

Walsall Safeguarding Children Board



and

Walsall Safeguarding Partnership



**ANNUAL REPORT 2019 – 2020**

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## **Foreword by the Independent Chair – Liz Murphy**

Thank you for taking the time to read Walsall Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report which covers the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.

The report is published by the 3 statutory partners: Walsall Council, West Midlands Police and Black Country and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group. These agencies are jointly and equally responsible for putting in place effective arrangements to support the co-ordination, quality assurance and continuous improvement of activity to safeguard children in the borough.

In the year, and in response to changes to statutory guidance, significant changes were made to strategic safeguarding partnership arrangements for children and young people; the details of these changes are set out in the report. Learning from ‘early adopter’ sites was used to inform the development of the arrangements in Walsall and the shared ambition of statutory partners for children and young people to become the 4<sup>th</sup> partner in the local arrangements is an indicator of the commitment to listen to and learn from children. A review of the new partnership arrangements will be completed in 2020-21 and this will provide an opportunity to evaluate the impact of the changes.

Walsall Council’s Children’s Social Care has during this period operationalised a locality based delivery model that has been informed by the views of parents/carers and is designed to promote stronger multi-agency working whilst at the same time, making best use of the community based assets including schools and the voluntary sector. West Midlands Police have made changes in the year to the way they deliver their public protection services; these changes were designed to be more responsive to children who are victims of child abuse. The Clinical Commissioning Group has continued to work with primary care and other health providers in relation to a wide range of safeguarding issues. An example is the ‘Our Voices, Our Shoes’ conference that was co-produced and facilitated by young people and professionals. The Conference covered issues of substance misuse, gangs and exploitation, domestic abuse and living with mental health issues.

In support of the shared ambition to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families, Walsall Council made a successful application to the Department for Education to secure funding to implement the Family Safeguarding Model in Walsall. Family Safeguarding is one of three innovation projects within the Department for Education Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme. The model will enable specialist services to work more collaboratively with parents/carers on the issues that impact most on their parenting capacity and so support children to be cared for in their family.

Statutory partners made the decision that the governance of the Family Safeguarding Model would sit with the Walsall Safeguarding Children Partnership and an external evaluation of the Local Authority and Partnership’s readiness to implement Family Safeguarding Model resulted in Walsall being selected as the first area in the country to implement the model.

In this report, partners provide an overview of work completed to progress locally agreed priorities supported by their analysis of the impact of this work. Data shows that the work to implement a revised “right help, right time” framework has had a positive impact on children and families as

more families who receive early help support are stepping down to universal level of need due to positive outcomes being achieved at the early help level of need. In addition, there is evidence of a better understanding and application of statutory thresholds in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH); there is however, further work to do to ensure that partner agencies are referring those children who require a statutory safeguarding service to the MASH. There has also been a significant reduction in the number of child protection enquiries completed bringing Walsall much more in line with national comparative data. In addition, a focused inspection visit by Ofsted during this period found that the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was providing a timely and appropriate response to those children who require a statutory social work service.

Audit activity carried out during the year evidences the positive impact of multi-agency working for children and families however, partners have identified that, whilst there has been good progress over the last two years in relation to strengthening the quality of multi-agency working, there is further work to do to ensure that all children and families consistently receive a good and joined up safeguarding response.

The last few weeks of the period covered by this report saw the country go into national lockdown because of a global pandemic thus creating unprecedented circumstances for services as well as children and families. Partner agencies rose to the challenge of sustaining safeguarding services, whilst at the same time, responding to emerging need. Agencies worked together to risk assess and determine who was best placed to respond to the most vulnerable children and arrangements were put in place for partners to regularly meet to share information about the delivery of safeguarding services. Another strength of the Partnership's response to the pandemic was the arrangements put in place to communicate key messages to front line practitioners, supported by a comprehensive virtual learning and development offer.

Developing the response to neglect is a priority for the Partnership and to support the delivery of the aims of the neglect strategy, a discussion took place at the inaugural meeting of the Safeguarding Children Partnership in October 2019. This identified the need to review membership of the Neglect Steering Group, clarify the role/responsibilities of Neglect Champions and review the local learning and development offer. Progress has been made in developing a tiered training offer, a Neglect Champions Group has been established and the NSPCC have been involved in work to plan a local awareness campaign. Given much of the work that has taken place during the year has been developmental, there is yet limited evidence of the tangible impact of the Neglect Strategy on practice and outcomes for children and families and this is a recognised priority for 2020-21.

Like other partnerships, Walsall has recognised the need to respond to all forms of child exploitation and arrangements to discuss, on a multi-agency basis, children being criminally exploited were piloted in the year. In recognition of the need to strengthen the oversight and implementation of the Child Exploitation Strategy Delivery Plan, a focused set of actions were agreed in November 2019, including the development of a child exploitation pathway; the agreed actions were to be completed by end of March 2020. Whilst not completed by the end of March 2020, a child exploitation pathway is now in place. One of the challenges in safeguarding children who are being criminally exploited is to respond to them as *victims* of abuse; this can be complicated by the fact that these children can be coerced into criminal activity. Providing a victim/child centred response, along with improving the response to children who go missing from home/care, are areas of ongoing focus for partner agencies.

The statutory safeguarding partners have implemented the revised statutory arrangements to review and learn from serious child safeguarding incidents and an overview of the work completed is

included in the report. Feedback from the National Panel has been used to refine the approach to completing Rapid Reviews. Whilst some of the learning from serious incidents lends itself to a specific action e.g. amending multi-agency procedures, much of the learning requires a continuous programme of practice or service development e.g. the Family Safeguarding Model will promote a “think family” approach between services that work with children and those that work with adults who are parents/carers. In future reports, partners will have the opportunity to more fully describe the impact of actions taken in response to the learning from serious child safeguarding incidents.

As required by statutory guidance, the report details the work carried out by young people to influence service provision. To use young people to “inspect” services brought an additional element of scrutiny to the partnership arrangements and this is to be commended, as are the young people who completed this work.

The report concludes with an evaluation of:

- how safe children are in Walsall
- the strength of partnership working and
- the extent to which the partnership is operating as a learning system.

This is an open and transparent evaluation and appropriately identifies the progress made as well as the ongoing areas of development in relation to either practice/service development or the partnership’s delivery of its statutory functions.

I will close by recognising the work of the committed professionals who either, work directly with children and their families, or who have a specialist role in safeguarding in partner agencies; thank you for the work you have done and continue to do to safeguard children in Walsall and for your swift and creative response to the safeguarding challenges brought by the pandemic.

## 1. Introduction

This report covers safeguarding children activity in Walsall for 2019-20. The strategic governance arrangements for this year took 2 separate forms. For the first part of the year the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) was in place as the statutory body with responsibility for quality assuring local practice. Following the publication of Working Together 2018, partner agencies began to develop plans to establish Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements and published their plans on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019, launching the new Walsall Safeguarding Partnership. Further information on the detail of these arrangements can be found [here](#) and additional information in Appendix 4.

## 2. Local Context / Our Year in Figures

Infant mortality rate has increased from 6.2 (last year) per 1,000 live births to 9.4. Compared to 3.9 nationally.

4.16% of all births in Walsall are considered Low birth weight, compared to 2.86 nationally.

Under 18 conception rates per 1,000 girls (15-17) has increased from 27 in 2018-19 to 30 in 2019-20.

31% of children in the Borough are from BME Backgrounds.

24% of primary school children have English as an Additional Language (EAL)

21% of secondary school children have EAL

26% of children are overweight in Reception, this rises to 40% in Yr. 6

27% of Primary school children are entitled to free school meals (up from 23%)

29% of children live in low-income families (up from 26% in 2018-19).

Ofsted rated 80% of Walsall schools as 'Good' or better

## Headlines:

On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, there were:

- 1,265 'Children in Need' <sup>1</sup>
- 240 Child Protection Plans were open
- 671 children in care.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020:

- The number of child protection plans started within 2019-20 has decreased from 2018-19. The rate of 65 per 10,000 is in line with our statistical neighbours (64) but significantly higher than the England rate of 56.
- The number of children who have started a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time has increased this year from 19% in 2018-19 to 24% in 2019-20 taking us above both statistical neighbours and England (18% & 21% respectively).
- 10,178 contacts were made to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), resulting in 4,368 referrals to social care. This is a 17.6% decrease from 2018-19.
- 4,392 Child and Family Assessments were completed. This is a 17.1% decrease from 2018-19. At the time of writing there was no published comparator data.
- 1,257 Section 47 enquiries were held (an investigation carried out when a child is thought to be suffering significant harm).
- The number of children who had a missing incident during the year has tripled due to changes in police recording. Approximately 100 episodes per month were recorded in 2019-20.
- 10% of looked after children went missing in 2019-20. Compared to 7% that went missing in 2018-19.
- West Midlands Police recorded 1,331 crimes with a category of child abuse, with an additional 1,312 child abuse incidents which were deemed to be non-crimes (safeguarding concerns)

## Early Help (EH)

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020:

- There were 4,531 requests for Early Help – a 0.4% decrease compared to 2018-19. Of these requests for help:

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<sup>1</sup> The Children Act, 1989 states a child will be in need if:

- they are unlikely to achieve or maintain or to have the opportunity to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without provision of services from the Local Authority;
- their health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of services from the Local Authority;
- they have a disability.

- 59.1% were via the Early Help Hub
- 25.3% were via MASH
- 10.2% were via step-down from social care assessment
- 5.4% were stepped down from children in need review.
- 285 requests for support (6.3%) were repeat requests for families who had previously received support within the last 12 months. This is a decrease from 8.4% in 2018-19.
- The three main reasons for support were:
  - Challenging behaviour concerning the child (10.8%)
  - Domestic violence concerning the parent/carer (9.8%)
  - Mental Health (parent/carer) (7.2%).
- Outcomes for children, young people and families receiving Early Help support are improving following support and intervention.
  - 77% felt that there had been a positive outcome for them, this is an increase of 12% pts compared with 65% 2018-19.
  - 4.2% had a neutral closure (where the case is closed due to the family moving out of borough or the child turning 18) - compared to 6.3% the previous year.
  - 18.5% of families receiving support had a negative closure (where the case is stepped up to social care, the family disengages or refuses to consent to support) – a decrease, compared with 27.4% in 2018-19.

### Referrals to Social Care

- The Rate of referrals per 10,000 is 641 which is a decrease from 753 (2018-19). It remains significantly higher than the England averages (545) and slightly higher than the statistical neighbour average (614).
- There were 4,368 Referrals in 2019-20 which is a 17.6% decrease from 2018-19 (5,135 Referrals).
- Concerns about a lack of appropriate application of thresholds led to a revision and relaunch of the Right Help, Right Time (Threshold) Multi Agency Continuum of Need Guidance in September 2019.
- The number of referrals per 10,000 resulting in no further action (7 per 10,000) has reduced – this is the lower than both England and statistical neighbour averages (8 per 10,000).

### Factors identified at assessment

- Domestic Violence continues as the main factor (56%) and has increased by 12% from 2018-19.
- Neglect has decreased the most, down from 30% (2018-19) to 15% (2019-20).

### Section 47 Enquiries

- The rate of Section 47 enquiries has seen a significant decrease in 2019-20 and is at 184 per 10,000. Which brings Walsall below the statistical neighbours (195) but higher than the England averages of 168.

## Child Protection

- 93% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) were completed within 15 working days of a strategy discussion – an improvement on 88% in 2018-19 and significantly better performance than our statistical neighbours (81%) and national performance (79%).
- The rate of ICPCs in the year has significantly decreased from 99 per 10,000 in 2018-19 to 69 per 10,000 in 2019-20 and is now lower than our statistical neighbours (75) and more in line with England average (65). The reduction is in line with the decrease in Section 47 enquiries.
  - This reduction in the number of children being discussed at ICPC reflects the work done across the service to change culture in the way we work with families in preparing for the implementation of Family Safeguarding. Children's Services have undertaken a number of themed audits in respect of children discussed at a strategy meeting who did not then progress to an ICPC to assure ourselves that the application of the threshold was correct.
  - There has also been a focus on delivery of Right Help Right Time training to assist partners in the correct application of the threshold for referral. The October 2019 Ofsted inspection of our Front Door arrangements confirmed that most children received an appropriate response in a timely manner.
- ICPC Attendance:
  - Police attended 70% of ICPCs and submitted reports to 93% of meetings.
  - Relevant health practitioners (predominately school nurses and health visitors) attended 82% of those meetings applicable and submitted reports to 83%.
  - GP engagement in ICPCs remains low and further work will be carried out in 2020/21 to better understand the reasons for this and to work with GPs to improve engagement.
  - Education attended 73% of applicable ICPCs, and submitted reports to 77%.
  - Allocated Social Workers attended 95% of meetings and provided reports to parents (at least one day prior to the ICPC) in 90% of cases.
- The number of child protection plans started within 2019-20 has decreased to 65 per 10,000 population aged 0-17 from 86 per 10,000 in 2018-19, however, this remains higher than statistical neighbours (64 per 10,000) and the national rate (56 per 10,000).
- The proportion of children who have become subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time has increased from 19% in 2018-19 to 24% in 2019-20. However, in Walsall this remains lower than statistical neighbours (20%) West Midlands (20.6%) and England (21%).
- 93% of children have their views represented at the Initial Child Protection Conference compared to 87% last year.

### Categories of Abuse (as listed in Child Protection plans)

- Neglect and emotional abuse continue to be the largest categories recorded on child protection plans (45% and 44% respectively).
- The proportion of children who are subject of plans due to emotional abuse is higher than the proportion nationally (35%) and among statistical neighbours (32%) averages. However, this is likely to be linked to high rates of domestic violence as this is the category of abuse that would be used for children who are subject of a plan due to living in a household with domestic violence when that is the over-riding reason for the plan.
- We have seen some shifts in categorisations for the reason children are on a plan with fewer children being categorised under neglect and an increase in the proportion of children categorised as being subject of a plan for emotional abuse. This is due to a refinement in the use of the definitions resulting in some children who previously would have been categorised as neglected when living in a home where domestic violence was present, now being recognised as children who are living in emotionally abusive households.
- The number of child protection plans ending this year has decreased from 606 in 2018-19 to 535 in 2019-20.
- The number of child protection plans reviewed in the timescale has decreased slightly to 95.3% from 98.2% in 2018-19 but performance remains consistently above the comparator rates.

### Children in Care

- The number of children in care has increased from 614 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 to 671 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020
- 78.2% of children in care were living in foster placements, an increase from 75.6% the previous year.
- 31% of the children becoming looked after in the year were aged 10-15.
- 81% of children became looked after due to abuse, neglect, or family dysfunction.
- 9.7% of children in care went missing from their placement on at least one occasion, an increase compared with 6.9% the previous year. Despite the increase we are in line with statistical neighbours (10%) but remain lower than the national percentage (11%).
- 2018-19 saw a significant reduction in the number of looked after children starting to be looked after. The number of new starters returned to more expected levels in 2019-20; the overall increase is broadly in line with regional neighbours, who also saw an increase in the number of looked after children.

### Private Fostering

- Numbers of children being identified as privately fostered remain low. In 2019-20 between two and seven children per quarter were identified as privately fostered.

### Health Services

- The number of children attending A&E due to self-harm continues to increase with 179 children attending in 2019-20 compared with 161 in 2018-19 and 132 in 2017/18.
- There was one child admitted to an adult mental health bed in 2019-20. There were none in 2018-19.

### MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference)

- Overall MARAC referrals reduced by 12% compared to 2018-19, which contrasts with the increase in DA referrals to MASH.
- Repeat notifications increased by 4%.

- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – allegations against staff

| Sector  | Number of contacts 2019- 20 | Percentage of contacts 2019-20 | No of contacts change from 2018 | No and % of contacts progressing to a Position Of Trust meeting |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Education</b>                                      | 64                          | 40.5%                          | -101                            | 22 (34%)  |
| <b>Foster Care</b>                                    | 31                          | 19%                            | -3                              | 16 (51%)  |
| <b>Walsall Local Authority carers</b>                 | 7                           | 4%                             | -11                             |   |
| <b>Independent foster carers</b>                      | 22                          | 11%                            | +7                              |   |
| <b>Other Local Authority carers living in Walsall</b> | 2                           | 1%                             | +1                              |   |
| <b>Early Years</b>                                    | 11                          | 7%                             | - 13                            | 3 (27%)   |
| <b>Residential care</b>                               | 14                          | 9%                             | -8                              | 8 (57%)   |
| <b>Walsall Local Authority</b>                        | 6                           | 3%                             | +2                              |   |
| <b>Independent</b>                                    | 8                           | 3%                             | -8                              |   |
| <b>Health</b>   | 12                          | 7%                             | -                               | 3 (25%)   |
|   |                             |                                |                                 |   |

|                                |    |    |    |         |
|--------------------------------|----|----|----|---------|
| <b>Faith</b>                   | 5  | 3% | -3 | 0       |
| <b>Social Care</b>             | 7  | 4% | -  | 2 (28%) |
| <b>Transport</b>               | 2  | 1% | -3 | 0       |
| <b>Others</b>                  | 10 | 6% | -  | 0       |
| <b>Voluntary sector</b>        | 2  |    | -1 |         |
| <b>Sports</b>                  | 2  |    | +2 |         |
| <b>Supported accommodation</b> | 0  |    | -3 |         |
| <b>Police</b>                  | 0  |    | -2 |         |
| <b>Other</b>                   | 6  |    | +4 |         |

There were 60 Position of Trust meetings held during 2019/20, meaning that 38% of the contacts accepted progressed to a Position of Trust meeting. This compares to just 17% in the previous year.

Of these, 29 were held and found to be Unsubstantiated; 17 were Substantiated and 5 were felt to be Malicious.

A change in recording practice was made at the beginning of 2019/20 following advice from the National LADO network. As a result, records are no longer created in respect of individuals where the employer is seeking advice regarding issues that relate to contractual matters or matters relating to employee behaviour that does not impact on care provided to children by the employee and where there is no safeguarding concern. Whilst these discussions will still take place it has impacted on the recorded numbers of 'contacts' and explains the significant drop in referrals from education and associated reduction in referrals from other agencies.

### 3. Progress against Our Priorities

**Priority 1:** To support the local and professional community to ensure that children and families receive the **right help** at the **right time (RHRT)**

**Intention:** what we wanted to achieve during 2019-2021

- Relaunch the Threshold / Right Help, Right Time Guidance
- Revise the multi-agency training strategy and programme (including the RHRT training)
- Launch the multi-agency CSA Strategy
- Effective communications strategy to deliver key messages
- Further develop and embed the process for working with children and young people as our 4<sup>th</sup> partner
- Effective functioning of the MASH and revise the MASH operating protocol

Still to do during 2020-2021

- Embed a Child Exploitation Pathway (including a performance monitoring framework)
- Ensure appropriate police referrals to MASH in relation to Domestic Abuse
- Launch and embed the Family Safeguarding Model
- Ensure Early Years and Health practitioners are accessing the multi-agency training
- Response to Ofsted Focused Inspection:
  - the timeliness of early help assessments and interventions
  - the consistency, timeliness, and quality of return home interviews
  - the prompt availability of health information in the MASH.

#### **Implementation:**

- The partnership agreed its strategy for Preventing and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse.
- 14 Right Help Right Time training sessions were facilitated and a launch event held to promote the new [Continuum of Need document](#). These were attended by 437 practitioners.
- In addition to the training sessions, a Practice Reflection Workshop, focused on RHRT was attended by a further 20 practitioners.
- IRIS is a General Practice based domestic abuse support and referral programme. During 2019, 130 patients accessed support via telephone, email and 1 to 1 support through IRIS. Of these, 16% were either pregnant or caring for a child up to the age of 6 months old. 45% of all those referred to IRIS were caring for a child under eighteen. As a result, there were 7 referrals to MASH and 1 to Early Help via IRIS.

- The availability of health information when screening new contacts sometimes led to delays in responding quickly to children's needs (Ofsted Focused Inspection).
- Staff within the Access Service in Access and Achievement have worked to refine the Local Authority's tracking and enquiry systems in relation to those children and young people that are resident in Walsall but that are currently missing education. This process has led to the development and implementation of a RAG rated tracking system for all those children that are open to the Local Authority as children missing education. The Access Service has begun to utilise this RAG rating to identify the most appropriate actions or interventions that may be required in order to ensure that the correct support is provided to these children and young people at the most appropriate time.
- A week of activities took place in October 2019 to remind children and parents about the key messages of the NSPCC PANTS campaign. The programme has been delivered in Walsall for 3 years and this was an opportunity to run a week of events to raise the profile once again. Sharing messages about 'Privates are Private, Your body belongs to You and Talk about Secrets that Upset You'. Social media and local news channels reported on the school assemblies, library events, stalls in local Matalan stores and visits from 'Pantosaurus'.



- PANTS films were also shown during October at Walsall Arena & Arts Centre, during the trailers and intervals of films being shown to the public.
- The Early Help Locality Team continues to provide training, help and support to ensure all practitioners are confident and competent in the Lead Professional role.
- There has been an improvement in the number of Early Help children, young people and their families being supported by Health Services, where Health Practitioners are acting as Lead Professional within the Early Help Partnership. School Health have recently received Lead Professional training and this partnership has been and continues to be strengthened.
- In 2019 Walsall police launched the Police Cadet Programme locally. Police Cadets had been trialled in other areas in WMP and based on the success and uptake has now been expanded. There is one cadet unit in Walsall based in a secondary school. This involves volunteer cadet leaders – both police officers/staff and volunteers from outside of policing – running a youth support

programme for 13-17 year olds with a focus on policing and public service. Any child can be referred into the programme, including young people with additional safeguarding needs or subject to Early Help. There are plans to expand into a second cadets unit in the next financial year. The Walsall Neighbourhood Policing Unit (NPU) commander has now taken on the role of Police Cadet Lead for the force and the Walsall Child Protection Lead provides the safeguarding training for the cadet leaders.

- WMP have 4 Police Community Support Officers embedded with the Early Help Hubs to ensure there is information sharing and police contribution to the Early Help agenda where required.

### **Impact:**

- The number of referrals to social care decreased by 15% from 5,135 in 2018-19 to 4,368 referrals in 2019-20. This indicates that the right thresholds are being applied to contacts received by the MASH more consistently; however, the number of contacts to the MASH remain high and increased from 9,760 in 2018-19 to 10,178 in 2019-20. This suggests that while Right Help, Right Time is being applied within the MASH, there is still work to do to embed an understanding of thresholds within partner organisations who continue to make contacts which do not result in a referral to social care.
- Despite the reduction in referrals, the proportion of referrals resulting in no further action has increased from 3% in 2018-19 to 7% which indicates that there is also further work to do to embed children's social care thresholds in MASH decision making.
- October 2019 Ofsted Focused Inspection found the quality of work in responding effectively to contacts has improved since the last inspection in 2017.
  - children and families receive a timely response to initial identified needs and concerns
  - the local authority response to most children at risk of harm or in need of help is appropriate, although, for some children, consideration of Early Help support could be given sooner by referring agencies
- The availability of health information when screening new contacts sometimes leads to delays in responding quickly to children's needs (Ofsted Focused Inspection)
- At least 2 children were safeguarded from sexual abuse following a PANTS assembly at school
- 618 children were considered as part of Safety Plans following MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference).

Comments from a practitioner (teacher):

"I attended the Practice Reflection Workshop on RHRT to gain a better understanding of multi-agency understanding and to allow myself time to reflect and learn from others, I intended to use the training initially by having more professional curiosity and asking more in-depth questions, also to be more aware of the family as a whole rather than just the child. I have shared the training with my team members and encouraged them to attend as part of a team meeting. I feel from attending my practice has improved as I have increased confidence and

knowledge, I have an increased awareness of pathways and process which reduces delay and improved workflow when I have supported families, now I am fully aware of them.”

## **Case Study**

Following an NSPCC PANTS assembly, a child realised that what was happening to her was not ok and she wanted it to stop. She later refused to go to the house of the perpetrator, which led to a disclosure of sexual abuse. The police and children’s services became involved and the child and her sister were safeguarded.

**Priority 2:** To support the local and professional community to recognise and respond to neglect in a child centred way

**Intention:** what we wanted to achieve and the actions underpinning this priority:

- 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
- Launch the Look, Say, Sing, Play campaign (NSPCC)

Still to do during 2020-2021:

- Implement the Family Safeguarding Model (FSM)
- Pilot of the NSPCC pre-birth assessment tool
- Measure and evidence impact

## **Implementation:**

- Rebecca Claybrook (Social Worker) won an NSPCC ‘Elephant Practitioner Award’ which acknowledges the motivation, enthusiasm and effectiveness of practitioners using the GCP2. Becky is leading by example and spreading the message in Walsall about the benefits of GCP2.
- A 3 Tier training model and competency framework is now in place for Neglect.

## Neglect Training Model



- 49 practitioners completed the Basic Neglect Training – eLearning
- 46 practitioners completed the Understanding Neglect Training
- 122 practitioners completed Graded Care Profile 2 Training
- A Practice Reflection workshop took place in January 2020 and was attended by 22 practitioners from across the partnership, including Walsall Healthcare Trust, Police, One Walsall, Walsall Housing Group, Schools, The Beacon, Dudley and Walsall Mental Healthcare Trust, Early Help Localities, Troubled Families, Department of Work and Pensions, Walsall College and Occupational Therapy.
- Newsletters and poster were produced and circulated across the Partnership to provide information and raise awareness.
- Look, Say, Sing, Play is an NSPCC campaign aimed at parents and carers of children under two, to help them have higher quality interactions with their baby throughout their daily routines; by giving them the understanding, tools, and confidence they need to make this happen. Ultimately helping parents give their child the best start in life – both by building their brain and strengthening the bond between parent and child. This was launched in Walsall in July 2019 and attended by 50 professionals. A subsequent parent session at the Art Gallery was attended by 100 parents.
- The Early Help School Ready Team staff delivered a number of engaging workshops and activities to parents showing how fun and simple building brains can be as well as signposting them to all the free online resources and tips.
- After the success of the launch a number of Look, Say, Sing, Play briefing sessions were delivered to professionals in the localities and roadshows at a number of Lidl stores to reach out to the public. Children centres have started to deliver the session plans with families to help parents feel confident in using the tools and tips and to date all sessions have been well received with parents responding positively to the information shared, including during the lockdown period when virtual sessions were accessed.



- A multi-agency neglect audit was undertaken in quarter 4 but has not yet been formally reported on due to the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic.
- Neglect Champions were identified across the partnership to drive improvements in practice and met once before lockdown. The aims of the Champion role are to:
  - receive and disseminate information about neglect to staff;
  - ensure that staff are aware of the neglect training available from the partnership;
  - signpost practitioners to appropriate help and advice;
  - report back to their agency on how well neglect is being addressed in their team/service area.
- The successful bid to implement the Family Safeguarding Model in Walsall should see a positive impact on some of the most vulnerable children suffering from neglect.

**Impact:**

- The neglect strategy has yet to deliver the positive outcomes which were hoped for and demonstrating impact is not yet possible.
- The strategy will be revised in 2020-21; however as partners we need to do more in relation to the use of GCP2 and tackling neglect prior to it becoming a child protection concern.
- It is acknowledged that we also need to capture the impact of our work on this across the partnership.
- Many practitioners who complete the GCP2 training do not yet go on to complete the tool in practice. Feedback from practitioners, post training, indicates a mixture of reasons for this including not seeing this as their role to lead on. Therefore, there is work to do on organisational 'sign up'.
- The only agency currently able to record completed GCP2 tools is Children's Social Care, which in part contributes to the point above about evidencing impact.
- The percentage of Child Protections for Neglect has changed from 50% to 42%; this reflects refinement in the use of the categories.
- West Midlands Police recorded 192 crimes of 'Wilful Neglect' in Walsall in 2019/20, which was an increase from 134 the year previously – a 43% increase. This in part was due to changes in recording following feedback from a HMIC inspection.

Practitioners' feedback after Neglect training:

- *"It has increased my confidence and general understanding of issues affecting other teams and improving joint working when working with children where I feel neglect is present"*
- *"I now have an increased awareness of what services can support, and how the GCP2 can support the identification of neglect, since completing the workshop I have contributed to a GCP2 and am confident to do this, understanding why my contributions were so important"*

Parents who attended Look, Say, Sing, Play sessions said:

- *"Really enjoyed the singing session"*
- *"Simple & easy ideas"*
- *"I will now try and talk to my child more during activities and use different language"*
- *"Like the idea of what I already have at home and not having to buy new or expensive toys"*

### **Case Study**

Sam (social worker) worked with a health visitor in relation to the Jones family. The health visitor had formed a good relationship with both parents who were initially reluctant to engage with professionals. The health visitor had a good understanding of the neglect and the concerns raised and worked with Sam to complete the GCP2.

Sam stated that without the GCP2, the parents would not have fully understood the concerns about their parenting. The GCP2 assisted in breaking down the concerns and allowing the parents to understand the impact of their behaviour on their child; it allowed the father in particular to reflect on the situation. It also allowed the parents to feel 'in control' as they were involved in grading themselves which helped to engage them in the assessment. The GCP2 assessment identified that although there were concerns, these were at a level which could be supported by universal services and family members without the need for social work intervention.

**Priority 3:** To gain assurance regarding transition arrangements for agreed vulnerable groups between children and adult services.

**Intention:** What we want to achieve and the actions underpinning this priority

- An all-age exploitation strategy
- Effective transition between services provided to children and those working with adults (e.g. disabilities teams, Mental Health)
- Embed in practice the Child Sexual Exploitation and Criminal Exploitation Transition Strategy
- Delivery of multi-agency exploitation training (including transition planning)

- Embed our approach to 'Think Family / A Whole Family Approach', including further developing our multi-agency training to reflect this priority
- Ensure seamless transition between Youth Offending Service and Probation (following SCR W10)
- Implementation of an all-age Exploitation Hub

### **Implementation:**

- The Youth Offending Service 'T2A' transition process was reviewed across the Black Country cluster in June 2019 to ensure compliance with the national protocol for transitions and the Youth Justice Board's 'standards for children in the youth justice system 2019'- standard number 5 'transition and resettlement'.  
The new 12 stage 'T2A' (Transition 2 Adulthood) process ensures that the seconded Probation Officers to each of the Black Country Youth Offending Services' work closely with both the National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Company to identify young people at the earliest and most appropriate opportunity to transition them from youth justice services to adult services.
- 2 Practice Reflection Workshops were facilitated for practitioners on Transition and SEND Transition.  
These were attended by 18 Adult social care staff, West Midlands Fire Service, Children's Services, Walsall Community Health, Police, One Walsall, Walsall Housing Group, Schools, The Beacon, Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Trust, Early Help Localities, Troubled Families, Department of work and Pensions, Walsall College and Occupational Therapy staff
- Walsall has engaged with WMEmployers and the Game Changer Partnership to facilitate a 3 day 'Impactful Partnership Programme'. The focus of this being Exploitation, with an opportunity to reflect on how the partnership works together to deliver on this agenda and begin to develop an all-age exploitation strategy.

### **Impact:**

- Walsall's HMIP inspection in youth offending identified partnerships as a strength of the service and found good evidence of the close working relationships with Social Care. These partnerships have contributed to the findings that outstanding desistance work occurred for children and young people in Walsall, supported by excellent (lower) re-offending rates.
- Practitioner comment following the Practice Reflection Workshop:  
*"Now I have an increased knowledge base, I am able to ensure there is a smooth transition for children into adulthood by looking at this earlier and knowing what services are available to support."*

## Case Study

A is a 21 year old young person. A has a number of co-morbidities including learning difficulties, Autism, ADHD, Epilepsy and Encephalopathy, A attended a state funded Special School throughout childhood and has been under a number of health services through their life. Following a number of safeguarding concerns, A became subject to a Child protection plan in 2008 and again in 2009. A became a Looked After Child in 2013 and remained under the care of the local authority until their 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday whereby A transitioned to Local authority Adult services.

During the time A was a Looked After child they continued to access secondary health care services for their health care needs and received annual looked after children health assessments.

Due to A having a significant learning disability and being non –verbal, the Looked After Children’s nursing team liaised with the Special school A attended to ensure they remained at the centre of the care they received, this was made possible by working in partnership with education and A to produce a pictorial health assessment.

For continuity, the Looked After Children Nurse ensured A remained on their caseload. This enabled the therapeutic relationship to be maintained. The nurse attended Looked After Children’s reviews with the local authority and supported the foster carer to support A’s transition to adult services. Both social care and adult health services were well planned to ensure that no delay occurred for A. The pictorial health assessment was shared to support A while under the care of secondary adult services for ENT, Clinical Physiology and Orthopaedics. A received a health history document, elements of which are pictorial to enable A to understand their healthcare needs as they move into adult services.

**Priority 4:** To tackle exploitation and supporting those children and adults who are victims of exploitation and/or go missing

**Intention:** what we wanted to achieve and the actions underpinning this priority:

- Increase our understanding of children and young people who go missing from home or care
- Understand how children are exploited in Walsall
- Increase awareness of trafficking
- Use trauma informed practice and thinking to respond to vulnerable children
- Ensure young people at risk/being exploited are supported
- Disrupt and prosecute offenders

**Implementation:**

- Carrying a knife is associated with criminal exploitation and young people within the youth justice system are more likely to be involved in County Lines drug running. The Youth Justice Service (YJS) have continued their

partnership with the Street Doctors charity to teach young people basic First Aid to help save the lives of their friends if they are the victim of violence. This is a powerful intervention which challenges the young person's perception of stabbing and being stabbed whilst teaching them a potentially lifesaving skill.

- The YJS has also formed partnerships with the James Brindley Foundation and the St. Giles Trust to add different dimensions to their work to address knife crime. The YJS are working with the Foundation to utilise the 'Full Circle Knife Crime Programme' with young people on the periphery of the youth justice system. St. Giles Trust have supported the YJS with knife crime workshops to provide 'lived experience' mentoring, to help young people understand the personal consequences for carrying a knife and engaging in violent crime.
- Walsall has engaged with WMEmployers and the Game Changer Partnership to facilitate a 3 day 'Impactful Partnership Programme'. The focus of this being Exploitation, with an opportunity to reflect on how the partnership works together to deliver on this agenda.
- The Designated Nurse for Safeguarding led a partnership group which successfully submitted a bid to be part of the Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) Support Programme. This programme is an investment by the Department for Education and aims to support local areas to develop an effective strategic response to child exploitation and threats from outside the family home, including child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation, including county lines drug trafficking. The bespoke support programme will begin in Walsall in 2020 and have a focus on community engagement and resilience.
- The Exploitation Subgroup has developed a data scorecard to better understand the local trends and picture of exploitation. Various agencies report into this scorecard to track activity, outcomes, and the information flow in relation to victims, locations, and perpetrators for all types of exploitation.
- As part of ongoing partnership work, a daily triage has been established and now takes place to discuss the most at risk victims. This triage meeting is attended by the Children's Services Exploitation Team, Return Home Interview Officers and police representatives from FCID, PPU, Locate and Neighbourhood Policing. Discussions have taken place to bring in additional partners including Adult Social Care, Street Teams, Early Help, and health colleagues. This is a real opportunity to advance contextual safeguarding to support victims and identify perpetrators of exploitation. It is also an early opportunity to identify new victims and supports safety planning for children, identification of locations of concern and identifies any gaps in intelligence sharing.
- Street Teams supported 107 young people (60 female and 47 male) over a continued period of time, which includes support provided to 55 young people affected by CSE, 27 young people affected by Criminal Exploitation, 18 service users in transition, 14 young people affected by gangs and 3 young people displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour. Additionally, there were 10 young people (all male) who were on the waiting list for support.

- Street Teams also supported 21 families (78 individuals including parents and siblings) affected by CSE.
- Street Teams provided 126 education and prevention programmes to over 7,000 school children / pupil referral units to raise awareness of the risks of exploitation and delivered 55 training sessions to 2,128 professionals, parents, and volunteers.
- There was an overall reduction in the number of crimes recorded by the police where CSE was included as a marker. In 2018/19 there were 45 crimes as well as 122 CSE incidents recorded which were not deemed a crime. In 2019/20 this reduced to 38 and 62 respectively. The sharp decrease in non-crime matters reflects a reduction in young people who are deemed medium or high risk of CSE and subject to MASE meetings as each referral will usually result in a non-crime record being created.
- In 2018/19 the most frequent CSE offence type recorded was online child sexual exploitation (15) or rape offences (7). In 2019/20 the most commonly recorded CSE offences were online exploitation (10) and Trafficking (8). Almost all Trafficking offences were recorded due to a young person being referred to the National Referral Mechanism. The reduction in rape offences, and the increase in NRM-driven Trafficking recording, is a positive step in reducing harm to young people and increasing safeguarding measures through appropriate referrals.
- In acknowledgement of the need to strengthen the focus on children at risk of exploitation, the Healthcare Trust invested in sending two nurses from its safeguarding children service to a five day course on contextual safeguarding at the University of Bedfordshire. It is expected that they will use their knowledge in this field to support the Partnership as well as the Trust.

#### Still to do during 2020-2021

- Develop an all-age exploitation strategy
- Further develop and embed the Exploitation Hub.
- Launch an Exploitation Screening Tool and Pathway.
- Expand CMOG and MARVP into an Exploitation Panel (as part of the pathway) to direct operational activity in relation to all forms of child exploitation and not just CSE.

#### Impact:

- Despite some positive steps across the partnership, such as the TCE bid and Impactful Partnership Programme the progress on the all-age Exploitation agenda has been slower than intended.
- The Exploitation Delivery Group did not meet for a period of time, the delivery plan against the strategy was not in place for a prolonged period and there was a delay in establishing a shared pathway.

- A meeting was held in November 2019 to agree on the partnership priority tasks for the next 6 months however these were not completed in the agreed timescale.
- Due to a change in West Midlands Police reporting procedures in the categorisation of missing episodes, the number of children reported missing was 5 times higher this year compared to 2018-19. Previously no notifications were made for children deemed at no apparent risk or “absent” with the change in procedures all children previously deemed absent or no risk will be placed on the missing person system and referred to the local authority. These referrals will then result in Return Home Interviews. The impact is that a large number of children who previously would not have received this RHI will now receive one and have chance to share information and receive support.
- The number of individual’s reported missing to MASH increased in 2019-20, from 129 in 2018-19 to 350 in 2019-20.
- 49% of young people received a Return Home Interview, the same figure as the previous year, however it was positive that this was sustained given the huge increase in numbers. 51% of young people did not receive a Return Home Interview, with the main reason (74%) being either they declined the interview or had gone missing again with the following 72 hr period.
- Of the services users engaged with Street Teams (in relation to CSE), by the end of the intervention:
  - 71% Made safer choices
  - 61% Improved their safety and security
  - 46% Reduced their drugs and alcohol use
  - 56% Improved their health and well-being (including sexual health)
  - 66% Improved their safety online
  - 62% Improved their safe relationships
  - 56% Improved their relationships with their family and other adults
  - 60% Improved their education/learning attendance

The number of young people considered at ‘serious’ risk of CSE reduced by 50% (some of this was related to data cleansing).

## Case Study:

From a Street Teams service user:

*'I just wanted to say a big thank you for all your help and support for both my daughter and myself. Without Street Teams I don't know what I would have done trying to deal with and understand the complexity of CSE. We need more people like you in the world who genuinely care about these young girls. It's clear you put 100% effort into your job and want to see them overcome the trauma and dilemmas they're faced with. Just know that you made a big difference to [my daughters] life and I know she will forever feel grateful that you were a shoulder for her to lean on in a time of her struggle. God Bless.'*

J is a child in care; he has been in care for a long time and lives with other children in a local care home and often goes missing. He has an older brother who has also been in care and is vulnerable to exploitation when he goes missing. A lot of local practitioners from partnership agencies know J and his brother – mostly as young people who have been involved in anti-social behaviour. Over the last few months, J has gone missing on a regular basis, often because he is bored and does not like to be at the children's home, although sometimes he goes missing to spend time with his family members and friends.

J will often accept his Return Home Interview and has built an open and engaging relationship with the worker, R, who has been able to meet him and talk about any potential concerns that J has. She has also supported him to understand how risky the community can be for vulnerable children. R has built a relationship with J and his care home, his Social Worker and his Youth Justice worker ensuring that valuable information can be shared across J's professional network, without the need for him to keep telling different workers what has been going on or happening in his life, something that J has struggled with previously.

There is now a solid safety net for J when he goes missing, sharing information with others to enable risk assessments and missing trigger plans to be updated and in a timely way. J recently moved placements after a period of missing and asked to speak to R about how he feels about the new placement. He outlined that he felt comfortable having R as his worker when he goes missing and understands the concerns that his social worker has for him and his safety whilst out in community. R will continue to work with him when he does goes missing even if he does live out of the local borough.

## 4. Our 4<sup>th</sup> Partner – Children, Young People and Adults

In 2019/20, the partnership created a Joint Engagement Strategy (2020-2022). This strategy is aimed at all organisations within Walsall whose staff and volunteers provide services to children, young people and adults with care and support needs. The aim of the strategy is to help the partnership achieve the vision of having children, young people and adults as equal partners alongside the Local Authority, Health and Police in shaping the work of the Safeguarding Partnership. The strategy outlines 4 key steps to achieve engagement: consultation, representation, decision-sharing and co-production.

### Youth Safeguarding Partners (YSP)

The Youth Safeguarding Partners group was established at the end of 2018/19. YSP have continued to be engaged with the Partnership, meeting 12 times during 2019/20. These meetings take place approximately every month for 2 hours. The work plan is flexible depending on YSP members' interests however it has mainly focused on establishing the group identity and purpose, expanding membership, completing safeguarding assurance and check and challenge for various pieces of work.

### Section 11 visits

The largest engagement activity in 2019/20 was part of the Section 11 Audit. YSP members expressed a willingness to 'inspect' services they may be in contact with and see how they create an environment that is suitable for young people. Keeping to the safeguarding agenda, the Section 11 Audit process provided a perfect opportunity for our young people to complete this activity and contribute the findings to a wider assurance event with all key partners involved.

YSP members devised some questions they felt were important to ask every agency e.g. "how do you ensure you are listening to me and not just my parent/carer?" "What would you do if I told you I hadn't been fed for two days?"

Further questions were asked which were specific to each agency, depending on how services rated themselves within the Section 11 Audit. During the visits, the young people also received a tour of the building and gave notes on how they felt the spaces could be improved. The young people gave feedback on the day but also wrote notes that could be triangulated with the audit responses and the practitioner survey.



- 7 visits across 6 organisations took place by YSP (Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Trust, National Probation Service, Walsall Children’s Social Care, Walsall Healthcare Trust, Walsall Youth Justice Service and West Midlands Police).
- 17 feedback forms were completed by YSP in total, across the 7 visits.
- Specific follow-up from DWMHT found that CAMHS had implemented improvements suggested by YSP to their waiting rooms.
- Walsall Healthcare Trust invited YSP to be involved in future engagement activities for the new A+E building.



#### Other activities within the year:

- Children, young people and professionals were brought together from across the 4 areas within the Black Country, to work in partnership and co-produce an innovative and unique conference, funded by NHSE - ‘Our Voices, Our Shoes’ which saw young people supporting and facilitating the event, which covered issues of alcohol and substance misuse, gangs and exploitation, domestic abuse and living with mental health issues.

The conference saw 157 children, young people and professionals jointly exploring how health services can be delivered more effectively. 127 pledges were made by the delegates of ways that the learning and messages they had been given on the day, were going to be taken in to their daily personal and working lives, in order to make changes and support this vulnerable group.

- YSP held a re-launch event to attract new members with presentations to the Independent Chair and Head of Safeguarding from Local Authority Children’s Services.
- In May 2019, a new Anti-Knife Crime Project was launched. It is a partnership between various voluntary and community sector organisations being led by One Walsall. ‘At the cutting edge’ held a special production event to showcase the skills and talents of young people in Walsall in facing up to concerns around the prevalence of knife crimes across the borough.
- This event was part of a wider project looking to:
  - reduce the number of incidents of knives being carried to school
  - reduce the number of injuries received from use of knives
  - change perceptions about personal safety and the need to carry a knife.
- Other work has also included membership of a regional engagement group to share ideas and progress the engagement agenda for both children and adults:
  - mapping existing engagement activity and opportunities for next year for both children and adults

- establishing a network of schools participating in the School Nurse Champions programme with the aim to add Safeguarding priorities as part of this offer.

#### Areas of work for 2020/2021

- Increased engagement for adults with care and support needs
- Embed engagement of safeguarding into existing School Nurse Champions to increase young people's engagement and expand YSP membership
- Seek opportunities to maximise the Partnership's involvement in existing engagement opportunities' (e.g. votes for schools, Street Teams, the work being undertaken as part of the TCE bid)
- Gathering feedback from children and young people on their experience of safeguarding services
- Invest in resource for Engagement within the Safeguarding Partnership, exploring options of either a job role or commissioning a service.

## 5. Serious Case Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Walsall launched its new arrangements in September 2019. Therefore, half of the financial year the Board was working to Working Together 2015 guidance in relation to Serious Case Reviews and then moved to Working Together 2018 in September for Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

Within the period of this annual report the partnership:

- commenced SCR W12
- have completed 3 reviews – SCR W9, W10 and W11,
- have published – 0 reviews (W10 and W11 are delayed due to ongoing criminal proceedings)
- once SCR 9 had been completed and all the information had been gathered a decision was taken by the Leadership Group and agreed by the National Panel that the SCR criteria was not met. Therefore, this SCR will not be published primarily because of the impact on the family. However, the learning has been shared and acted upon as relevant.
- have contributed to 2 out of Borough SCR's.
- have undertaken 1 Rapid Review

Other Reviews:

- Undertaken 2 Learning Reviews.

Once completed, reviews are published on our Safeguarding Partnership [website](#). Multi-agency action plans are in place for all reviews and are monitored via the Practice Review Subgroup.

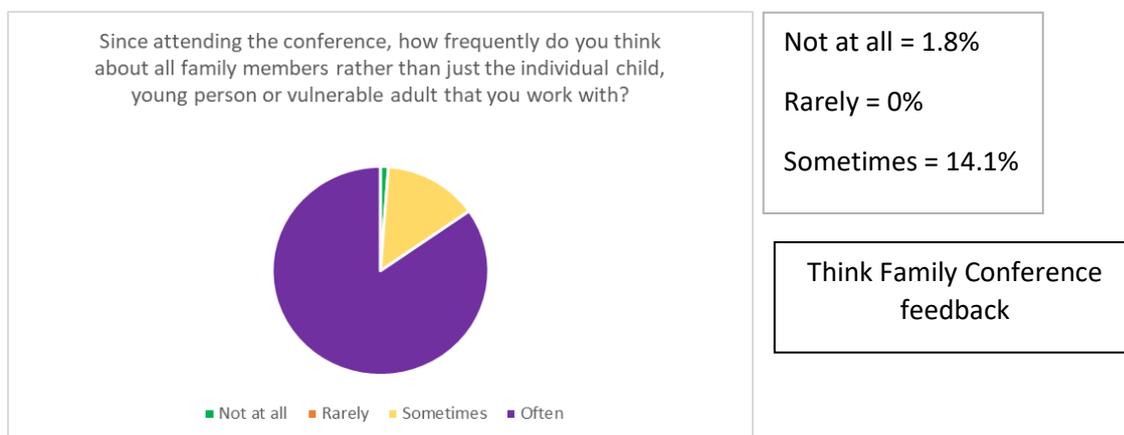
Key learning and themes have been identified and include:

- Professional curiosity about apparently 'absent' fathers.
- The need to harness the Third Sector when working with families who appear 'hard to engage' with statutory services.

- The need to ensure full understanding of a parent’s history, including their childhood or time in care, when undertaking assessments of their current parenting capacity.
- Information sharing between agencies about risk, including risky adults and offenders.
- Understanding the motivation for connected carers to foster children from within the family and the pressure they may be under and how this may differ from the motivation and pressures of those who become career foster carers.
- Learning of national interest was shared with the National Panel and Ministry of Justice about the lack of community supervision for violent offenders who have served their full sentence but do not meet the threshold for MAPPA.

Learning has been shared via newsletters, 7 minute briefings (e.g. neglect, domestic abuse), updated multi-agency training programmes (including face to face, online courses and practice reflection workshops), on the Partnership website and a large multi-agency briefing session took place in June 2019. Policies and procedures have also been changed as a result of learning from the above.

In January 2020, the partnership hosted a Think Family conference to promote a joined-up approach across services, supporting practitioners to think about all the needs of all individuals within a family or household. The conference was attended by 198 professionals across two, half day events.



**Practitioner Comments:**

*“We are currently working with a young person and their behaviour is impacting on the rest of the family. By using the whole family approach, we are trying to ensure that the whole family is supported.”*

*“When discussing cases I am more able to advocate for children and families due to improved knowledge.”*

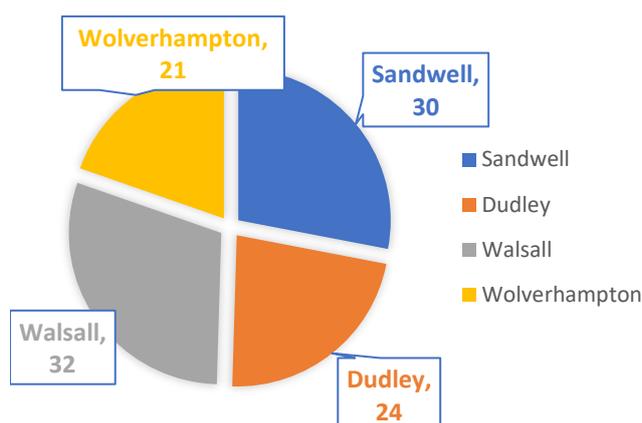
*“Now I have an increased knowledge base, I am able to ensure there is a smooth transition for children into adulthood by looking at this earlier and knowing what services are available to support.”*

The SCR’s which started in this year will be completed and monitored by the new Safeguarding Partnership arrangement.

## 6. Additional Safeguarding Workstreams and Responsibilities

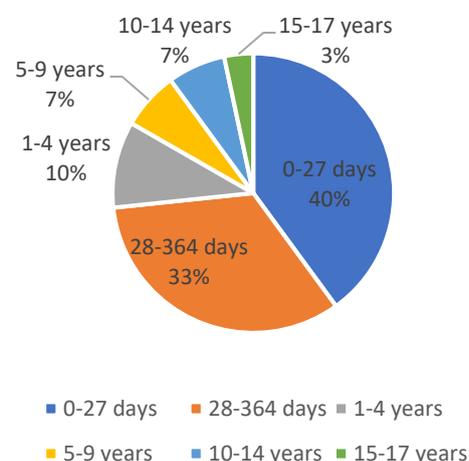
### Child Death Reviews

- The new Child Death review arrangements went ‘live’ in September 2019 and are now part of a joint Black Country arrangement.
- As required by Working Together 2018, all relevant information relating to Child Deaths was successfully transferred over from the LSCB to the CCG and Public Health.



- There were 107 Black Country child deaths reported in 2019 – 2020; 32 of these were Walsall residents.

- 40% of the deaths in Walsall occurred in the 0-27-day (about 4 weeks) age group which is slightly lower than the national average for this age group which is 42%.
- 7 of the 32 deaths notified in this timescale in Walsall were unexpected and a Joint Agency Response was carried out.



84 deaths were reviewed in total across the Black Country. 30 of these reviewed deaths were Walsall resident child deaths. 33% of these deaths were identified as having modifiable factors.

These were identified as:

Smoking during pregnancy or smoking in the household; high BMI of expectant mums; consanguinity; alcohol misuse; late booking of pregnancy; sharing of information; safe sleeping practices; poor housing conditions.

Local interventions:

Newsletters are disseminated following every panel outlining learning.

Hospitals across the Black Country are all hoping to be 'smoke free' by the end of 2020 and support strategies for expectant mums who are smokers are being implemented through Local Maternity Systems.

Public Health Walsall are working with health agencies on several Infant Mortality Reduction workstreams.

### **Domestic Abuse**

- The revised Domestic Abuse strategy was due to be relaunched in summer 2019 but has not yet been agreed by the Safer Walsall Partnership.
- A new Domestic Abuse Steering Group is to be established for 2020-21.

### **Safeguarding Procedures**

- Walsall has continued to participate in the Regional Safeguarding Procedures consortium.
- This year has seen the final year of the 3 year contract with the current service provider. It has been agreed that this will be extended for an additional year in 2020-21 to enable the contract to be re-tendered.

### **Section 11 Audit**

The Section 11 Audit was completed in March 2019. An initial analysis report was presented in July 2019 to Leadership Group which showed a high level of reported compliance with the Section 11 standards however, it highlighted the following areas for further assurance:

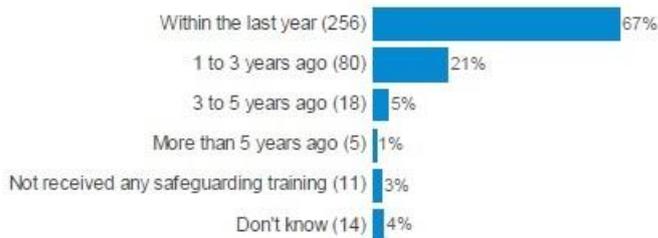
1. Assurance of how each agency are embedding the Neglect Strategy (completed through challenge event)
2. Impact of safeguarding training, embedding SCR learning into practice (completed through challenge event)
3. Further evidence of how the voice of the child is shaping service delivery (completed through the YSP Visits)
4. Further evidence of how agencies are evaluating outcomes from the perspective of the child or young person (completed through the YSP Visits)

Agencies submitted action plans to outline how they intended to address areas which did not meet the required standard.

In November 2019, a practitioner survey was undertaken to further quality assure the

initial findings reported by the agencies in their s11 audit returns. There were 384 responses across adults and children’s safeguarding workforce. The findings of the surveys were analysed and used to form the set of challenge questions for a peer challenge session. Some of the responses can be seen below:

**When was the last time you attended any safeguarding training (including refresher training)? Tick one only.**



**Are you aware of the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership’s escalation/resolution policy? Tick one only.**



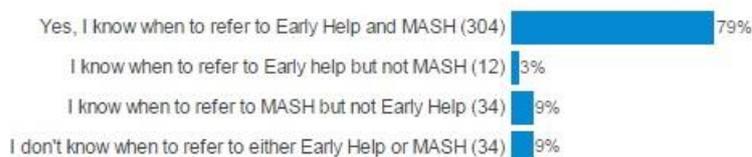
**If you needed to, do you know who to report safeguarding concerns regarding adults and children to? Tick one only. (Adults)**



**If you needed to, do you know who to report safeguarding concerns regarding adults and children to? Tick one only. (Children)**



**Do you understand when to refer safeguarding concerns regarding a CHILD for Early Help and when to refer to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)? Tick one only.**



Some of the responses to the above questions are also played out in audits and reviews, such as use of escalation and data measures, and such as the reduction in MASH referrals.

Later in November an assurance and challenge event took place where partners came together to discuss, challenge, and hold each other to account.

Recommendations from the challenge and assurance event will be included in each agency's Section 11 action plan and monitored on a six monthly basis by PQA.

### **Multi Agency Safeguarding Training**

- The partnership has offered a programme of multi-agency training.
- From 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020, 21 Training Events (total 69 face to face sessions and 3 eLearning Modules) were delivered and 1,231 delegates have successfully completed this training.
- This year saw an increase of 28.7% in attendance compared to the previous year; in addition, 298 people attend the conferences.
  - 307 hours of training and development was accessed
  - 114 delegates booked a space on the training but did not attend
- This year's programme, across the children's and adult's workforce, has included the development of 3 Partnership eLearning Modules and 5 Practice Reflection Workshops with the themes of:
  - Right Help Right Time
  - Self-Neglect
  - Transition
  - Neglect
  - SEND Transition
- The Practice Improvement Strategy and Competency Framework has been revised and agreed.
- The partners have also supported the programme with a training pool, with 69 practitioners from across the partnership.
- The Business Unit has successfully recruited a new full-time role of Practice Improvement Manager, to support this area of work.

### **Areas of work for 2020-21**

- To embed Impact evaluations across the partnership as part of management oversight and supervisions.
- To revisit the Practice Improvement Strategy and Competency Framework, to explore any gaps in the learning and development offer.
- To develop joint children's and adult courses in relation to Exploitation and Domestic Abuse.

## 7. Summary: Evaluation of the Safeguarding System

### How safe are children in Walsall?

Evaluating the multi-agency audit from June 18 to practice at the end of 19-20 shows a range of practice improvements.

There has also been evidence of some other improvements within the year which includes:

- An appropriate reduction in referrals to MASH
- Positive impact of Early Help services (as evidenced in the data at the beginning of the report)
- A positive Ofsted inspection of the 'front door'
- Positive reductions seen in the number of children subject to child protection plans.
- Less cases judged inadequate through audit, however as the majority were judged as 'requiring improvement' this means a reduction in those that were 'good'.

| Rating               | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Good                 | 32%     | 37.5%   | 23%     |
| Requires Improvement | 45%     | 45%     | 62%     |
| Inadequate           | 23%     | 17.5%   | 15%     |

### Areas for further development include:

- The development of an all-age exploitation pathway, hub, and screening tool to support the identification and response to children who are victims of all forms of exploitation as there are inconsistencies between pathways for CSE and CE and there remain issues in reporting missing children at "no apparent risk" to the local authority promptly.
- Ensure consistent application of the Right Help Right Time Continuum of Need
- Continued focus on practice in high impact areas such as Neglect, Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation.
- Continue to develop our approach to identifying learning across the system and implementing it (see 'Are we a Learning System' below).
- Launch the Family Safeguarding Model.
- Utilise the TCE programme to enhance our response to exploitation.

### How strong is partnership working?

- The successful TCE bid was submitted and coordinated by the CCG ensuring an inclusive partnership approach.
- External evaluation of the strength of partnership working has been positive e.g. successful TCE bid and FSM (due for launch April 2020 – this was delayed until October 2020 due to Covid 19).

- In addition, the partnership has created a pool of multi-agency trainers to support practice development.
- Partner agency contributions to learning reviews is positively commented on by external reviewers.
- The Ofsted LA Focused Inspection noted 'Leaders have a good understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement, with aspirational plans in place to effect positive change.'
- There is generally good attendance and contribution by all partners at meetings across all levels; however, progress in implementing key work streams is an area for development.
- There is a financial commitment to the partnership arrangements with a jointly funded Business Unit.
- Partners report they find meetings are interactive and developmental and 'do not simply process papers and reports.'
- The investment in the Impactful Partnership Programme shows a commitment to developing local leaders.
- There is a mutual commitment to improving practice through investment in the post of a Practice Improvement Lead. The post is hosted by WHT but based within the Business Unit and will enhance learning and development across the partnership.
- There are well established relationships between senior leaders which are utilised to resolve issues and escalations in a dynamic timeframe and to do so in a professional and supportive manner.
- There is a commitment to developing new ways of working, especially through a strong connection with Walsall Together, the integrated care partnership aimed at improving the health and wellbeing outcomes of the local population.
- Some evidence of impact of challenge, but work to do, to ensure more timely impact; the governance role of the Operational Subgroup is critical in this.
- There has been evidence of positive working arrangements, however, there have also been challenges. For example:
  - The new Safeguarding Arrangements, in line with Working Together 2018, have offered an opportunity to re-align the Leadership and accountability for the safeguarding agenda and develop a new vision for the Partnership. However, this year has been a time of change in strategic arrangements and, also, in the leadership and structure of CCG and health providers which has led to variations in the membership or consistency of attendance of some meetings.

- The frequency of newly established partnership meetings was less than planned which is not ideal. The wider 'Childrens Partnership' group did not meet between October 2019 and April 2020.
- There has been challenge at Board and Leadership meetings by and of partners e.g. regarding the health contribution to MASH.
- The response to Neglect is improving but progress in implementing the Strategy has been slower than intended in some agencies.
- There is representation by the Public Protection Unit at relevant meetings, but the unit services 4 LA areas and capacity can be an issue. There are plans to review this in 2020-21.

Areas for further development include:

- Finalising the agreed arrangements for health economy contribution to MASH.
- Further engagement with the voluntary and community sector including the implementation of our Engagement Strategy.
- There is not yet a Domestic Abuse Strategy for the partnership, which is a significant risk from last year that requires addressing.
- Resolving the impact of one agencies systems on the practice within another e.g. Police missing notifications.
- Appointment of a Designated Doctor is a priority.
- Ensuring an equal voice and accountability of all partners – this will only happen if all partners fully understand and effectively uphold their partnership roles.
- Effectively utilise and build on the leadership development that has already been undertaken.
- Continue to enhance the involvement of children and families in the work of the partnership.

### Are we a learning system?

Rapid Reviews (RR's) and local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR's) will be conducted and overseen by the Practice Review Subgroup, within the new arrangements. A recommendation from the RR panel will be made to the Independent Chair, for their scrutiny, regarding whether a case will progress to a CSPR or whether all relevant learning has been identified. Resulting multi-agency action plans are developed and included within a thematic tracker. The thematic tracker was developed to help reduce duplication of activity or repetition of previous ineffective actions and to focus the partnership on areas of concern which are arising from multiple reviews.

- The partnership have produced several 7 minute briefings on issues which have been identified through reviews (e.g. Professional Curiosity, Think Family) and there has been a regular Neglect Newsletter produced to share good practice and ensure a maintained focus on this area.
- The multi-agency training programme has been shaped by learning from audits and reviews and the priorities within the partnership e.g. webinars on neglect and domestic abuse. Improvements have been made (e.g. including

front line practitioners in audits and the role out of Practice Reflection Workshops based on identified learning themes) but we are not yet operating as an effective learning system. There is more to be done to achieve this including strengthening the functioning and oversight role of PQA Subgroup, strengthening the audit methodology and learning from elsewhere.

This will include:

- A further review of the multi-agency safeguarding training offer, opportunities for practice improvement and the capacity to deliver on this across the partnership.
- Evaluating the impact of training.
- Engaging with children and young people in a meaningful way (as our 4<sup>th</sup> partner in the new arrangements)
- Embedding and ensuring that learning translates into impact for families, as currently we cannot consistently evidence the impact of learning on practice and outcomes.
- Regularly sharing single agency audits with partners and subgroups; West Midlands Police have created capacity to implement an internal audit schedule and this will include sharing the findings with the Safeguarding Partnership.

### Opportunities

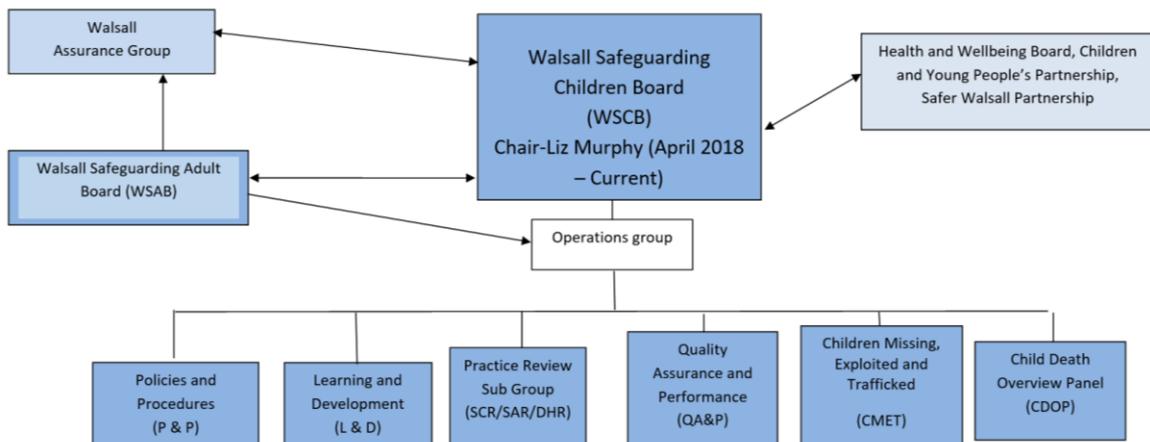
- The new arrangements offer the opportunity to renew the partnership governance structure and work more closely with other partnership boards (such as Safer Walsall Partnership – Community Safety).
- Increased capacity will be created to support the delivery of a robust multi-agency Practice Improvement Programme with the appointment of a full time Practice Improvement Manager – following a successful secondment during 2019-20.

### **Priorities and Next Steps in 2020-21**

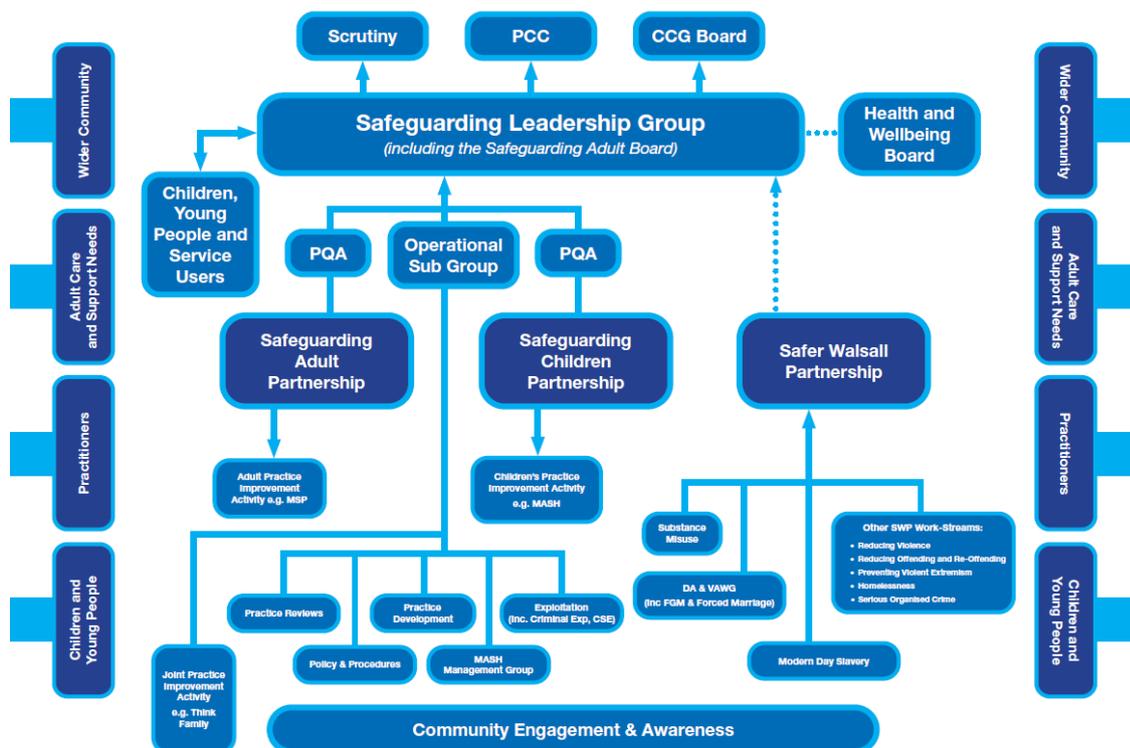
- Launch the CSA strategy and begin work on the action plan.
- Launch the Criminal Exploitation Pathway and Assessment Tool.
- Increase the pace of implementation of the Neglect Strategy following the review of the strategy.
- Review the New Safeguarding Partnership Arrangements.
- Implement the Family Safeguarding Model.
- Continue to develop and refine our approach to embedding learning from performance, audit, and reviews.
- Ensure children, young people and service users are actively engaged in the partnership.
- Increase the visibility of the Safeguarding Partnership.
- Continue to ensure strong safeguarding leadership across the partnership.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1. LSCB Structure



## New arrangements structure



## Appendices

### Appendix 2. Walsall Safeguarding Children Board / Partnership - Meeting attendance April 2019 – March 2020

2 meetings were held (June 2019 and October 2019), January 2020 and March 2020 were postponed.

| Organisation / Member                            | Total % attendance |
|--|--------------------|
|  |                    |
| Independent Chair                                | 100%               |
| Lead Member/Councillor                           | 0%                 |
| WSCB Business Unit                               | 100%               |
| Children's Services, Walsall Council             | 100%               |
| Community Safety Partnership                     | 0%                 |
| Clinical Commissioning Group                     | 100%               |
| Education  | 100%               |
| Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust                     | 100%               |
| Walsall College                                  | 100%               |
| West Midlands Police                             | 100%               |
| National Probation Service                       | 100%               |
| Designated Doctor for Safeguarding               | 0%                 |
| Public Health, Walsall Council                   | 100%               |
| Dudley & Walsall Mental Health Partnership Trust | 100%               |
| CRC (Reducing Reoffending Partnership)           | 50%                |
| Youth Justice                                    | 100%               |
| CAFCASS  | 0%                 |
| Housing  | 50%                |

There were 6 Leadership Group meetings between July 2019 and March 2020.

| Organisation/member                | Total % attendance |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| West Midlands Police               | 100%               |
| Adult Social Care                  | 67%                |
| Children's Social Care             | 100%               |
| CCG                                | 83%                |
| Access and Achievement (Education) | 67%                |
| Public Health                      | 100%               |
| One Walsall (VCS)                  | 50%                |

# Appendices

## Appendix 3. Budget

|  | <b>Budget 2019-20</b> | <b>Actual 2019-20</b> |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|  | <b>Total</b>          | <b>Total</b>          |
| <b>Funding</b>                               | <b>£</b>              | <b>£</b>              |
| Walsall Council Contribution                 | (51,584)              | (51,584)              |
| Walsall Council Additional Investment        | (200,000)             | (200,000)             |
| NHS Walsall                                  | (10,000)              | (10,000)              |
| Probation Services (NPS & CRC)               | (3,000)               | (1,500)               |
| West Midlands Police                         | (30,594)              | (31,209)              |
| CAFCASS                                      | (550)                 | (550)                 |
| CCG  | (40,000)              | (70,000)              |
| CCG Additional (One off)                     | (15,000)              | (15,000)              |
| Other Training                               | 0                     | (3,105)               |
| Other CDOP                                   | 6,264                 | 1,620                 |
|  | <b>(344,464)</b>      | <b>(381,328)</b>      |
|  |                       |                       |
| <b>Costs</b>                                 |                       |                       |
| Salary Costs                                 | 254,190               | 250,263               |
| Agency                                       | 0                     | 13,644                |
| Consultants Costs                            | 4,000                 | 4,586                 |
| Workforce Development SLA                    | 25,000                | 10,319                |
| Section 11/157/175 Tool                      | 3,000                 | 0                     |
| Chronolator Tool                             | 1,580                 | 850                   |
| SCR / SAR                                    | 38,008                | 25,327                |
| Development Day / Conference                 | 0                     | 3,627                 |
| Development Activities                       | 0                     | 2,727                 |
| PHEW - Online Child Protection Procedures    | 686                   | 686                   |
| Other Costs -                                | 6,000                 | 11,395                |
| Online booking system                        | 2,000                 | 0                     |
| Service User Involvement                     | 10,000                | 621                   |
|  | <b>344,464</b>        | <b>324,044</b>        |
|  |                       |                       |
| Carry forward to be request/(use of reserve) |                       | <b>57,374</b>         |
|  |                       |                       |
| <b>Forecast Outturn Over / (Under)</b>       | <b>0</b>              | <b>90</b>             |

# Appendices

## Appendix 4. New Arrangements

In September 2019 the Safeguarding Children Board, in partnership with the Safeguarding Adult Board, disbanded the LSCB and launched their new arrangements in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children.

The Partnership Arrangements can be found [here](#).