



Right for Children, Families and Adults

Walsall Safeguarding Children Partnership
Annual Report 2020-21

Walsall Safeguarding Children Partnership **Annual Report** 2020-21





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Introduction

Welcome to the 2020-2021 Children's Annual Report of Walsall's Safeguarding Partnership.

Following the publication of Working Together 2018, partner agencies in Walsall established Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements and published their plans on 1st September 2019, launching the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership, which replaced previous arrangements, including the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Further information on the detail of these arrangements can be found [here](#).

Following the first 12 months of the new arrangements the statutory partners commissioned an independent review of their arrangements. The review focused on the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Arrangements; the Strategic Plan; robustness of Performance and Quality Assurance; effectiveness of Learning from Serious Incidents and the impact of Independent Chair Arrangements and proposals for future Independent Scrutiny, in Walsall. Penny Thompson (CBE) undertook this review in autumn 2020 and shared her findings with partners in December 2020. Achievements which were highlighted included the Learning & Development offer; timeliness of Rapid Reviews; the management of the impact of Covid-19 and improved Communications with practitioners. The review noted the 'openness, candour and self-reflection' of those involved, it also acknowledged a consensus that some adaptation to the current arrangements would be helpful, and that these will be behavioural and cultural as well as organisational. Areas for further focus included ownership and leadership by the statutory partners, a reduction in meetings and priorities and greater attention to the underpinning values agreed by the partners. These will be taken forward in 2021 by a newly formed Executive Group of the partners. A breakdown of the partnership funding can be found in Appendix 1.

2020-21 was a challenging year with the Pandemic however, WSP continued to exercise oversight over children's safeguarding, whilst mindful of the pressure that health, police and social care have been and continue to be under. During the Pandemic, WSP held weekly partnership meetings to review how services have been responding to the challenges that the virus has created.

We have maintained close oversight on arrangements led by the Police, CCG and the Local Authority to Safeguarding Children. We maintain a close focus on our child safeguarding practice reviews and on learning from our assurance activity.

There is, of course, more to do and more that should be done to continue to improve safeguarding services and become an effective learning system.

The Partnership would like to thank agencies for the work they have done to keep our communities safe and to respond to the needs of children at risk of abuse and neglect in Walsall.

The partners would like to express thanks to Liz Murphy for her work as Independent Chair, for her support and leadership and the work that she has helped progress during this reporting period and throughout her 3 years in Walsall.

Walsall at a glance

Population of 286,716
69,375 (24.2%) of whom are children aged 0-17
2020 mid year population estimate

The number of children and young people aged 0-17 is projected to rise to 71,822 by 2020

Children and young people have more health challenges than their peers

3.5% of babies are born with a low birth weight
Compared with 3.3% to the West Midlands and 2.9% nationally (2019 data)

6.8 per 1000 children die before their first birthday
Compared with 5.6 in the West Midlands and 3.9 nationally (2017-2019 data)

3.0% of young girls get pregnant at 15, 16 or 17
compared with 1.9% in the West Midlands and 1.7% nationally (2018 data)

7.3 per 10,000 would be admitted to hospital as an inpatient for mental health issues
compared with 9.2 in the West Midlands and 9.0 nationally (2019-20 data)

1.5 per 10,000 admitted to hospital for alcohol related issues
compared with 2.6 in the West Midlands and 3.1 nationally (2017-18 – 2019-20 data)

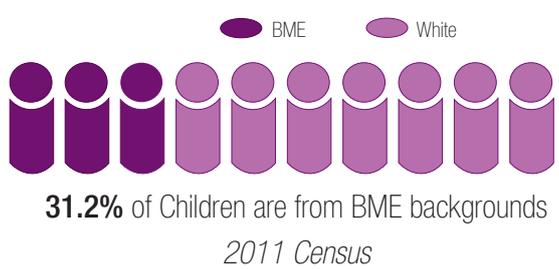
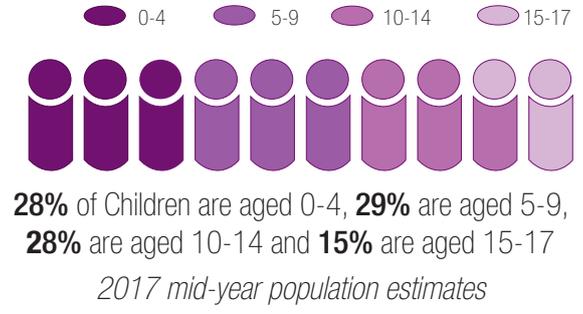
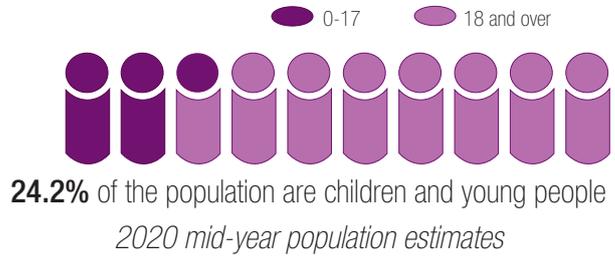
Deprivation levels are high

In the Indices of Deprivation Affecting Children (IDACI)

Walsall is the **19th most deprived Local Authority** in the country with (29%) of neighbourhoods in the top 10% of most deprived neighbourhoods nationally which is the 15 highest.

Two of Walsall's three parliamentary constituencies are in the **top 50** constituencies with the highest levels of child poverty

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What the Safeguarding Partnership has focussed on during 2020/21

During this year, not only have we focused on our strategic priorities, we have focused on ensuring that partnership agencies have continued to deliver safeguarding services during the pandemic. Regular Safeguarding Partnership Covid Meetings were held to discuss service response and assurance, risks and opportunities, key issues or messages and staffing. This offered partners the opportunity to respond to and manage risk, support other services and utilise local resources. It also provided a risk escalation process for the partners.

Our practice development opportunities, audit processes and multi-agency meetings were quickly adapted and we embraced using virtual platforms in response to the national lockdown to support ongoing multi-agency learning opportunities as well as business activities and meetings.

Our Priorities	What we said we would do:	What we did:
<p>To support the local and professional community to ensure that children and families receive the right help at the right time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch the multi-agency CSA strategy. • Effective communications strategy to deliver key messages. • Embed a Child Exploitation pathway. • Ensure appropriate police referrals to MASH in relation to Domestic Abuse. • Improved timeliness of early help assessments and interventions. • Ensure information from GP's and mental health is available in MASH in a timely way. • Launch and embed the Family Safeguarding Model. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 Right Help Right Time virtual training events (235 attendees). • A Practice Reflection Learning Event: Injuries in non-mobile babies and children (109 attendees). • Domestic Abuse webinar, April 2020. • CSA Strategy revised and agreed. • Developed and disseminated regular Key Messages newsletter, to quickly update partners and practitioners with relevant information. • GP / MH info is now available via the Named Nurse in MASH. • Quarterly partnership newsletters. • Learning from Reviews Newsletter, February 2021. • Developed information materials and revised our website to support Covid volunteers. • 7 minute briefings: including – Domestic Abuse, CSA, Babies born during lockdown. • CSA focused partnership event facilitated by CSA Centre for Excellence. • Family Safeguarding Model was launched • Launched the All-Age Exploitation Panel, pathway and assessment tool • Held multi-agency Exploitation webinar. • Timeliness of Early Help Assessments (within 5 days) has doubled.

Our Priorities	What we said we would do:	What we did:
<p>To support the local and professional community to recognise, respond to and reduce the impact of neglect in a child centred way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglect is identified and assessed consistently well across the system • Neglect is tackled holistically via a whole family approach • Increased professional challenge and curiosity • Families are enabled and empowered to make positive and timely change and to identify support • where possible from their own networks • Professional practice supports timely and effective interventions to reduce risk and promote positive • change within families • Assessment, intervention, decision-making and recording is focused on the lived experience of the child • Pilot of the NSPCC pre-birth assessment tool • Continue the Look, Say, Sing, Play campaign (NSPCC) • Implement the Family Safeguarding Model (FSM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Safeguarding Model was launched and implemented. • Undertook a multi-agency Neglect Audit. • Neglect webinar, November 2020. • Look, Say, Sing play roll-out continued
<p>Assurance regarding transition arrangements for agreed vulnerable groups between children and adult services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain more assurance that agencies are embedding a think family approach in practice through audit activity. • Embed the Exploitation Transition Protocol • Establish a multi-agency, all-age, Exploitation Hub. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carried out a joint children's and adults audit to review the effectiveness of the Transition Exploitation Protocol • Launched the all age Exploitation Panel, pathway and assessment tool • Launched the All-Age Exploitation Hub • Began to develop an All-Age Exploitation Strategy
<p>Tackle exploitation and supporting those children and adults who are victims of exploitation and/or go Missing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch an Exploitation Screening Tool and Pathway. • Establish an Exploitation Panel (as part of the Pathway). • Further develop the data scorecard. • Develop joint children's and adult courses in relation to Exploitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued to develop an all-age exploitation scorecard • Launched the Herbert Protocol across the West Midlands • Held an All-Age Exploitation Webinar • Successful Tackling Child Exploitation programme bid.

What has this meant for children and families in Walsall?

Early Help, identifying need and appropriate thresholds

<p>Contacts to Early Help have increased by 7% 4,893 contacts were received between 01 April 2020 and 31st March 2021</p> <p>Top three referrers to Early Help are:</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police (20.2%) LA Services (19.8%) Health (16.7%) <p>Top three presenting needs to Early Help are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenging Behaviour (18.4%) Emotional Wellbeing (child) (14.7%) Domestic Abuse (parent/carer) (14.3%) 		<p>Referrals to social care have reduced by over 30% since Right Help, Right Time was launched in 2019</p> <p>3,431 referrals were received between 01 April 2020 and 31st March 2021 compared to 4,401 last year and 5,267 the previous year</p> <p>Top three presenting needs to Social Care are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic Abuse (37.9%) Emotional Abuse (29.4%) Neglect (16.3%) 	<p>83.5% of contacts to social care were completed within 48 hours</p> <p>58% are completed within 24 hours</p>
<p>Timeliness of Early Help contacts is improving</p> <p>89% were completed within the 5-day target</p> <p>Up from 70% in 2019-20</p> 	<p>Timeliness of Early Help assessments has doubled</p> <p>56% were completed within the 5-day target</p> <p>Up from 28% in 2019-20</p> 	<p>Timelessness of assessments is improving</p> <p>90.2% were completed within 45 days</p> <p>Up from 74.8% in 2020</p> 	
		<p>75% of children age 5 or over are seen alone as part of their assessment</p> 	

<p>Family Safeguarding</p> <p>265</p> <p>Children from 141 families have or are being supported through the Family Safeguarding model</p> 	<p>Adolescents entering care have reduced by 29%</p> <p>63 in 2020-21 compared with 89 in 2019-20</p> 	<p>94% of children have heard at their child protection conference</p> <p>31% attend their conferences</p> 
<p>Children subject of a child protection plan has halved</p> <p>203</p> <p>Children were subject of a plan 31st March 2021 compared with 408 in March 2018</p> 	<p>Care Applications have reduced by 28%</p> <p>78 in 2020-21 compared with 108 in 2019-20</p>	<p>95 children and young people are at risk, 21 are at significant risk and 9 are at serious risk of sexual or criminal exploitation</p> <p>75 Had their risk reduced throughout 2020-21</p>
<p>Initial Child Protection Conferences are timely</p> <p>85% are completed within 15 days of the strategy discussion and 80.4% lead to a child protection plan</p>	<p>The number of children going missing has decreased</p> <p>To 233 in 2020-21 compared with 319 in 2019-20 but missing episodes have reduced by 26%</p> 	<p>Timeliness of return interviews is improving</p> <p>398 Return home interviews were offered and accepted</p> <p>68.1% were completed with 72 hours</p> <p>Compared with 52.6% in 2019-20</p>

• Multi-agency audit findings:

When undertaking multi-agency case file audits a noticeable improvement on previous years was found in practice.

Grade	2019/20	2020/21
Outstanding	0	4%
Good	23%	61%
Requires improvement	62%	30%
Inadequate	15%	4%

• Practitioner's and young people's voice:

"I will apply the guiding principles into my everyday practice and be honest and open with our parents and families and work in ways that builds on family's strengths."

Practitioner changed their practice, following Right Help, Right Time training.

"I will be able to apply it to situations that arise when younger children present we have a duty to find out why there is bruising and have professional curiosity."

Practitioner changed their practice, following Bruising in Non Mobile Babies webinar.

"Working within a multi-disciplinary team, using a restorative approach to support families, has been the missing piece to the puzzle. I'm delighted to be a part of this project barriers will be broken down."

Practitioner involved in Family Safeguarding.

Hello my name is *** and I'm 15, all through the summer I had Sarah as my support worker. I had been struggling a lot and my anxiety was really bad. I've had many social workers etc in the past and I have never really bonded with them or been helped by them, they never had an impact on me however when I met Sarah she was really calm and helped me control my anxiety and I really wish I could have had her long as she helped me so much. She is amazing and I can see she helps many children, and I just wanted to thank you for letting her be my support worker, if I didn't have her I'm not sure where I would be today. My granddad and my auntie really appreciate what Sarah did for me so thank you.

Walsall Young Person was supported to succeed.

Kids not getting the correct nurture

A child always playing alone when their parents are always on their phone

Young people's views were heard on what neglect means to them.

Over 200 parents and professionals attended 3 events to promote Look, Say, Sing, Play

Hundreds of parents have signed up to 'brain building tip's' online

Communication and Engagement

The Partnership Joint Engagement Strategy (2020-2022) aims to support the safeguarding partnership achieve the vision of having children, young people and adults as equal partners alongside the Local Authority, Health and Police. The strategy outlines 4 key steps to achieve engagement with adults: consultation, representation, decision-sharing and co-production.

We also set out in our vision that we wanted to raise the profile of the Safeguarding Partnership, with the community and professionals, and have sought to do this in a number of ways.

The partnership recognises that one of the effects with Covid-19 is the reduced ability to engage with the workforce and with children, despite this the workforce has continued to get information through our communication below. For the young people we have made concerted efforts to keep in touch via virtual means.

During the year we:

Created and distributed a leaflet to support those that needed to isolate at the start of the first lockdown	Created an online tool kit for professionals and volunteers who may be seeing vulnerable families during the pandemic, to raise awareness of safeguarding.	Distributed regular Key Messages to professionals in partner agencies in relation to Covid -19 and partnership safeguarding work	Employed an Engagement Officer in the Business Unit to progress the work of involving our 4 th Partner in our work	Invited young people to discuss the Family Safeguarding Model.
Held 4 Walsall webinars <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic abuse (113 attended) Exploitation (201 attended) Trauma Informed Practice (163 attended) Neglect (87 attended) 	These Webinars have been uploaded to our website and accessed 874 times.	Supported #16days action against domestic abuse campaign on twitter (181 clicks on the content and 11,747 views)	Youth Safeguarding Partnership (YSP) Interviewed and influenced the appointment of the new Independent Chair.	Developed and distributed 7 Minute Briefings on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-agency audit findings Injuries in non-mobile babies CSA Domestic Abuse Learning from Alex (W11) SCR
Supported Sexual abuse and sexual violence awareness week on twitter (17 clicks on the content and 755 views)	Delivered an engagement and training forum with Healthwatch Walsall to 38 residents of Walsall	Published a Domestic Abuse awareness poster in the Health and Community guide which reaches over 40,000 residents of Walsall	Shared learning from all our Walsall Reviews to all partner agencies	Developed the future engagement project and delivery of strategy for 2021-22
Maintained contact and held 7 virtual meetings with YSP.	Discussed with young people, what neglect means to them.	Young people reviewed the WSP website and a film produced by Walsall College.	Began planning 2021-22 YSP events / activities.	

Learning from Case Reviews and Audits

5 children were referred to the Practice Review Subgroup for consideration of a review during the year.

None of these were Child Safeguarding Incidents notified to the National Panel or Ofsted by the LA.

One case progressed to a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR, W13) and is due to be completed in summer 2021.

2 cases were teenagers, the others were all aged 3 years or younger.

There was learning identified in all of the case discussions and associated actions were monitored by the Practice Review Subgroup with cross reference to the Practice Development Subgroup as appropriate.

Walsall also contributed to the National Panels report 'Out Of Routine: A review of sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI) in families where the children are considered at risk of significant harm' which was published in July 2020. The published report was shared across the partnership and included discussions at the Black Country CDOP, which has led to plans to commission and roll out the ICON Babies Cry You Can Cope programme in 2021/22.

Disseminating and implementing the learning included:

- A 7 minute briefing on W11 SCR (Alex) was produced and shared across the partnership.
- A 'Learning from Reviews' Newsletter was produced and shared across the partnership.
- A multi-agency leaflet on Bruising in Non-Mobile Babies was developed and a webinar facilitated by the CCG and WHT, which was positively evaluated.
- One of the cases influenced the review of the CSA Strategy and plans for future audits and CSA training.
- A standardised agenda template for Strategy Meetings was developed and implemented to support good practice and consistency.
- Awareness raising of adult self-neglect and hoarding issues took place with practitioners who work with children.

In summer 2019 the Walsall Local Safeguarding Children Board published a Serious Case Review which included learning in relation to Connected Carers. During quarter 3 of 2020-21 a multi-agency audit was undertaken to provide an insight into practice in relation to children placed with connected carers and review the impact of this previous learning.

Overall the multi-agency team determined that of the 5 cases audited, one case was 'Outstanding' and two cases were 'Good'. Of the remaining two cases, while the audit team recognised that the outcomes for the child in each case were good, in the specific area of ensuring notifications to agencies were timely, improvement was required.

The audit demonstrated that while in every case the required notifications to Out of Authority agencies and to the local Healthcare Trust had been made, they had not all been made in a timely way in every case. As with all multi-agency audits an action plan was put in place.

There was evidence of good multi-agency information sharing about planned placement moves to ensure seamless transition of health provision and where children were of an age (5yrs plus), there was good evidence that the voice of the child had been sought in planning and preparing the child for a move to connected carers.

In order to further embed this learning a webinar will be planned for 2021.

How effective have our arrangements been?

What has worked well?

- Although this year has been challenging due to a pandemic, there continues to be evidence that children are safe in Walsall (data on page 8):
 - An appropriate reduction in referrals to MASH
 - Positive impact of Early Help services
 - Positive reductions seen in the number of children subject to child protection plans
 - Positive increase of the number of families supported through the Family Safeguarding Model
- Partnership focus on safeguarding has continued through regular meetings between statutory partners despite the challenges brought by the pandemic.
- Attendance at multi-agency meetings has improved, particularly since they moved online. This virtual or blended approach allows for greater flexibility moving forward.
- A successful bid to the TCE (Tackling Child Exploitation) Programme saw work with local colleagues begin to develop work in relation to community resilience and engagement and consider the role which the wider community can take in developing an effective, strategic all-age response to exploitation.
- The CSA Strategy was updated and re-agreed by partners and an action plan developed.
- The Neglect Strategy was revisited to bring a renewed focus.
- Progress was made with the All-Age Exploitation pathway and included the development of an Exploitation Hub.
- The multi-agency audit programme continued to obtain learning in order to improve practice and saw improvements in the case ratings.
- During the year there were 5 multi-agency audits carried out, 4 were linked to the safeguarding partnership priorities and one (during quarter three) was in response to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families request for assurance in respect of services to newborns and infants during lockdown . In respect of the latter, all the children had been seen by the relevant multi-agency professionals with good recording regarding whether this was face to face or virtually. All case files audited had relevant risk assessments in place and PPE was utilised appropriately as required for in person contact. There was consistent evidence of good information sharing across agencies. Needs identified during assessment were being met and children and their families were being supported. Where risks had escalated, there was clear evidence that the appropriate actions had been taken to respond and consider these in a multi-agency forum, leading to an initial child protection plan for one infant.
- Work has taken place to embed the SARC (Sexual Assault Referral Centre) pathway, supported by SARC Lunch and Learn training sessions.
- An independent review (by Penny Thompson, CBE) commissioned by the 3 statutory partners in Autumn 2020 to consider the first year of the new arrangements was a proactive and positive undertaking. The report commented on the committed and effective Safeguarding Partnership Business Unit and the openness, candour and self-reflection demonstrated by the partnerships leaders.
- Approaching the end of the contract held by the previous Independent Chair (Liz Murphy) the statutory partners reflected on the independent scrutiny of the Safeguarding Arrangements and opted to re-appoint an Independent Chair. Recruitment took place in the early part of 2021 with the new post holder (Sally Hodges) commencing in April 2021.

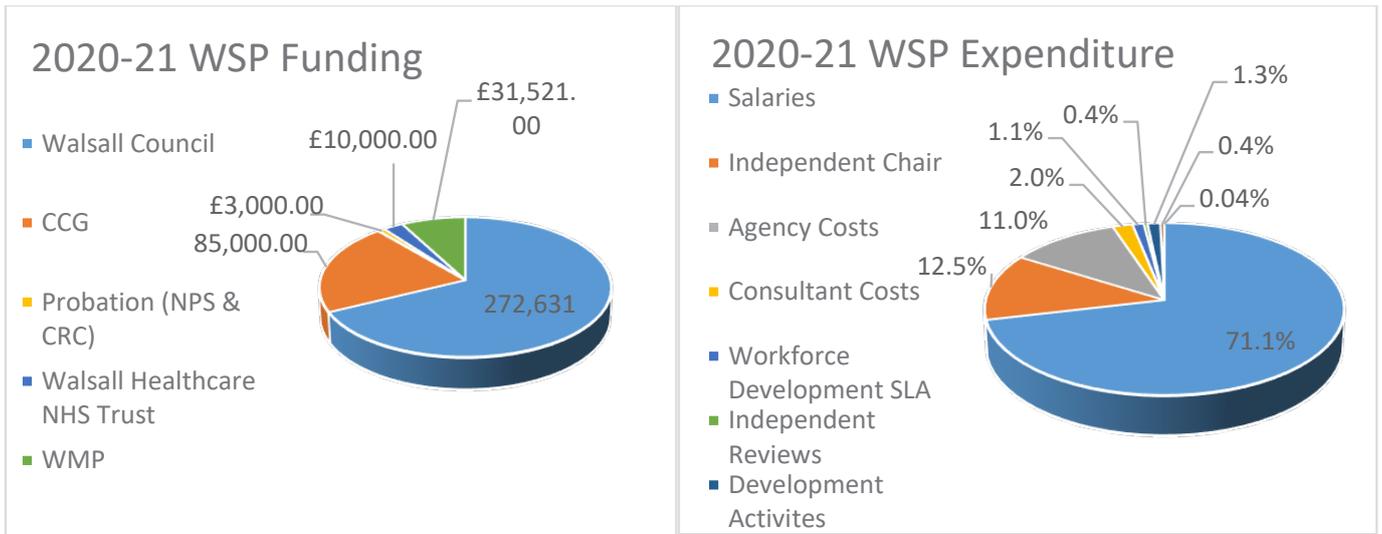
Areas for improvement or focus in 2021-22

- To implement recommendations made by Penny Thompson in her review of the Safeguarding Partnership Arrangements, including creating an Executive Group and reducing the number of partnership priorities to provide more focus and impact.
- To consider and implement recommendations from the forthcoming Wood review
- Progression and sign off the All-Age Exploitation Strategy.
- Revision and continued delivery of the Neglect Strategy.
- To review the participation strategy to ensure we effectively engage with young people and practitioners and improve our communication with partners
- Implementation the ICON Programme across Walsall
- Strengthen the links between the Family Safeguarding model and Walsall Safeguarding Partnership
- Develop a positive and productive relationship between Safeguarding Partnership and the Safer Walsall Partnership
- Due to Covid-19 there was limited inspection activity of the statutory partners during this year. Once this re-commences the Partnership will be sighted on and respond to the respective findings.
- Track the impact that learning from our reviews and audits have had by carrying out a range of assurance activities and engaging with practitioners.
- To embed Impact Evaluations across the Partnership as part of management oversight and supervisions

Appendix 1: Financial Summary

In 2020-21 the partnership had £402,000 pooled into a partnership budget. This money was contributed by the Statutory Partners, plus the local Healthcare Trust and Probation. The majority of the resource was used to pay for Business Unit staffing. Other costs include the Independent Chair, Regional Procedures and online products used for business processes, Service User Involvement, Consultancy and Training.

The charts below show the proportion of the contributions by organisation and also the percentage split of the expenditure.







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