

Corporate Parenting Panel

28 January 2022

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020/21



Report of David Pickard Independent Chair & Scrutineer - Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP)

Electoral division(s) affected:

None.

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Corporate Parenting Panel with the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020/21. The full annual report is available via the DSCP website at <https://durham-scp.org.uk/professionals/key-reports/> and is attached as Appendix 2.

Executive summary

2. The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership is required in law to produce a report at least every 12 months into the effectiveness of its arrangements to safeguard children in the area.
3. This report details our Vision and Values and the work undertaken against set priorities for 2020-21 and outlines our focus for 2021-22.

Recommendations

4. Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to:
 - a) Note the content of this report.
 - b) Accept the DSCP Annual Report for information as an overview of the work undertaken in 2020/21 and our priorities for action in 2021/22.

Background

5. The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership is a statutory body established under the Children Act 2004. It has an independent chair and scrutineer and consists of three statutory partners, namely Durham Constabulary, Durham County Council and the Clinical Commissioning

Group. Other relevant agencies form part of the broader partnership across Education, Health, Criminal Justice and the Voluntary & Community Sector.

6. The DSCP's primary responsibility is to provide a way for local organisations that have a responsibility in respect of child welfare, to agree how they will work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in County Durham and to ensure that they do so effectively.
7. Statutory Guidance from Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) requires each local Safeguarding Children Partnership to produce and publish an Annual Report every 12 months, evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area.
8. This annual Report provides an overview of the DSCP's 'Practice Improvement and Impact' on our areas of focus in line with our Vision and Values for keeping children safe.

DSCP Annual Report

9. The DSCP Annual Report 2020/21 sets out the work of multi-agency partners to ensure effective arrangements are in place to safeguard and protect vulnerable children and young people from abuse and neglect.
10. The report describes the work undertaken against the 2020/21 priorities and sets out the future priorities for 2021/22.
11. The report also provides an overview of our Vision and Values; the demographic of children and schools in County Durham; the effect of Covid on our services; our achievements against priorities; the work of the Partnership sub-groups; Serious Case Reviews, training and other areas of key activity including Looked After Children (LAC) and Elective Home Education.

Vision and Values

12. Our Vision is simple, it's about 'Keeping Children Safe' on the premise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It acts as an umbrella covering all that we do and underpinned through our three Core Values – Tenacity; Curiosity; Openness.
 - **Prevention through early intervention** – work together to prevent harm at the earliest opportunity
 - **Joined-up response** - We will respond promptly drawing on appropriate expertise of others
 - **Listening** - We will listen to and observe children to ensure their voice is heard even when they don't or can't speak out.

- **Identifying** - We will identify those most likely to be harmed by sharing information and data effectively.

DSCP Priorities for 2020/21

13. The priorities for the year 2020/21 were determined through multi-agency discussions including at DSCP development sessions:
 - Domestic Abuse – Coercive Controlling Behaviour
 - Cumulative Harm and Risk Assessment.

Achievements Against Priorities

- **Domestic Abuse**

14. This has been one of the key Practice Improvement themes over the last year in raising awareness and understanding, to ensure children are considered as a part of domestic abuse situations and appropriate action taken to protect them.
15. Partner agencies have come together to develop a range of tools, interventions, and workforce development opportunities to support practitioners in identifying and responding to families where coercion and control is a feature.
16. Looking at coercion and control as a part of domestic abuse, the Partnership has worked closely with the Open Clasp theatre company to further develop their production of Rattlesnake and accompanying workshops. The sessions explore how coercion and control can manifest in relationships and the impact this has on families, particularly children.
17. DASH(domestic abuse, stalking, honour based violence) Risk Assessment training linked with the Signs of Safety Harm Matrix has been developed, and managers' report seeing an increase in the use of these tools to better understand risk and potential harm within families.

- **Cumulative Harm and Risk Assessment**

18. The DSCP had earlier recognised that more work was required around the assessment of risk in line with our Signs of Safety Practice framework, and most notably in our judgement on the effect of cumulative harm on children and families. Initial focus was around improving the usage across the Partnership of the Harm Matrix as a tool when developing the risk assessment, in effect asking key questions to illicit quality information to best inform the assessment.
19. A launch event around the Harm Matrix took place across the Partnership in September 2020 and was followed up with a further awareness raising

session during Safeguarding Week in November. Feedback and scrutiny would show a greater understanding of the Harm Matrix and improved use as part of the main risk assessment.

20. It was however recognised that this tool was only one part of the broader need to fully understand and assess risk based on the cumulative harm being experienced by children and its significant effect. With a clear need identified this area is one of our Practice Improvement Themes for 2021/22.

Summary of Key Achievements

21. Below are some examples of achievements and progress made by the DSCP in 2020/21:

- A more rigorous multi-agency risk assessment process dealing with return to home interviews after children have gone missing.
- Significant work within the Embedding Learning sub-group examining actions and recommendations from Serious Case Reviews and other inspection criteria resulted in the development of 4 Practice Improvement Themes (see 2021/22 Priorities).
- A notable achievement around child exploitation is the way in which the use of the Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker (CEVT) has been embedded into multi-agency practice influencing decision making on a day-to-day basis around our most vulnerable children. There is clear connectivity and information sharing between the multi-agency processes that feed the CEVT and operational risk/vulnerability areas such as County Lines and radicalisation.
- A key achievement over the last 12 months has been the design of a new Neglect Practice Guidance section as part of the Children and Families Practice Toolkit to assist practitioners in better recognising the signs of neglect to support effective intervention at the earliest opportunity.
- The County Durham Stronger Families Programme has been committed to implement a Place Based Approach (PBA) and associated Locality Early Help Conversations to all seven localities across County Durham with there being a major shift with this approach. The requirement has been that areas embed better ways of collaborative working to mainstream the 'whole family' approach and embed the Family Outcome Framework (FOF) across the Partnership.
- Enhanced focus on Elective Home Education. information is shared openly between partners including Education, Housing, Health, Gypsy Roma and Traveller Education services, Children's Services and the Police to establish when children were last seen. This informs a wider risk assessment process which considers suitable education and safeguarding. The numbers of those EHE remains

low at 472 (0.6%) with over 70 having returned to school in the reporting period.

- By focusing on the successes of our young people it is seen that Care Experienced Young People aged 17-18 in Durham are engaged in education, employment and training at a rate of 74%; this rate has been sustained throughout the COVID-19 pandemic with young people being supported to access digital and other remote solutions where required. These successes are built upon the actions and interventions with children at a younger age where through our multi-agency care planning we retain an ambitious focus on each child's future, supporting them to feel able to stretch themselves to try new things and to feel hopeful for their futures.

Serious Case Reviews and LAC

22. The DSCP have published a number of Serious Case Reviews within the past year that were agreed pre 2019 launch of the new partnership. It must be recognised that as some of these were some time ago, individual agencies and the partnership have progressed the learning and a number of key actions.
23. None of the cases published were in relation to Looked After Children but a number have been in relation to babies and or very young children and this is a theme that the National Panel have also highlighted and published.
24. In June 2020 the DSCP commissioned a report to disseminate the learning and recommendations from 4 Serious Case Reviews. There were 7 identified themes:
 - a) Cumulative harm/ wider risk assessment
 - b) Information sharing including handovers between agencies
 - c) Professional curiosity and professional challenge
 - d) Missed opportunities
 - e) Professional Optimism
 - f) Compliance with statutory duties and decision making
 - g) Voice of the Child
25. The partnership have consolidated the learning from these reviews and other sources into the 4 Practice Improvement Areas for 2021/22 (see below). We have shared the learning with practitioners through the following:
 - Safeguarding weeks in October 2020 and July 2021
 - Monthly bulletins
 - Learning tools published on the DSCP website.
 - Specific targeted awareness raising and review of training.

- Six monthly updates to the Child Protection Procedures which highlight changes
 - Promotion of support through stronger families and resolving parental conflict forums.
 - Continue to work with the Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Executive Group (DASVEG) and support identified training across the partnership.
26. The DSCP have not commissioned any Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews since the launch of the partnership but have shared learning through the Rapid Review process.

What's Next for 2021/22 – this is correct covers financial year, Apr-March

Focus on Practice Improvement Themes

- Management Understanding and Decision Making
- Voice and Lived Experience of the Child
- Risk Assessment and Cumulative Harm
- Child Sexual Abuse

Other Key Work

- Introduction of new DSCP website.
- Continue to embed the Signs of Safety Practice Framework across partner agencies.
- Improve effectiveness of Partnership scrutiny and the assessment of impact.
- Continue to embed new Training Strategy with hybrid offer.

Conclusion

27. The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020/21 was agreed by the DSCP in October 2021
28. The report is available on the Durham SCP website at <https://durham-scp.org.uk/professionals/key-reports/>, and has been disseminated across partners and their own organisational governance structures.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

Yearly financial contributions to Durham SCP are received from partner agencies and are detailed in the DSCP Annual Report.

Staffing

The priorities identified in the DSCP Annual Report will be delivered using existing resources. Durham County Council will contribute to the delivery of the priorities in partnership with other statutory authorities.

Risk

No adverse implications.

Equality and Diversity/ Public Sector Equality Duty

The DSCP Annual Report identifies the actions to safeguard the needs of vulnerable children and young people.

Accommodation

No adverse implications.

Crime and disorder

The DSCP Annual Report reflects priorities and action that impact positively on crime and disorder in County Durham. The report shows effective partnership working with the Safe Durham Partnership.

Human rights

No adverse implications.

Consultation

Consultation with partner agencies and stakeholders has been undertaken as part of the development of the DSCP Annual Report.

Procurement

No adverse implications.

Disability Issues

No adverse implications.

Legal Implications

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) is a statutory body established under the Children Act 2004. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 requires each area Safeguarding Children Partnership to produce and publish an Annual Report evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area.