

Meeting Date: 19 March 2024

Walsall Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Childrens and Adults Services

Report:

1. Walsall Safeguarding Partnership (WSP) has a combined Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangement of Walsall Safeguarding Children's Partnership (WSCP) and Walsall Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB) and is required to produce an annual report which provides an assessment of the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements in working with adults and children.
2. The Care Act 2014 requires each SAB to publish an annual report. The annual report gives an insight as to how adult abuse and neglect is identified and addressed in Walsall and outlines the achievements and challenges of the Safeguarding Adults Board, its subgroups and partner agencies. The report covers the period from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.
3. This report sets out to update the Health and Wellbeing Board, on the key headlines from the Walsall Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB) Annual Report. The full report will be published in December 2023.
4. **Introduction** Sets out the work undertaken during this period to strengthen the statements that underpin the WSP purpose, Vision and Ambition. This supports the work to promote the individual identity of the WSP.
5. **Walsall at a Glance** of the report provides an overview of Walsall's demography. This section also set outs what is meant by the term 'Adult safeguarding', summarises the legislation that underpins the WSP arrangements. The WSP has continued to demonstrate its ability to provide stable and effective leadership and a tenacious focus on safeguarding matters impacting adults with care and support needs and their friends and families.
6. Acknowledgement is given to all partner agencies and particularly Health colleagues who have been steadfast during significant organisational change with the introduction nationally of Integrated Care Boards in September 2022. During this challenging time, Health agencies have maintained their commitment to both regional and local partnership working to safeguard adults.

7. Performance Data regarding Adults Safeguarding Activity

a. What the data is telling us

- Adults aged between 81-90 are deemed most at risk of abuse and neglect
- Neglect, Psychological Abuse and Physical Abuse remain the top 3 categories of abuse in safeguarding adults
- Increase in concern enquiries and safeguarding concerns 2,660 compared to the previous year (2335)
- Health providers make the most referrals into the system, thereafter the ambulance service and residential care or nursing homes.
- Mental Capacity Act (MCA)
- Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) – 59% adults have expressed their desired outcomes as being ‘fully achieved’ following intervention, this has remained the same as the previous year

b. Improved areas of practice are indicated on the following:

- Data suggests positive trends in provider services engagement in caused enquiries and improved timeliness.
- increase in DV disclosure scheme applications which suggests increased awareness of the scheme and of the ‘right to know’ initiative.
- A decrease in fire related incidents - fatalities and serious injuries
- An improved process to quality assure CQC graded care/nursing homes may result in increase to safeguarding referrals

c. Areas for improvement

- Renew focus on equality, diversity and inclusion in safeguarding dataset to enable focused discussion on service need and demand
- Strengthen governance between Walsall Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB) and Safer Walsall Partnership (SWP) and the Domestic Abuse Partnership (DAP)
- Linking LeDeR data to safeguarding adult review processes
- Improve care and services for people with learning disability and autism.

8. Walsall Response - Agreed Priorities for 2022-23 Identified from 2021-2022 Annual Report

a. Review and restructure of the Safeguarding Partnership Arrangements.

In 2020 Penny Thompson, Independent Chair, Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership, undertook a review of the effectiveness of WSP arrangements with a view to look at the strengths, limitations, opportunities, and threats of the joined-up arrangements.

A review and proposed restructure of the WSP was agreed, with implementation commencing in quarter 4. The WSP has been realigned

with a separation of functions to provide greater focus of the children and adults agenda respectively through the additional appointment of an WSAB Chair.

b. Full Care Compliance Audit to be completed utilising the West Midlands Audit Tool.

There was a delay in the launch of the regional tool which resulted in the full Care Compliance audit being scheduled for completion between April and June 2023-2024.

c. Continue to progress the All-Age Exploitation Strategy and Child Neglect Strategy as key priorities and measure their impact through the outcome framework.

Work within the respective sub-groups has been undertaken over the last 12 months to strengthen arrangements for Neglect and All Aged Exploitation as detailed in Section 7 Progress Against Priorities of the annual report.

d. Additional scrutiny work to be commissioned in 2022-2023 to explore if it is possible to identify any changes or improvement in practice as a result of previous Serious Case Review recommendations and actions.

Jane Wonnacott was commissioned by the WSP to identify the extent to which these actions have had a positive impact on practice. The evaluation was commissioned in June 2022 with an agreement that the focus would be on three specific practice issues that had been identified from a previous review W6 and issues that also emerged as themes in more recent cases:

- Working with neglect
- Child Sexual Abuse within the family
- Working with learning disabled parents.

The finding of the scrutiny work identified there is ample evidence of both partnership and single agency activity focused on improving practice in the areas of neglect and child sexual abuse. Audits show that this is beginning to have an impact on referrals and assessments and focus groups were able to describe changes to practice. This included school staff referring to training that had focused attention on the voice of the child and social workers feeling more confident in working with child sexual abuse.

There was however minimal evidence of changes or improvements in work with learning disabled parents.

The outcome of this review is to be considered in work to be progressed on the revision of the Child Sexual Abuse and Neglect strategies.

Adults safeguarding will give specific focus to work to improve practice with learning disabled parents.

e. Re-establish capacity within the Business Unit and further the children and young people's engagement agenda.

The Business Unit Review section of the annual report details the work undertaken to progress this action. In summary following the departure of the Permanent Business Manager and Quality Assurance Manager interim appointments were made to enable the partnership to continue business as usual but also take the opportunity to undertake consultation, review and development work with the Business Unit, WSP substructure and its sub-group chairs and members. The review of the business unit capacity has commenced, and further work is to be progressed to review all job roles.

9. **Report on Progress**

The WSP identified three priorities for progression, Neglect, Self-Neglect and All-Age Exploitation this was reinforced by the outcome of the JTAI outcome published in February 2022.

10. **Neglect**

This is the second year of Neglect being progressed as a priority for the partnership. Steady progress has been made in improving the multiagency arrangements with work being undertaken to review and relaunch the neglect strategy and the implementation of the Graded Care Profile 2.

11. Adult self-neglect is also a priority for the WSP and work has been undertaken to ensure the 'Think Family' approach underpins the areas of practice identified in the Adult Self Neglect Strategy.

12. **All Age Exploitation**

WSP remain committed to an All-Aged Exploitation (AAE) approach to tackle the issues in the borough of risk and vulnerability to exploitation experience by young people and adults with care and support needs across the Borough.

13. The AAE subgroup has reviewed and implemented its multiagency arrangements. The commission of the Exploitation Hub has provided invaluable in person and direct support to residents to work on solutions to address issues of gang affiliation, related activity, and wider links between criminal offending behaviour and exploitation. The Hub is also working with schools, parents and carers to raise awareness of the signs of exploitation and what to do if they are concerned about their child.

14. Members will be reminded of the positive comments received from the Joint Targeted Area inspection in November 2022. The JTAI report summarised the following as key strengths and impacts from local arrangements to identify and respond to exploitation.

"Risks to children from sexual or criminal exploitation are recognised well at the front door. The daily Exploitation Triage meeting is a well-attended multi-agency meeting that explores effectively the risks faced

by children when they are reported as missing. Information is shared effectively in order to help professionals' understanding of risks and actions, which helps inform decision-making. "

"The chair of the Exploitation Triage meeting rotates between its core members, which is inclusive and indicative of confidence in the commitment and capability of the participants in the meeting. This ensures that responses to child protection are a shared responsibility across all partners."

15. Whilst the work around adults' exploitation is less progressed with very few referrals being received by the partnership, the WSP is working with partners to increase identification, referrals, and response across the multiagency workforce. Work continues to improve the performance and quality assurance arrangements. The commission to produce a strategic needs assessment will be taken forward in 2023-2024 and will be instrumental in strengthening the understanding of the prevalence of exploitation in the Borough and enable more targeted multiagency response to address the issues.

16. Child sexual abuse

Nationally child sexual abuse referrals have seen a significant decline. WSP has had a focus on child sexual abuse since 2019 and has worked with the Centre of Expertise to develop the CSA multi-agency Strategy 2020-2023. In quarter 4 of the business year the WSP Executive Group were presented with information which suggested that further work needed to be undertaken around Walsall's identification and response to Child Sexual Abuse (CSA).

The CSA strategy will be subject to review through 2023-2024 and will consider any crosscutting issues for the adult safeguarding agenda.

17. How we Learn:

18. Section 7/8: Learning and Themes Arising from the Outcome of Multi-agency Audits

19. How we Learn: Case Reviews and National Learning and Feedback from 4th Partner Experiences

20. Subgroup Developments

21. Workforce Learning and Development

22. Scrutiny Arrangements

23. How feedback from adults, their friends and family have informed our work and influenced provision.

There has been some evidence of effective work being undertaken by partner agencies. Health Watch undertook an audit on the cost of living, Adults services report a slight increase in making safeguarding personal - 59% of adults at risk were 'asked, listened to and had actions progressed', this has resulted in their desired outcomes being fully achieved

It does remain however that more work needs to be done to ensure a robust and embedded arrangement across the partnership, whereby we consistently ask, listen and act on the views of adults their friends and family members to strengthen areas of assurance around the effectiveness of the safeguarding system and multiagency practice. This will continue to be a golden thread integral to the WSP strategic plans.

24. **Opportunities to Learn and Improve**

25. Multi-agency audits provide an important view into the effectiveness of our safeguarding system and has identified some positive practice and possibly highlighted how factors such as workforce challenges can impact on the effectiveness of multi-agency working. This further illustrates the crucial role that partners across the system, but particularly as part of Performance and Quality Assurance process, play in identifying, addressing, and mitigating these factors.

26. **Multi-agency audits (MAA)** - During 2022-2023, the MAA audits focused on fire risk and safety, self-neglect, exploitation, and domestic abuse.

27. The fire safety audit highlighted that there was some good practice with evidence of understanding and application of the Mental Capacity Act in the context of fluctuating capacity, Making Safeguarding Personal and multi-disciplinary meetings. Co-existing risks was recognised particularly with hoarding self-neglect and mental ill health.

28. Inadequate ratings have been a feature in three of the four audit rounds with self-neglect and domestic abuse having the highest proportion. Evidence that any remedial actions have been completed from Q2-Q4 are completed and noted within the report. Other aspects of the audit for self-neglect identified an underuse of the self-neglect pathway, risk assessment tool by practitioners.

29. The Domestic Abuse audit found that practice could be strengthened re mental capacity. Better collaboration and co-ordination opportunities between professionals was required to develop a better picture of the domestic concerns and any other co-existing factors.

30. The All-Age Exploitation audit identified positive practice in terms of making safeguarding personal, adopting a trauma informed approach, risk assessment and some examples of engaging some adults.

31. There is a robust summary of the themes and key finds arising from the multi-agency audits.

32. **Learning from (SARs) Safeguarding Adult Reviews**

WSAB carries out Safeguarding Adult Reviews into cases where individuals with care and support needs have been seriously harmed or died, and abuse or neglect is suspected. The reviews are focussed on identifying how multi-agency safeguarding systems and practice can be improved in the future.

Review activity undertaken includes the following:

- The introduction of the local process of SARs in rapid time
- Joint learning opportunity with Coventry SAB

33. How the learning was shared

The WSP continue to develop new ways of cascading the learning arising from MAA and case reviews.

- a. The outcome of reviews are promptly applied and featured in WSP learning and training material.
- b. All learning from reviews is disseminated across the children and adult's workforce through 7-minute briefings. This is a well-known approach based on a technique adapted from the FBI!
- c. 7-minute briefings are sent out in WSP newsletters, prior or post publication of reports, at practitioner events, and policy or procedure development and launch events.
- d. Practitioner events are held in person and virtually, these are well received by multiagency practitioners. The events are recorded ensuring wider accessibility and sustainability of learning in the system and across the multiagency workforce.

34. **Workforce learning and Development.**

35. The partnership continues to approach its work with practices adopted during the pandemic. However, over the year we have seen a steady increase of in person meetings across the partnership substructure and in training and other learning events. The hybrid approach continues to be an efficient and welcomed approach for partner members to manage their commitments across the partnership.

36. Key Highlights

- 52 events either face to face or virtual have taken place.
- 1,504 attended virtual or face to face training.
- 920 completed evaluations which include post evaluation or Impact evaluations.
- 19 videos or webinars have been added to the website.
- Video recordings have been accessed 1,194 times.
- 1,123 eLearning modules have been completed – however, these are predominately by Walsall Council employees due to external partners being unable to access the Learning Management System.

37. One of the key areas for development in 2023-2024 is to develop and implement a framework to assess the impact of workforce learning on practice and its impact on 4th Partner (children and their family) outcomes.


38. **What Scrutiny arrangements are in place and why these have been adopted? How successful have they been?**

39. The programme of independent scrutiny has existed through the function of an Independent Chair chairing the Performance and Quality Assurance (PQA) Subgroup and Operations and Scrutiny Subgroup. This was an active way for the Chair to gain insight and understanding into the quality of frontline practice.

40. The Independent Chair provides regular challenge to the system, and this is reflected in regular assurance reports to the Executives Group meeting.
41. In quarter 4 plans were progressed to split the Operations and Scrutiny Group to two groups provide the partnership separate focus for adults and children safeguarding respectively. The Operations and Scrutiny Group was renamed to Safeguarding Leadership Group (SLG), Sally Hodges chaired the children's SLG and an additional appointment for independent chair for adults was made to Derek Benson. It is hoped that the changes would provide more focussed response to independent scrutiny across the Partnership's activity, this is to be a key area for improvement in 2023-24.
42. **Conclusion** How effective have our arrangements been?
43. Members will note the positive aspects of the annual report. There remains strong commitment to our collaborative workstreams that has needed our attention, while the annual review of effectiveness has demonstrated that there are aspects of effective Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements in place, this annual review report must also acknowledge that there is more to be done by our partners to progress the WSP strategic intentions, to further improve partnership working and the related safeguarding practice. The WSAB will therefore, continue to review, streamline and improve the multiagency safeguarding system, services and practice delivery to ensure we remain effective, now and into the future.
44. **Strategic Plan 2023 - 2025**
- The key priority areas identified for the WSCB in 2022 – 23 continue to be the main priority areas for further development and embedment for the Partnership in 2023/24. In addition, the Safeguarding Executive Group reached agreement that work to improve multi-agency oversight and management of child sexual abuse would be the 4th Priority. The review of the Child Sexual Abuse Strategy will consider any cross-cutting issues for the adult safeguarding agenda.
- Priority 1 - Neglect
 - Priority 2 – Self-Neglect and Hoarding
 - Priority 3 – All-Age Exploitation
 - Priority 4 – Child Sexual Abuse
45. In addition, there is a programme of work planned to further strengthen the governance and leadership across the WSP substructure, to drive practice improvements, increase accountability and provide greater clarity of expectations for members of the partnership.
46. The summary plan sets out WSP ambitions and strategic priority areas of focus for 2023-2025 alongside summary actions that will help the partnership subgroups to devise plans to oversee activity that helps to keep children, young people, and adults, be and feel safe and protected from abuse and neglect.

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