on the collective effort and response made by partners since the GET SAFE approach was introduced in 2019.

In addition to the direct engagement with children, young people and families which takes place within the Child Protection and MACE processes, 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. In March 2022 there was a successful event run at the Malvern Theatre in support of the GET THERE programme. Over 100 children and young people attended, and opportunities were provided for these young people to speak directly to staff members and discuss the issues highlighted.

A production was also arranged at the Swan Theatre in Worcester by the GET SAFE Team working with Ready Steady Worcestershire, who provide activities over the school summer holiday period. This production used the story of a young girl being groomed for sexual exploitation and the young people in the audience provided feedback both before and after as a means of highlighting how their understanding of the risks had changed.

Engagement has also been more targeted. Following the tragic stabbing incident outside Asda, Redditch in March 2022, outreach workers were deployed to engage with youth groups in the area to provide reassurance and an opportunity for any concerns to be raised and discussed.

The Steer Clear initiative has been launched across Worcestershire by West Mercia Police and this has been supported by the GET SAFE Operational Group. This initiative delivers engaging workshops to young people and their families about the dangers of carrying knives. The Knife Angel, which is the National Monument Against Violence and Aggression, has been on tour in towns and cities across the UK since 2018. Worcester City Council and West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion arranged for it to be displayed in the city in support of the Steer Clear message. To further support the Steer Clear programme, inputs to over six thousand Year 9 and Year 10 pupils are being planned. This will include a lived experience talker attending schools to talk to pupils in assembly. The aim is to be delivering these inputs throughout the 2022-2023 reporting period.

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. The Anti-Violence Bee visited areas across the county throughout November 2022.



*(Photo of the Knife Angel Statue in Cathedral Square, Worcester)*



## Areas for Future Focus

During the forthcoming reporting period the GET SAFE Partnership Group will be:

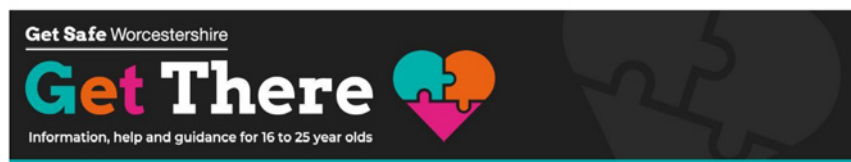
- Working to understand how effectively the information received from individual agencies via the GET SAFE portal, crime recording and other single agency systems is used to influence local multi-agency responses to emerging themes and need.
- Working with Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB) to ensure that the GET THERE and GET SAFE processes are harmonised with the CARM framework to ensure there is a smooth transition of the management of risk between child and adult safeguarding services.
- Exploring the extent to which children and young people find information in relation to online safety both useful and accessible, and where needed how partners can make the help offered more relevant to their needs.
- Ensuring that any learning from the recommendations within the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Telford (published July 2022) has been captured where relevant to Worcestershire.



Full information on the GET SAFE and GET THERE programmes can be found via the following links:

[www.worcestershire.gov.uk/getsafe](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/getsafe)

[Get There | Worcestershire County Council](#)





# 9. The Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures Group

The role of the Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures Group (QAPP) is to support the improvement and development of services offered to children and young people in Worcestershire 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.

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

## Areas of Focus for 2021/2022

The 2020 - 2021 yearly report identified the following areas of focus for this reporting year:

1. The development of multi-disciplinary audits at the Family Front Door between Social Care, Education and Early Help to look at the quality of referrals and application of the levels of need to promote system learning and the Early Help agenda.
2. Support the GET SAFE Partnership Group in embedding the learning from the 'Sarah' Child Safeguarding Practice Review.
3. Completion of the Early Help project in conjunction with the University of Worcester
4. Ensure that a multi-agency plan is in place to ensure Worcestershire can effectively respond to any Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI). This will include support for agencies to understand their role, expectations and resourcing commitments of such an inspection.
5. Continue to deliver multi-agency audits in areas identified as requiring further scrutiny and use the learning from those audits to improve services to children and young people. The audit activity within this coming reporting period will include how effectively agencies capture the voice of SEND children within our safeguarding processes.

## Progress and Achievements

The work of the QAPP Group within these areas is set out below. A newsletter has also been developed by the QAPP Group and shared across the partnership to share information on our activities and key learning.

***1. The development of multi-disciplinary audits at the Family Front Door between Social Care, Education and Early Help to look at the quality of referrals and application of the levels of need to promote system learning and the Early Help agenda.***

From September 2021 a system of multi-agency auditing has been developed whereby each month ten cases are selected 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. Full details of the audit activity and associated learning is provided within the Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group section of this report.

***2. Support the GET SAFE Partnership Group in embedding the learning from the 'Sarah' Child Safeguarding Practice Review.***

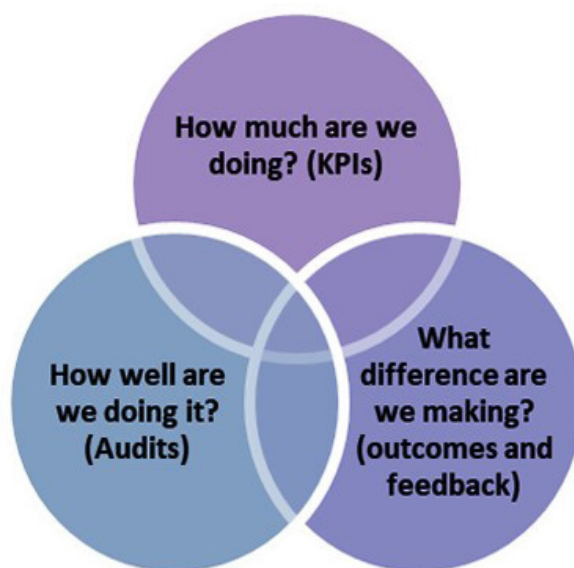
Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership recognises the importance of ensuring that learning from child safeguarding practice reviews is used to improve practice, both within multi-agency systems and, where appropriate, within single agencies.

The QAPP Group committed to supporting the GET SAFE Partnership Group in embedding the learning from the 'Sarah' review. In April 2022 the QAPP Group sent the following questions to partner agencies across Worcestershire.

1. How has your organisation disseminated the learning from the Worcestershire Child Safeguarding Practice Review 'Sarah' to your own staff?
2. How does your organisation plan to assure itself that the learning relevant to your agency has been embedded and that where necessary practice has changed in line with learning?
3. How has your organisation promoted the use of the GET SAFE risk assessment within your own organisation, and the processes to be used following completion of the risk assessment tool?
4. How does your organisation monitor the use and submission of the GET SAFE risk assessment tool to ensure it is being completed and submitted in appropriate circumstances?
5. What has your organisation done to promote the understanding and use of a contextual safeguarding approach amongst your staff who have contact with children and young people?
6. Are you assured your agency is appropriately attending and contributing to children's Looked after Reviews? How is this monitored and followed up where there is non-attendance?

In addition, where the review had identified areas of learning specific to one agency, that agency was asked to update on progress against that learning.

All responses were collated and presented to the QAPP Group. This follow up gathered a significant amount of information, and examples of the work highlighted by various agencies are provided below.



## In relation to the dissemination of learning:

**Worcestershire Children First** have undertaken the following activities from senior/corporate leadership to our frontline staff:

- Presentation of the learning, recommendations, and our actions to WCF Board and Corporate Parenting Board.
- Learning presentation to our End-to-End Leadership Team for Social Care and Safeguarding including all Group Managers, Team Managers, Advanced Practitioners, Independent Review Officers and Child Protection Chairs from Early Help through to the Care Leavers Service.
- Learning presentation to our SEND, Education and Early Help End-to-End Leadership Team.
- Focused Independent Review Officer (IRO) team meeting on the learning and the role of the IRO.
- Dissemination of the LSCP learning briefing to all Social Care staff through direct email and Social Worker Practice Newsletter.

**Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust** reported that learning has been disseminated via:

- Their Integrated Safeguarding Committee from where representatives disseminate to their area
- Safeguarding supervision
- Peer supervision
- Children's Board
- Learning Brief discussed as a patient story
- Safeguarding newsletter.

**Young Solutions**, which is the infrastructure body supporting the voluntary and community sector across Worcestershire reported that they had circulated the 'Sarah' briefing in their monthly eNewsletter and weekly eBulletin which goes to 175 clubs and organisations. In addition to many small clubs and community groups it includes larger organisations (such as the YMCA and the Diocese of Worcester) and local networks who will also circulate to their staff and networks.

## **In relation to how agencies have assured themselves that the learning relevant to their agency has been embedded and that where necessary practice has changed in line with learning:**

**West Mercia Police** reported that from the learning detailed in the recommendations there is a dedicated CSE team, which now has a full time dedicate Detective Sergeant. The team have close working relationships with GET SAFE, utilising the GET SAFE coordinators. Protection notices are used when necessary to safeguard vulnerable children.

The **Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group** reported that their Safeguarding Team carry out assurance visits with individual GP practices where learning is discussed from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews with the practice.

**Worcestershire Probation Service** reported that they are launching monthly case reflection meetings. These are case audits that utilise the same assessment criteria as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). Key themes and learning points will be collated and disseminated across all front-line operational staff within Worcestershire.

## **In relation to promoting the use of the GET SAFE risk assessment and associated pathways within their organisations:**

**Bromsgrove and Redditch District Council** reported this was achieved by regularly reviewing their systems already in place, and the use of robust and regular supervision with those practitioners who work directly with young people and their families, ongoing attendance by the Council safeguarding leads at the relevant quality assurance and GET SAFE meetings, and bi-monthly safeguarding champion meetings to ensure practice is reviewed with the necessary services/departments within the Council.

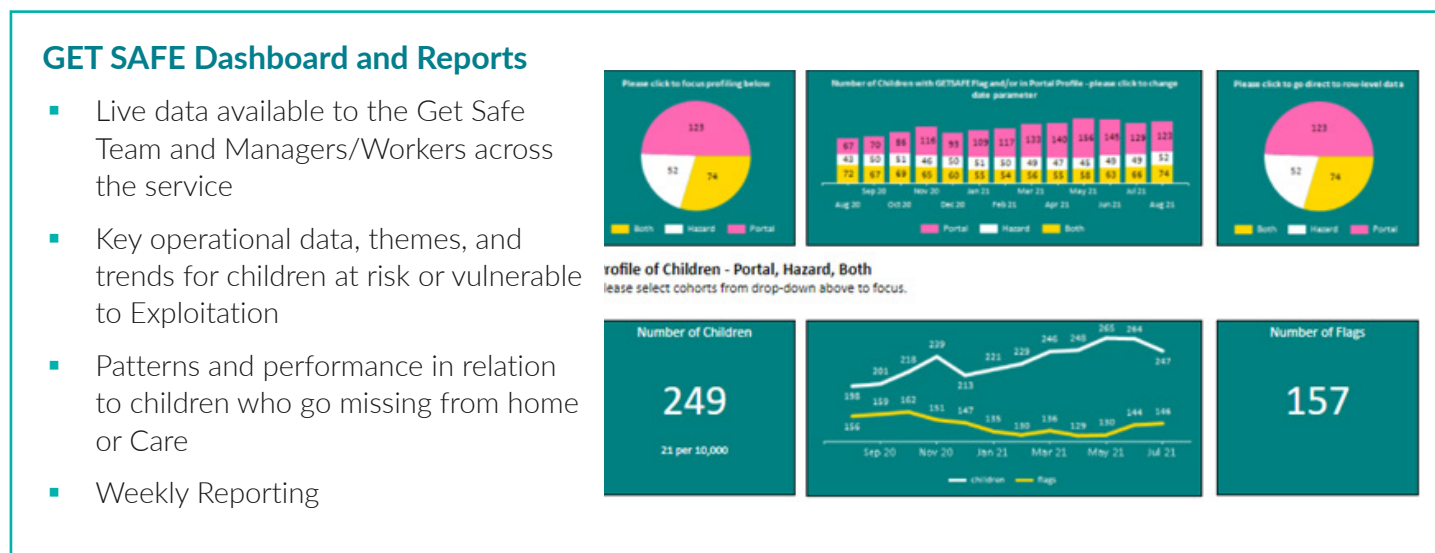
**West Mercia Police** reported that the GET SAFE risk assessment tool is promoted via meetings such as Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE), strategy meetings, missing intervention meetings, Safer Neighbourhood Team communication, Intervention and Prevention Officers and Harm Hubs. It is mainly completed and submitted by the Child Exploitation coordinator and local officers.

**West Mercia Youth Justice Service** reported that they sit on the weekly GET SAFE meeting, team meetings have been held to discuss GET SAFE, and there is a folder on their shared drive with all the GET SAFE information

including guidance and the assessment form. Further, staff have attended the Vulnerability and Exploitation training.

## In relation to organisations monitoring the use and submission of the GET SAFE risk assessment tool to ensure it is being completed and submitted in appropriate circumstances:

**Worcestershire Children First** reported that they have robust performance management systems in place to monitor and track GET SAFE Risk Assessments. These are monitored through quarterly reporting and live dashboards, examples of which are given below.



**West Mercia Police** reported that the Child Exploitation Coordinator will upload these and is in direct contact with the Harm Assessment Unit. They will do crime and Daily Management Meeting (DMM) checks in order to identify any incidents which need to be looked into further via the GET SAFE forum. This is completed by updating incidents and submitting risk assessments.

The **West Mercia Youth Justice Service** reported that the GET SAFE risk assessments are upload to Childview (Youth Justice Service data base) as well as the GET SAFE portal. A senior practitioner sits on the weekly GET SAFE meetings, and if any issues with the risk assessment are reported these can be brought to the attention of the YJS case manager.

## In relation to what organisations have done to promote the understanding and use of a contextual safeguarding approach amongst their staff who have contact with children and young people:

**Bromsgrove and Redditch District Council** reported that details of the multi-agency Exploitation and Vulnerability training is regularly circulated to all staff, and the Council staff's attendance on the training is monitored by the Council's representative on the GET SAFE Operational and Strategic Groups. Staff who have direct interaction with young people (i.e. Youth Workers/Mentors) are fully qualified, experienced youth practitioners and trauma informed mentors/counsellors with expertise in contextual safeguarding. They have also received specific training on Exploitation and Vulnerability and the GET SAFE risk assessment tool and maintain their CPD via their membership of the National Youth Agency.

**Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust** reported that they have promoted training opportunities such as the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Joint Conference on Child Exploitation and the Child Exploitation Awareness Day. Further, contextual safeguarding discussions are included in mandatory Safeguarding Training.

## **In relation to assurance that their agency is attending and contributing to children's Looked after Reviews, and attendance is being monitored:**

Worcestershire Probation Service reported that attendance at such meetings is a requirement of the practitioner role and if the practitioner is not available, either a substitute officer will attend or alternatively, a written update will be provided. In the case of unexpected non-attendance, this would be escalated to the team manager so that follow up action can be taken.

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust reported that their agencies are not attending all reviews but have agreement with Independent Review Officers about who would be appropriate to attend depending on if they have an active role in working with the child / young person. Further, the Looked After Children register and alerts are maintained on Electronic Patient Records (EPR), and

Health assessments for Looked After Children are audited by the Specialist Nursing Team for Looked After Children. Annual Review Health Assessments for Looked After Children are completed for each child, during which their individual health plan is reviewed and updated, then uploaded onto the Worcestershire Children First electronic record system and shared with the allocated social worker so this may be discussed during their statutory reviews.

In conclusion, from the various responses WSCP were able to secure reassurance that the learning from the 'Sarah' child safeguarding practice review has been acted upon by local agencies across Worcestershire.

### ***3. Completion of the Early Help project in conjunction with the University of Worcester***

This is one area of our partnership work that has not progressed as we would have wished. One of the key aims of this project is to gain in depth feedback from parents, carers, children and young people who have accessed or been signposted to early help support within Worcestershire to understand strengths and areas for development in relation to early help services and any barriers to families accessing such support. Clearly, gaining such feedback is wholly reliant upon the consent and engagement of those families.

During this reporting period partner agencies have identified approximately 80 families who have initially agreed to work with the independent researcher, however when contact from the University has been made far fewer have actually been willing to fully engage with the process. This has meant that we currently have insufficient data to draw any solid conclusions. Alternative routes to engagement are now being explored with a view to gaining sufficient feedback to ensure we can achieve credible outcomes from this research before the project then moves on to gathering information from practitioners. The importance of the voice of the child and family in child safeguarding is often emphasised within various reports and guidance. This project does highlight however the challenges that can be encountered in securing meaningful and truly independent feedback from families about services, and this is perhaps understandable given the sensitivity of their circumstances.

### ***4. Ensure that a multi-agency plan is in place to ensure Worcestershire can effectively respond to any Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI). This will include support for agencies to understand their role, expectations and resourcing commitments of such an inspection.***

A Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) is an inspection framework for evaluating the services of vulnerable children and young people. It is conducted jointly by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). Each JTAI includes a specific 'deep dive' safeguarding theme. JTAs are carried out under section 20 of the Children Act 2004.

They examine multi-agency arrangements for:

- the response to all forms of child abuse, neglect, and exploitation at the point of identification
- the quality and impact of assessment, planning and decision making in response to notifications and referrals

- protecting children and young people at risk of a specific type (or types) of harm, or the support and care of children looked after and/or care leavers (evaluated through a deep dive investigation into the experiences of these children)
- the leadership and management of this work
- the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements in relation to this work.

More information on JTAI inspections can be found in the practitioner briefing which has been produced by the QAPP Group as part of our preparation:

**WSCP - JTAI – Multi-Agency Inspection Briefing for Partners ([safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk](https://safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk))**

To support our preparation for a JTAI inspection the Safeguarding Partnership has also:

- Used the JTAI audit methodology for our own multi-agency audits, so developing partners' familiarity with the process.
- Provided a presentation on the JTAI approach to all our WSCP subgroups to raise awareness on the approach and expectations of partners
- Developed a single point of contact list for key agencies who will likely be involved in any future JTAI process.

***5. Continue to deliver multi-agency audits in areas identified as requiring further scrutiny and use the learning from those audits to improve services to children and young people. The audit activity within this coming reporting period will include how effectively agencies capture the voice of SEND children within our safeguarding processes.***

## **Voice of the Child with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

A multi-agency audit of the services provided to five children with special educational needs and disabilities has now been completed. This audit considered the children's experiences of those services and how they have had their voices heard and responded to. For this audit, we followed the Joint Target Area Inspection (JTAI) methodology, with each agency considered the same five children's experiences and then meeting to share and discuss findings.

The audit returns identified a number of areas of good practice within the work of the various agencies, examples of which are provided below:

- Appropriate safeguarding child alerts on systems to ensure any practitioner who may see the child / young person is aware of any current safeguarding concerns and Social Worker involvement /contact details.
- Capacity was considered and recorded in relation to medical decisions /interventions.
- GET SAFE minutes were available on agency systems to inform staff of safeguarding concerns / current level of risk, Social Worker contact details etc.
- Clear attempts were made so practitioners had opportunities to see the children alone and if this was not possible it was clearly documented for the next practitioner to see.
- Parents and carers were updated on the plans.
- There was evidence of awareness by practitioners of how a child's disability was impacting on their daily functioning and as such appointments were tailored to this. Cultural needs were also recorded in respect of individual children.



- Plans had been formulated with the child and parent around keeping safe from harm. The child had been consulted for these and had expressed their opinions whether negative or positive. The child's voice appeared to have been heard and their wishes listened to.
- During the Covid-19 period when interventions were taking place virtually, one young person was not engaging and wanted to move to face to face interventions. This was appropriately responded to and moved to direct sessions; responding to the child's wishes and supporting better engagement.
- SEND needs were evidenced in all assessments completed by the Youth Justice Service.
- The Voice of the Child was clearly recorded and informed plans for children and young people, and there was evidence of children's views being considered within decision making and care planning. There was also evidence of seeking and using expert advice (psychologist) in how best to communicate with young people.
- When new information was received and evidence of risks escalated, Strategy Discussions were held appropriately.

As with all multi-agency audits, the group was also keen to identify how we can further improve services and share that learning across the partnership. Opportunities identified within this audit are provided below.

- Health records should always be clear on who is holding Parental Responsibility, as this can sometimes be difficult to ascertain in an emergency.
- There was little evidence within records of the family and child's religious or cultural beliefs being considered.
- In one case the child's specific disability needs were not evidenced in the context of appropriate contact and approaches.
- We need to ensure that all appropriate referrals have been made to partner agencies. In one example, it was "assumed" that referral to a particular agency involved with the child would have been done after the Strategy Discussion, but that did not in fact happen. It is important to not make assumptions that another agency will make a referral that was initially identified by your own agency.
- It is always important to record when a child has been spoken to alone, and it is important that children have these opportunities. Where this has not happened or been possible this should also be recorded, with the reasons why.
- We must always ensure that missing episodes are followed up in a timely manner, strategy discussion minutes are recorded and shared in a timely manner and direct work with children always considers their individual needs and communication needs.

Where there were areas of improvement for agencies these were recognised, and actions were taken to address those.

A learning briefing was produced and circulated to practitioners. A copy of the briefing can be read here:

[Multi-Agency Audit: Voice of the Child and SEND \(office.com\)](#)

## Identification of Need and Risk

The Quality Assurance, Practice and Procedures Group (QAPP) has also undertaken a multi-agency audit of seven children's experiences 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. The agencies taking part in the audit were:

- Worcestershire Children First – Children's Social Care and Safeguarding
- Worcestershire Acute Hospital NHS Trust

- Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust
- West Mercia Police
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board – GP Practices

Again, agencies were asked to audit their own agencies' involvement with the child (using a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) methodology) and provide evidence of their practice and reflection on the work they have undertaken, identifying both good practice and areas for learning and development. Each agency graded the quality of practice from the perspective of their own service.

The audits were structured such that the quality of the agency response was examined within five key areas, these being at referral, strategy discussion, the interim safety plan, section 47 enquiry and 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. Specifically, it highlighted:

- Timely, appropriate and proportionate decision making by the Family Front Door.
- Strategy discussions with the right agencies involved and contributing and the outcomes appropriate to the risks.
- The progression to Initial Conference was the right action for these children.
- Agencies evidenced assurance of the right decisions and actions being taken to safeguard children, appropriate information sharing and partnership engagement. The audit also provided evidence of strategy discussions and conferences being well chaired and recorded.

The audit also identified that although strategy discussion minutes were being shared, not all agencies had saved these to their records. Further, on occasions agencies had not liaised or updated information within the assessment between the strategy discussion taking place and the Initial Child Protection Conference. This is learning which those agencies involved have taken from this process and will address internally.

## Measuring Performance

In addition to progressing 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.

## Learning and Development

A further important strand of QAPP Group work is to ensure the quality and accessibility of learning and development opportunities for the Partnership. Three core training opportunities have been offered during this reporting period.

**Signs of Safety** – A total of 64 partners attended courses which were held in February, April and June 2022.

**Management of Allegations** – A total of 46 partners attended two courses which were run in March and May 2022.

**Levels of Need** – Courses were run in February and May 2022 and were attended by a total of 59 practitioners.

Here are some examples of the feedback from delegates attending these courses:

*“I found the information was explained really well to a level where I could understand even though I haven't years of experience as some do. Thank you”*

*"This was a really good training session. All information contained was relative and informative. It was also good that although this was a virtual presentation it still allowed for participants to verbally participate within the activities and in asking questions"*

*"An informative refresher and clear presenting by the practitioners delivering the workshop who facilitated a relaxed presentation, inviting questions and curiosity"*

*"Loved that was lots of different organisations Involved with the delivery and that they had a wealth of knowledge on all sectors available to answer questions"*



Training is promoted through the Partnership Newsletter and can be booked via the Website at:

**[WSCP Training and Events - Worcestershire Safeguarding Boards \(safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk\)](https://safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk)**

## **Policies and Procedures**

Another function of the QAPP Group is to work with the West Midlands Safeguarding Children Procedures Group to ensure practitioners have access to relevant and up to date multi-agency policies and procedures, and to ensure the Levels of Need (Thresholds) guidance is readily accessible and updated as necessary. These are available at: **[Welcome | West Midlands Safeguarding Children Group \(procedures.org.uk\)](https://procedures.org.uk)**

## **Evidence of Impact**

As can be seen from the above examples of responses provided for the 'Sarah' single agency audit, agencies from across our partnership have used the learning from this child safeguarding practice review to develop their own internal practices and the knowledge of their staff in relation to child sexual exploitation. Although clearly we can never entirely eradicate all such risks for children and young people within Worcestershire, with the increased awareness amongst professionals and the strengthening of responses to concerns, we can make children and young people safer and ensure concerns are identified sooner, the appropriate support for those at risk is made available earlier, and an environment is created in which it is more difficult for offenders to operate, with an increased likelihood of them being identified. The responses by agencies evident from this audit all contribute to those outcomes and the evidence of the overall improvements in our local response has been triangulated by the 'Sarah' 'deep dive' case audit, details of which are provided in the GET SAFE Partnership Group section of this report.

Through our work to promote understanding of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) process we have improved the ability and readiness of the partnership to respond in the future should it be necessary. Through our work on the voice of the child with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) we have a stronger collective understanding of how we are capturing the views and wishes of these children and young people and have been able to provide evidence based guidance to practitioners in this area.

Finally, the QAPP Group's work on identification of need and risk for children who have recently been referred to the Family Front Door has provided assurance of the correct decisions and actions being taken to safeguard children, appropriate information sharing and partnership engagement at this point in the Child Protection process.

## Areas for Future Focus

During the forthcoming reporting period the QAPP Group will be focused on the following areas:

- Continued quality assurance activity through auditing and feedback processes. The areas chosen for such activity will be selected based on emerging national and local reviews and guidance, for example the quality of our response to children affected by domestic abuse.
- Continue our scrutiny and focus of multi-agency practice using our set of key performance indicators. The involvement of the right agencies at all stages of the child protection process and ensuring that children, young people and families receive the correct referral or support at the most appropriate level and at the earliest opportunity will remain a priority for the QAPP Group.
- Complete the independent research into the effectiveness of Early Help by the University of Worcester.
- Continue to offer learning and development opportunities for practitioners across the partnership, to include a Partnership Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Conference.

# 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, that the recommendations and learning resulting from these reviews are fully implemented, and evidence of their impact obtained. During this reporting period the CSPR Group has been chaired by Ellen Footman who is Associate Director for Nursing and Quality/Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Adults and Children with NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

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 safeguard children more effectively, for example through policy development and the commissioning of multi-agency training. There are 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. That said, with the changes introduced in the most recent 'Working Together' document, even when the criteria for a CSPR is met the three safeguarding partners do not have to carry out a CSPR if they believe all learning has been captured at the rapid review stage of the process. The new process regarding CSPR's allows a more flexible approach to reviewing cases than was previously seen within Serious Case Reviews. Child safeguarding practice reviews are not inquiries into how a child died or was seriously harmed or about who is culpable, the emphasis being on extracting the opportunities for learning and improvement.

## Progress, Achievements and Evidence of Impact

This year the CSPR Group has completed six rapid reviews resulting in the commissioning of one child safeguarding practice review. This review is ongoing. In each cases the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel has been notified of the outcome of the rapid review and in all cases has agreed with the decision of the WSCP Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group. Further, in all cases where a rapid review has been completed, any learning identified has been recorded and is followed up. Examples of such follow up from rapid review learning is in one case additional information has been shared with professionals across the partnership relating to keeping children safe when there are dogs in the home, and another such review has led to the refreshing and promotion of the WSCP professional curiosity briefing, which provides guidance to practitioners on this subject.

The CSPR Group has continued its work to implement learning from both national and local reviews. Following on from the last WSCP Annual Report which set out our intention to develop a 'Keep Me Safe' Strategy, significant progress has now been made with this. The 'Keep Me Safe' 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 \(hwics.org.uk\)\)](#)

The strategy outlines the agreed priorities, aims and objectives for the period 2022-2025. The priorities for the overarching 'Keep Me Safe' Strategy is informed by emerging themes or concerns, identified from local and national reviews or through the child death overview process. The strategy is intended for use with any safeguarding theme and can be used as a framework in response to emerging priorities, perhaps as a result of national and local research, data or learning.

The first of these local guidance documents, 'Keep Me Safe when I am Sleeping' is nearing completion and will be available to practitioners across Herefordshire and Worcestershire in the near future. This work also supports

a recommendation made within 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. Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group also secured funding to support the use of the ICON programme within the county, this being a nationally recognised programme to help parents cope better with crying babies. This funding is being managed via the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership and will be used to support this work across Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

The intention remains to produce additional local guidance for practitioners based on the learning within the two national reports; *"Out of Routine: A review of sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI) in families where the children are considered at risk of significant harm"* (July 2020), and *"Safeguarding children under 1 from non-accidental injury caused by male carers"* (September 2021). This work is being completed jointly with Herefordshire and is being led by the Deputy Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Adults, Children and Children Looked After for NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

In last year's report we recognised the need to focus on meeting the National Child Safeguarding Review Panel expectation that reviews should be completed and published within six months of the incident. As with other safeguarding children partnership areas, this remains a significant challenge for us with barriers such as ongoing criminal proceedings remaining an issue. That said, we recognise that even when we are unable to meet that six month publication target we are, and will continue to disseminate learning from the rapid review in ways which avoid compromise to any ongoing criminal justice process. We have also in recent cases used alternative approaches, specifically audit methodologies, to access learning sooner.

## Areas for Future Focus

During the forthcoming reporting period the CSPR Group will be focused on the following areas:

- Continue to support the development of 'Keep Me Safe' themes in line with national and local learning.
- Complete and publish the three ongoing Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and embed any multi-agency learning resulting from them.

# 11. Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

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

The partnership has published one Child Safeguarding Practice Review during this period. This review, which was published in September 2022, related to the death of baby D who was only 6 weeks old when he suddenly died. The review can be read in full here:

**[CSPR - Baby D \(safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk\)](https://safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk)**

There were three recommendations from this review, all of which have been followed up by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review via the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Child Death Overview Panel, the Sudden Unexplained Death in Infancy and Childhood (SUDIC) Co-ordinator, and the West Midlands Regional Child Safeguarding Procedures Group respectively.





# 12. The Education Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group

The Education Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group consists of representatives of the Worcestershire 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. This group is chaired by the Director for Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Education Place Planning.

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

## Areas of Focus for 2021/2022

The 2020 - 2021 report identified the following areas of focus for this reporting year:

1. In the coming twelve months the Education Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group will be focused on ensuring the learning from the audit of multi-agency responses to reports of sexual violence in schools and colleges is used to further improve the services provided to children and young people.
2. System learning from Ofsted complaints is a further area of development on which the group will be focused. We need to build on how learning from these complaints, which also includes identified best practice, is used to strengthen practice in our education settings.
3. The group will continue to work to support education providers to encourage those who are victims of sexual violence, sexual harassment and other forms of child on child abuse to report those concerns, and have processes in place that promote such reporting through education and guidance, recognising that this is happening in all settings.
4. The group will also be focused on ensuring that they continue to support the relationship between education settings and the Worcestershire Family Front Door and promote the knowledge and understanding of the Levels of Need Guidance through regular joint audit activity and clear guidance and dissemination of learning.

## Progress and Achievements

The work of the Group within these areas of focus is set out below.

- Ensuring the learning from the audit of multi-agency responses to reports of sexual violence in schools and colleges is used to further improve the services provided to children and young people.

In last year's report we highlighted the ongoing audit of specific cases where young people had reported child-on-child abuse. This audit was completed during the current reporting period and learning briefings were developed for professionals. These were then 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. Learning from this audit is also used by the Worcestershire network of Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL's) Champions who support and disseminate good safeguarding practice within their own and other settings. This is further supported by Designated Safeguarding Leads having the opportunity to network on a termly basis; the meetings have been split into four geographical areas for ease of access for the DSL's. Numbers attending are high, for example since they began over 400 DSLs have attended the network meetings to share good practice and receive local and national updates on safeguarding.

The Worcestershire child-on-child abuse policy for educational settings has been updated with a risk assessment tool, and this has become a focus of safeguarding audits within individual schools by the Education Safeguarding Team. Further, there is a master class for Designated Safeguarding Leads about child-on-child abuse and the responses to it being planned for June 2023.

- System learning from Ofsted complaints; specifically building on how learning from these complaints, which also includes identified best practice, is used to strengthen practice in our education settings.

A briefing on key learning themes from complaints received via Ofsted has been produced and circulated to head teachers. This includes complaint prevention through school's approaches to most the common themes such as bullying, and opportunities for young people to raise concerns within schools so they can be addressed prior to them reaching the complaint stage.

- The group will continue to work to support education providers to encourage those who are victims of sexual violence, sexual harassment and other forms of child-on-child abuse to report those concerns and have processes in place that promote such reporting through education and guidance, recognising that this is happening in all settings.

Following the disclosures of child-on-child abuse made through the 'Everyone's Invited' website in early 2021 and the subsequent Ofsted national rapid review activity focused on the quality of partner responses to such reports, Worcestershire partners put in place a comprehensive response to the identified concerns. Much of that local activity was described in last year's report, and it is a strong reflection on the quality of that response that those activities were cited 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 \(govdelivery.com\)](#))**

Having robust training, policies and procedures in place in education settings is essential to encouraging reporting and providing the appropriate response should an incident of child-on-child abuse be identified. Between July 2021 and January 2022 Worcestershire Children First School Safeguarding Team carried out a Section 175 Audit of education establishments within Worcestershire. The purpose of undertaking the Section 175 audit is to provide a report to the School Governing Body on safeguarding practice that enables it to monitor compliance with the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), and to offer reassurance to both the Local Authority and Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership that schools are effectively carrying out their safeguarding duties and identify areas where further support is needed. Training, policies and procedures are key areas of the audit.

It is testament to the commitment to safeguarding generally and to supporting local partnership working that all 258 education settings within Worcestershire completed and returned their Section 175 audit. This audit therefore provides a comprehensive picture of the strength of safeguarding arrangements across the education sector. In addition to the self-assessment audit and to triangulate evidence the Education Safeguarding Adviser completed 67 audit visits to settings in the academic year covered by the Section 175 Audit. The purpose of the visits is to review safeguarding practice by undertaking a safeguarding assessment alongside the schools and offer support and further guidance to ensure safeguarding is effective and Ofsted compliant.

In relation to child-on-child abuse the Section 175 audit returns told us that in all of our schools there is a child safeguarding policy in place, and all staff have read Part 1 of the Keeping Children Safe in Education Statutory Guidance (which sets out their safeguarding responsibilities, including responses to child-on-child abuse) and the Designated Safeguarding Lead knows how to access current learning and improvement briefings. Further, all schools reported that they are aware of the importance of making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable, will never be tolerated and are not an inevitable part of growing up. The audit return also showed that 98% of Worcestershire schools are choosing to deliver relationships or sex education as part of a timetabled PSHE programme, with good outcomes, and 95% of schools have an E-safety, IT Acceptable Use Policy in Place.

It has been recommended that future Section 175 audits should build on the above progress by gathering information on how education settings are recording child-on-child abuse incidents, and the ways in which they are then responding to those reports.

- The group will also be focused on ensuring that they continue to support the relationship between education settings and the Worcestershire Family Front Door and 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 whereby each month ten cases are selected 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. The audit focuses on referrals from education settings as the greatest volume of referrals are received from this sector. Each case is audited independently by Education Safeguarding, Early Years Improvement and Early Years Partnership managers. The audit focuses on the reasons behind the referral, the quality of the referral, the response to the referral and how needs could more appropriately have been met at level one or two, so ensuring the child or young person and their family received the right service at the earliest opportunity. Each case is then discussed in a monthly meeting with auditors and the Family Front Door manager, and a summary of findings and learning is produced quarterly. This system has resulted in a total of 110 referrals from 69 different education settings being audited during the reporting period.

These audits have shown that thresholds are being applied appropriately by the Family Front Door and outcomes were consistent and proportionate to the presenting need, with clear rationales being recorded for the decisions made. Further, there is a range of high quality support available through schools' early help offers.

The following learning has been identified through this activity.

- We need to ensure that pupils, parents and professionals are consistently referred to the schools' early help offer, which needs to be user friendly and kept up to date.
- Support for the child/young person should be coordinated through the Early Help Assessment by schools and other community partners.
- There needs to be a robust conversation with the parent(s) and/or carers by professionals prior to the referral being made.
- There needs to be clear evidence of the child's voice within the referral.
- The referral needs to be specific on the concerns held.

- We need to ensure parents/carers understand and give informed consent for the referral where appropriate to do so.

The learning from these audits is shared in the following ways:

**Education Settings** – Each month, direct contact is made by the Education Safeguarding and Early Years Improvement team with individual settings where clear learning has been identified. Key learning and messages are shared within the Worcestershire Heads meetings and also circulated to each school, with individualised copies sent to those settings audited. Messages from these audits are used to inform and adapt the Levels of Need training, and learning is also cascaded via the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Network Meetings.

**Early Help** – The Early Help Partnerships Manager has attended Family Front Door meetings to provide a summary of what is available through early help in the community to strengthen the feedback given to referrers and continues to raise awareness of the early help available in the community and promote the use of the Early Help Assessment with all partners.

**Family Front Door** – Key Learning has been fed back by managers to the Family Front Door team and learning is included within supervision sessions.

There has also been a short learning briefing covering the findings from these audits produced and circulated to education settings.

There is evidence that this audit programme and associated learning is making a difference to the quality of referrals to the Family Front Door coming from educational settings. Comparisons between the first and second halves of the year show a 46% reduction in the number of referrals from those education settings audited most frequently.

In addition to the above four areas of focus, the Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group has undertaken work on several other aspects of safeguarding in education. These are summarised below.

## **Early Help**

The provision of early help to children, young people and their families by education settings is a key part of our wider multi-agency safeguarding system, and the expectation is that those education settings will, where possible, provide early help directly to families prior to asking for additional support from other agencies.

The Section 175 audit report completed in January 2022 showed that at that time 98% of Worcestershire schools had their own Early Help Offer, and 91% of schools had that available to families on their school website. Further, 68% of schools reported that they completed an Early Help Assessment prior to any referral to Worcestershire Children First for Early Help services, and 49% of schools complete the assessment when offering school early help. The audit results also showed that at the time of the audit, 6,207 children were using a schools Early Help Offer and 13,174 in total had accessed one in the previous twelve months. These figures provide strong evidence of both the engagement of education settings in our local Early Help arrangements, and the extent to which those settings are engaging with children, young people and families at a point which is critical to preventing escalation of risk and therefore potential child protection interventions.

The Worcestershire Early Help Partnership oversees the effectiveness of early help provision across the county, and representatives from both schools and Early Years are supporting the work of that group. Local resources such as the Here 2 Help Directory, and Family Hub website are also promoted within the Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group.

## **Exploitation**

The Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group has continued to promote both the Worcestershire GET SAFE and GET THERE provision and raise awareness amongst staff in their settings about the risks of child criminal exploitation. The Section 175 audit returns showed that in 93% of schools the GET SAFE training package has been accessed by both the school Designated Safeguarding Lead and their deputy, whilst nearly nine out of ten Worcestershire schools have disseminated GET SAFE training to their staff and included GET SAFE within the curriculum.

## **Domestic Abuse**

Operation Encompass involves the reporting to schools, before the start of the next school day, when a child or young person has been involved in or exposed to domestic abuse. The information is given in strict confidence to a school's DSL to enable support to be given dependent on the needs and wishes of the child. Operation Encompass initially covered public and local authority primary and secondary schools and nurseries attached to a primary school, however during this reporting period work has been done, supported by the Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group, to extend this service to include all nursery and preschool settings within Worcestershire. The work involved in this is significant with Worcestershire managing hundreds of Operation Encompass notifications each month, and it is for this reason that WSCP has provided additional financial support in this area (further details of which have been provided in the Executive section above). The Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group has also provided the forum to discuss the quality of the information provided within some Operation Encompass notifications to ensure the integrity of the information sharing.

## **Evidence of Impact**

The impact of the work of the WCF Education Safeguarding Team supported by the Education Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group has led directly to the following:

- In relation the joint audit activity at the Family Front Door, comparisons between the first and second halves of the year show a 46% reduction in the number of referrals from those education settings audited most frequently.
- A strong contribution from education settings to the delivery of early help to children, young people and families across Worcestershire.
- Education settings are now consistently recording incidents of child-on-child abuse.
- A wide understanding of child criminal exploitation risks amongst those professionals who have most contact with children and young people outside the family, and knowledge of the support available via the local GET SAFE and GET THERE frameworks.
- Communication between Worcestershire Children First and schools has improved with the provision of network meetings, training and DSL Champions and the Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group. The service level agreement offered to all schools has offered a consistent approach to high quality training for Designated Safeguarding Leads.

## Areas for Future Focus

During the forthcoming reporting period the Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group will be focused on the following areas:

- Consider the recommendations within the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Telford (published July 2022) which relate directly to education settings and implement any relevant learning within Worcestershire schools and colleges.
- Monitor the timeliness and quality of Operation Encompass notifications following the expansion to include Early Years settings and the increased partnership investment to support this (going live in February 2023).
- It has been recommended that future Section 175 audits should build on the above progress by gathering information on how education settings are recording child-on-child abuse incidents, and the ways in which they are then responding to those reports.

## 13. Updates to Published Arrangements

There have been no updates to the three safeguarding partners' published arrangements during this reporting period.

# 14. The Voice of the Child

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) following their national review of the effectiveness of independent scrutiny of safeguarding children partnerships 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, and how we might use this recommendation to strengthen children and people's involvement within the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership. This is an area for development in the coming reporting period.

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 seven children and young people involved. The below table sets out the questions asked and pattern of responses.

Questions	Response
Are you clear on the different roles of agencies in your child's plan? (Social Worker, Health, School etc.)	86% (6 parents said yes)
Do you think the multi-agency approach to supporting you and your family has improved your child's and your own safety and wellbeing?	71% (5 parents said yes)
Do agencies identify strengths for your family and make clear to you what they are worried about?	100% (all parents reported positively in this area)
Do agencies make it clear what you need to do as part of the plan?	86% (6 parents said yes)
Do professionals take time to speak to your child and listen to their views?	71% (5 parents said yes)

Here are some of things families told us:

*"Don't think anything could have been done better they did things perfect for me"*

*"The Social Workers could have communicated better at the beginning and explained things better. (Anonymised) is doing a brilliant job at explaining how I can improve myself. Other professionals have all been brilliant all along"*

*"Supported me and guided me gave me push I needed and have now empowered me to do things myself"*

*"The Health Visitor is brilliant; she comes out regularly and offers support. Also, the Support Worker comes out and supports me well, they all keep in regular contact"*

*"Mentor, at school is working with (anonymised) very well, she talks to (anonymised) and does well"*

*"Communicating, extremely well laid out, no misunderstanding, or meetings, very straight to the point"*



From the families spoken to, two families reported that they did not feel the support from agencies had had an impact at that point, however three families felt that both as parents and for their children they felt happier, healthier, and safer through the intervention.

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 at being at risk of harm and child protection planning is required. It should also be noted that this survey was completed with those families who were at the early stages of involvement as all had recently progressed through strategy discussion to Initial Child Protection Conference, so it is perhaps unsurprising that not all families felt that positive change had been achieved up to that point.

## Areas for future focus

- Strengthen the involvement of Children and Young People in our local safeguarding arrangements through work with the Worcestershire Youth Cabinet.

# 15. Independent Scrutiny

Independent scrutiny of the child safeguarding partnership arrangements is provided by the Independent Chair, and examples of how the work of the partnership is scrutinised are provided throughout this report. The Independent Chair has continued throughout this reporting period to attend and be directly involved in all groups within the partnership and so has a detailed knowledge of the contribution of the various partners, and the effectiveness and progress of ongoing workstreams. Further, the Independent Chair provides direct scrutiny of the safeguarding partners' representatives contributions within the Executive Group, reviews all Rapid Review decisions made by partners, and has a direct involvement in selecting the areas of focus for multi-agency audit. Examples of this within the current review period are the Independent Chair requesting the review of safeguarding partner responses to the Solihull JTAI findings and making the recommendation that a future area of focus for the QAPP Group is on children and young people who are affected by domestic abuse. The Independent Chair also produces the WSCP Annual Report.

# 16. Conclusion

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.

With the current volume of national reviews, learning and recommendations, it is important that Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership remains focused on those 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.

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.

# Appendix A – WSCP – Budget Details (2021 - 2022)

**Table: Income and Expenditure of WSCP for period 01/10/21 - 30/09/2022**

The following table on the next page sets out the income and expenditure of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership for the period 1st October 2021 to 30th September 2022. The following points should be noted in relation to the figures.

- Although the accounts show a net overspend for this period of £24,639, the first six months of this reporting period was when there was collective agreement that there would be no partnership contributions to the WSCP budget due to the impact of Covid-19 on single agency finances, accepting that WSCP reserves would need to be used to bridge that short term funding gap. Funding resumed as normal on 1st April 2022, so ending that short term funding deficit. The agency contributions reflected in the table below is therefore a half yearly figure (1st April 2022 – 30th September 2022).
- The funding for ICON has been provided by the Integrated Care Board to support the local roll out of the ICON programme through the 'Keep Me Safe' strategy. Further details of this have been provided earlier in this report, but in summary ICON is a nationally recognised programme designed to reduce instances of trauma to babies caused by shaking.
- The funding for the additional posts provided by WSCP to support both information sharing within the Family Front Door and Operation Encompass notifications did not begin until October 2022 so will be reflected in next year's report.

Income and Expenditure Account for the period: 01/10/21 - 30/09/22	Partnership Budget	Training Delivery	SCR Fund	Partnership Fund	Total
Holding account 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2022	4,157	97,233	18,085	7,476	126,951
<b>Income £</b>					
WCF	46,500*	0	0	0	46,500
Integrated Care Board (ICB)	35,740*	0	0	0	35,740
West Mercia Police	10,722*	0	0	0	10,722
ICB - ICON Funding (one off payment)	10,000	0	0	0	10,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>102,962</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>102,962</b>
*please note these are 6 month figures, as agreed there would be no contributions due to COVID-19 in previous year					
<b>Expenditure £</b>					
Salaries	68,986	0	0	0	68,986
Data Analyst	13,500	0	0	0	13,500
Administration and business costs	20,614	0	0	0	20,614
Recharges	24,500	0	0	0	24,500
Training Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>127,600</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>127,600</b>
<b>Net Position</b>	<b>-24,639</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-24,639</b>



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