

## **CABINET**

### **28 SEPTEMBER 2023**

# **WORCESTERSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022**

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#### **Relevant Cabinet Member**

#### **Relevant Chief Officer**

Director of Children's Services and Chief Executive of Worcestershire Children First

#### **Local Member(s)**

#### **Recommendation**

- 1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families recommends that Cabinet:**
  - (a) receives the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2021/22; and**
  - (b) notes the progress of the work of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership.**

#### **Background**

2. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 places a responsibility on the three safeguarding partners in each local authority area, these being the local authority, the local integrated care board and the chief officer of police, to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. Within Worcestershire the three safeguarding partners are supported in fulfilling this responsibility by the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP).
3. The three safeguarding partners are also required to publish a report at least once in every 12-month period detailing their progress. This report should include an update on a number of areas as set out in Chapter 3 of Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018) including how effective the arrangements have been in practice, evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies on outcomes for children and families from early help to looked-after children and care leavers, an analysis of where further progress still needs to be made and ways in which the partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision.
4. The report is made publicly available through publication on the Partnership website. In addition, it will be subject of scrutiny within both the NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board and West Mercia Police, and shared with all other relevant partner agencies. There is also a statutory requirement to share this

report with both the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care.

5. This is the third annual report published by the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership since it replaced the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board on 30 September 2019.

### **Key points from the WSCP Annual Report 2021/2022**

6. This reporting period has seen significant national scrutiny of how we work together to safeguard children and young people. The tragic deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson led to the publication in May 2022 of the national "Child Protection in England" report, which makes eight recommendations on how we collectively safeguard and protect children. Further, in May 2022 Josh MacAlister's independent review of children's social care was published. 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), and it is anticipated in the forthcoming months 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.

7. This reporting period also saw the publication of a number of other reports which carried potential learning for all safeguarding children's 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.

8. The National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel has also 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 published briefing papers covering bruising in non-mobile infants and children and multi-agency safeguarding and domestic abuse, focusing specifically on children and young people affected by domestic abuse.

### **What have we done as a Safeguarding Partnership?**

9. Following the Solihull Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) the Independent Chair of Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) asked each of the Worcestershire safeguarding partners to provide responses to the specific JTAI findings relevant to their agencies. Comprehensive responses were received from each partner, full details of which are contained within main report.

10. 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 funded additional resources within the Worcestershire Family Front Door. These posts help to both manage Family Front Door referrals, particularly from those agencies with high referral volumes and

low conversion rates and provide administrative support for Operation Encompass notifications to Early Years settings in line with a current national pilot.

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

## **GET SAFE**

12. As part of the follow up to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review 'Sarah', published in August 2021, a multi-agency audit has been completed within the GET SAFE Partnership Group which demonstrated that child protection procedures are followed and strategy meetings are convened appropriately with the correct agencies in attendance, and that missing intervention and Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings are not being used in place of child protection procedures, but instead complement them.

13. WSCP has introduced a multiagency dataset within the GET SAFE Partnership Group, which contributes to our increased understanding of child safeguarding in Worcestershire. There have been a number of different initiatives organised during this reporting period designed to engage with young people on GET SAFE and GET THERE, including successful events run at the Malvern Theatre and the Swan Theatre in Worcester by the GET SAFE Team working with Ready Steady Worcestershire, the Steer Clear initiative which delivers workshops to young people and their families about the dangers of carrying knives, a visit to Worcestershire of the Knife Angel, which is the National Monument Against Violence and Aggression, and 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.

14. In relation to strengthening WSCP links with other local partnerships, the safeguarding partners have sought and received 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. Work has also been 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.

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

## Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures Group

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

17. 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. 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 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.

18. 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.

## Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Group

19. 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 also 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... :: Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care System \(icb.nhs.uk\)](#). The priorities within this strategy 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.

20. 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 \(safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk\)](https://safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk)

## **Education Head Teachers Safeguarding Steering Group**

21. 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 the learning shared across the partnership and directly with schools. 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 (July 2022) "Multi-Agency Response to Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Learners: emerging practice".

22. 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. 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 regular multi-agency auditing takes place of cases referred to the Worcestershire Family Front Door from education settings where the appropriate threshold was not met, and the learning from these has been used to reduce such referrals from certain settings.

## **Funding**

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

## **Conclusion**

24. There has been a great deal of positive work completed across the partnership, 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.

25. 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.

## **Overview and Scrutiny**

26. . The Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report is to be considered by the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel on Friday 7 July 2023.

## **Legal, Financial and HR Implications**

27. There are no specific legal, financial or HR implications associated with this report. Details of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership budget for 2021/2022 are included within the report at Appendix A. This report is produced to comply with Children Act 2004 Section 16G which requires the safeguarding partners to prepare and publish, at least once in every 12 month period, a report on the work that they have done as a result of their arrangements, and how effective the arrangements have been in practice.

## **Risk Implications**

28. Not applicable.

## **Joint Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments**

Not required in relation to this report.

## **Supporting Information**

Appendix 1 - Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2021/22

Report also available via the following link: [Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2021 - 2022 \(safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk\)](https://safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk)

## **Contact Points**

### Specific Contact Points for this report

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## **Background Papers**

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