

Meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday 17th March 2021 at 6.00pm
On Microsoft Teams

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Agenda - Public Session
(Meeting open to the public and press)

1. Chairs Announcements

Welcome to this virtual meeting. This is a formal Council Committee. The public proceedings will take place live on the Internet.

It will assist with the conduct of business if participants speak only when invited. I shall adjourn the meeting if necessary if protocol is not observed.

Members of the public are welcome to view the proceedings but should not make contributions until they are invited in line with our procedure.

All Members of the Committee have received the reports and associated documents in advance and had the opportunity to read them. The public reports are published on the Internet.

All participants should mute their microphones and video feed when they are not speaking.

Please remember to unmute your microphone and switch on your video feed when it is your turn to speak. Speak clearly and slowly into your microphone.

Anyone wishing to speak should indicate using the 'raise your hand' button on Microsoft Teams. I will invite people to speak at the appropriate time.

If you do not have the hand button, please type your request to speak in the chat function. Please note that the 'chat' function is monitored and has a full audit trail and anyone found to be misusing this function will be removed from the meeting.

Finally, I ask for everyone's patience with the use of technology. I apologise in advance if we experience any unforeseen difficulties which we shall try to



resolve expediently.

I shall now follow the agenda items as listed.

2. Apologies for absence.
3. To report the appointment of any substitute members serving for this meeting of the Committee.
4. To receive any declarations of interest under the Members' Code of Conduct.
5. To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 20th January 2021 as a correct record.
6. Public Forum
7. Dudley Children's Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2019/20 (Pages 1 – 46)
8. Children's Services Update – Acting Director of Children's Services.
9. Children and Young People's Plan: January 2021 January 2022 (Pages 47 - 88)
10. Update on the Youth Offending Service Inspection Action Plan (Pages 89 – 95)
11. Unregulated Provision in Dudley (Pages 96 – 103)
12. Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report 2020/21 (Pages 104 – 111)
13. To consider any questions from Members to the Chair where two clear days-notice has been given to the Monitoring Officer (Council Procedure Rule 11.8).



Chief Executive

Dated: 9th March 2021

Distribution:

Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee:

Councillor A Millward (Chair)

Councillor P Sahota (Vice-Chair)

Councillors M Aston, J Baines, I Bevan, P Bradley, J Cooper, S Craigie, K Lewis, C Perks and S Ridley.

Cc Councillor R Buttery (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)

Church Representative – Mr T Reid (Worcester Diocesan Board of Education)

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- Elected Members can submit apologies by contacting Democratic Services: Telephone 01384 815238 or E-mail Democratic.Services@dudley.gov.uk

Minutes of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday, 20th January 2021 at 6.00 pm
Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present:

Councillor A Millward (Chair)
Councillor P Sahota (Vice-Chair)
Councillors M Aston, J Baines, I Bevan, J Cooper, S Craigie, K Lewis, P Lee, C Perks, S Ridney and T Reid (Diocese of Worcester Board of Education representative).

Officers:

S Carter (Finance Manager), R Cooper (Head of Financial Services), H Ellis (Acting Director of Children's Services), H Henderson (Head of Children in Care), J Keeble, (Head of Education Outcomes and Inclusion), D Nicklin (Complaints Manager) and K Buckle (Democratic Services Officer) together with 11 Members of the Public.

20 **Apology for Absence**

An apology for absence from the meeting was received on behalf of Councillor P Bradley.

21 **Appointment of Substitute Member**

It was noted that Councillor P Lee had been appointed as a substitute Member on behalf of Councillor P Bradley for this meeting of the Committee only.

22. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor S Ridney declared a non-pecuniary interest as the Chair of the Management Board of the Virtual School.

23. **Minutes**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11th November 2020, be approved as a correct record and signed.



24. **Children's Services Update**

The Acting Director of Children's Services referred to the appointment of Catherine Driscoll, who would join the Authority on 22nd February 2021 as the new Director of Children's Services.

It was reported that the COVID lockdown had produced a number of challenges surrounding supporting schools and managing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Guidance.

The Corbyn Road facility and a further Family Centre had now re-opened, with staff continuing to visit families in order to provide support.

A number of front-line staff had now been vaccinated and schools were being supported in relation to providing Lateral Flow Testing.

The Improvement Plan in relation to Children's Social Care continued and the nine priorities were outlined including Leadership, the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, achieving permanency, providing education to Key Stage 4 children and capturing the voice of the child. The detailed Improvement Plan would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

Some initial problems had occurred in relation to the Successor Programme regarding data reporting, however those problems were being resolved, with phase 2 of the implementation programme commencing, which would include developing a Children's Portal.

Arising from the verbal presentation Members asked questions and the Acting Director of Children's Services responded as follows: -

- The majority of the Borough's schools were now providing Vouchers as opposed to food hampers for those eligible for free school meals. However, it was accepted that some schools still had no alternative but to provide food hampers.
- In relation to the £3.00 deficit between the £15 hamper and the £12 voucher, schools could now claim this from the Department for Education (DfE).
- Although there were challenges with supporting staff during the pandemic, the Authority had a strong programme of emotional health and wellbeing, all had PPE, were being supported by Managers and front-line workers were receiving vaccinations, which had resulted in a boost in morale. Centres were now open for staff who would receive peer support whilst working in COVID restricted buildings.

There were a whole series of support tools for staff, however it was accepted that it remained a challenge to manage COVID-19, provide support and improve services at the same time.

- The new Director of Children's Services had a wealth of Director experience.
- The Vouchers could only be used for food with a clear message in relation to this being conveyed to all of the Borough's supermarkets.
- The programme of Lateral Flow Testing was continuing, however due to a change in Government Guidance should a pupil in a bubble with other children test positive, the whole bubble would be told to self-isolate.

The Chair echoed the concerns of a Member in relation to the continuing changes in Government Guidance and the short space of time in which to implement the guidance following announcements during weekends which would need to be implemented on Monday mornings.

The Chair congratulated all Head Teachers for their continued work and support during difficult and challenging times.

Resolved

That the information on the Children's Services update and as reported on at the meeting, be noted.

25. Medium Term Financial Strategy

A joint report of the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and Legal and the Acting Director of Children's Services was submitted on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2023/24, with emphasis on proposals relevant to the Committee's Terms of Reference, specifically Children's Services.

The Head of Financial Services reported that the budget had been developed around unprecedented uncertainty caused by COVID-19. The financial position continued to change, and those changes would be reflected in the final version of the report that would be considered by the Cabinet in February and Council in March 2021.

The COVID response funding that was received from Government continued to rise. A further £5m of Contained Outbreak Management Funding was expected over and above the amount that was reflected in Appendix A. Since the report was prepared, the Local Government Finance Settlement had been received, which was better than expected. It was forecast for next year that resources would be £263m rather than the predicted £259m. However, upon re-assessment, further pressures were expected in Adults and Social Care and those would also be updated in the future report.

In summary the Authority faced a very mixed position. In the short-term significant funding had been received to support the responses to COVID-19 and reserves were better than expected although they remained relatively low to the average.



In the longer-term Dudley remained a low taxing, low spending Council and there would be a deficit in the following three financial years that would need to be addressed in order that Dudley could be a fully financially sustainable Authority.

Arising from the presentation of the report and Appendices to the report submitted, Members asked questions and Officers responded as follows: -

- In relation to the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) reduced contribution, the RAA was established approximately two years ago and all four Local Authorities, Sandwell, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Dudley made fixed contributions to the Agency. However, it had been established that Dudley's share would not need to be as high. Although the services received would not change, the contribution would be decreased and the position in relation to the service that the RAA provided could be reviewed in future years.
- Dudley had a high number of children who were placed with family members and many foster carers had provided children with permanent homes under Special Guardianship Orders (SGO'S). Therefore the Authority's reliance on the RAA had not been as high as expected due to connected families work and the focus on retaining children with their own families where possible.
- In relation to Home to School Transport pressures, N Kletz, the Commercial and Procurement Consultant had established a Working Group whereby Commissioning and SEND professionals within the SEND Transport Team were investigating the issue of home to school transport for SEND children, to attempt to resolve issues, rather than conducting constant reviews. However, re-assurances were provided that following the work of the Working Group details of those savings would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.
- In relation to SGO's the 'No Detriment Policy' was referred to. That Policy ensured that a child's carer would not suffer financially as a result of entering into SGO's. However once an SGO was granted, the Authority would not have the burden of the additional costs of a child being in care, including Social Worker visits, Independent Reviews and Virtual School provision.

There would be a drive to recruit foster carers to avoid utilising Agency Foster Carers and that would reduce costs.

Work was being conducted with partner Authorities across the Black Country on a fostering sharing arrangement, in order to support fostering placements that would also result in projected savings, as regional funding was available to support that provision.

Re-assurances were provided that permanency for children in care remained a main priority for Children's Social Care, and the savings outlined within the report and Appendices to the report submitted would not compromise the service.

- Placement costs for children in care would be reviewed, as it was envisaged that the costs paid to providers would reduce, or there were internal residential placements for children and young people that would be more cost-effective.
- Services would not be re-designed, however in order to achieve savings and become more efficient, work would continue to prevent children accessing external placements when they initially entered the care system.
- A Permanency Strategy had been produced which had entered the consultation stage, and it was hoped that the Strategy would be rolled out the following week when work would commence with Social Workers in order for them to understand the Strategy and to focus on early permanency for children in care, as it was essential that permanency was a priority. There was the desire to keep children close to their homes in familiar settings.

Several different models were being investigated to support children to return to their homes. 'No Wrong Door' was a working model and there was the aspiration to set up a model in order to work with various parts of the Authority and services in education, as there was a rise in those entering care between the ages of 11 to 15 who had difficult and adverse childhood experiences, and who could not be contained any further within their home settings. It was accepted that some children and young people struggled to make care work for them, ending up in high cost residential placements across the Country. Services were being developed in order to focus on reunification and strengthen immediate and extended family members to care for children, in order to resolve the issues referred to above.

There was further work being conducted in order to prevent children entering care, and that work should reduce the pressures on placements.

The Chair thanked the Head of Children in Care for the detailed explanation in relation to reducing savings, with explanations satisfying some of her concerns.

Councillor P Lee raised concerns in relation to the outcomes for children who left care at the age of 18 with a request that the age be increased.

The Head of Children in Care agreed to discuss further issues with Councillor P Lee following the meeting.

It was noted that regular meetings were taking place with the Home to School Transport Team, who were becoming more rigorous in implementing the protocols and only agreeing to costs for transport should they genuinely meet all of the criteria.

The Head of Education Outcomes and Inclusion reported that the vast majority of funding was paid to transport providers direct.

The Acting Director of Children's Services confirmed that should parents or carers have disability vehicles in order to transport children to and from school, and separate applications for transport payments were being made, those applications would be investigated further.



The Acting Director of Children's Services also advised that in relation to Contact Centres, those savings had been rolled over from 2019/2020, however the Service was not in a position to make any savings in relation to family time and that saving would not be made in the future.

The Vice-Chair raised the issue of the Equality Impact section within reports not being completed in the appropriate way.

The Head of Financial Services made reference to the fact that the report was forwarded to the relevant Officer in order that the paragraph was completed in accordance with the contents of the report.

The Cabinet would consider the budget proposals on 8th February, prior to Full Council on 1st March 2021. The Committee requested that further information be provided to Members on the proposed savings in relation to the review of the home to school transport for SEND children, the managed step down from external residential placements and the movement of external placements into internal residential placements.

Resolved

- (1) That the proposals for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2023/24, set out in the report and Appendices to the report submitted, be received and noted.
- (2) That the Acting Director of Children's Services be requested to provide further information to Members relating to the home to school transport pressures and how the budget savings referred to above are to be achieved.

26. Children's Services Complaints: Response Times Action Plan.

The Committee considered a report that provided an update with regard to the response times performance in respect of complaints received by Children's Services.

The Acting Director of Children's Services advised that a new permanent Head of Service of Intelligence Performance and Policy within Children's Services had been recruited who would prioritise training and improve the quality of responses to complaints.

It was also noted that Care Management were a pressurised team and work would continue in order to investigate methods to support the team.

The Complaints Manager referred to the background to the report submitted, advising that the annual report had evidenced that only 41% of complaints were being responded to within 20 working days to which Members raised concerns. Members

had previously requested that updates be submitted to a future meeting regarding response times.

It was noted that the revised process intended to improve performance was introduced on the 18th August 2020, and the current response times performance evidenced that response times provided within the 20 working days timescale had increased to 65%.

However, it was accepted that work should continue to improve figures with regular performance updates continued to be provided to Senior Managers.

The reasons for those response times exceeding timescales as outlined in the report submitted were noted.

Senior Managers continued to examine the additional support that could be provided to support the service.

Work was also being conducted in conjunction with the Centre for Professional Practice who were developing an audit tool to ensure that a sample of complaints were analysed on a regular basis.

Benchmarking data from other Councils who were part of the West Midlands Complaints Officer Group had been obtained and it appeared that response times ranged from 50% to 73% with regards to Children's Services complaints being responded to within 20 working days.

It was noted that Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council had introduced changes to their processes in line with those introduced by Dudley and it had been identified that improvements in response times were not immediate.

Resolved

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted on Children's Services Complaints: Response Times Action Plan, be noted.
- (2) That further updates on the 20 working days response times be submitted to future meetings of the Committee.

27. Education Report

Members considered a report on the Education Strategy, Interim Ofsted Visits, Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), the Alternative Provision Strategy, illegal off-rolling and the Dudley Virtual School.

The Head of Education Outcomes and Inclusion presented the report submitted and referred to the Education Strategy for Dudley 2020-21 that had been launched with all internal stakeholders, Elected Members, Schools, Academies and Chairs of Governors during the first half of the Autumn Term. This provided an essential framework to all of the Borough's education and inclusion work, and a coherent content for all of the other workstreams and initiatives.



The six key principles of the Education Strategy as contained in the report submitted were referred to.

It was reported that schools were being made more inclusive and more able and willing to take children who had special educational needs, and challenges continued to be made to schools in order to ensure that the culture remained to be inclusive.

It was reported that there remained a deficit in services within school settings in order to deal with social emotional mental health.

In relation to reducing exclusions there was a large amount of work being conducted.

In order to roll out an Alternative Provision Strategy work was also being conducted in order to ensure the Education Teams were more co-ordinated.

It was reported that there were 15 Education Teams who met weekly each Monday to discuss the work being undertaken individually and collectively in schools in order to improve and challenge schools.

In order to improve the level of communication with schools the Head of Education Outcomes and Inclusion provided a monthly power point presentation to all Headship Groups.

The Various Officers involved with the Education Strategy Group were referred to and it was noted that the Group had been established in order to ensure that their work was fully co-ordinated. The meeting structure as set out in the report submitted was also outlined.

It had been agreed that another Local Authority would be invited to conduct an evaluation of the Strategy, and it was envisaged that there would continue to be an improvement plan in place.

It was acknowledged that school readiness continued to be a problem and there was also the need to work with post 16 students, with 32 schools, including Academies and Multi Agency Trusts agreeing to work with the Authority in both regards.

A bulletin was distributed twice each week in order to provide information to support schools and those bulletins also included any updated Government Guidance for Schools.

In relation to Ofsted visits, Ofsted had developed a new model which was currently evolving whereby virtual conversations were taking place which included general conversations, conversations around safeguarding, the response to COVID and behaviour and attendance.

Towards Christmas 2020 those conversations had been more focused on the curriculum in the main in relation to the subjects of English and maths, with a further three subjects being examined on a random basis.

Ofsted had also focused on remote learning, what that work involved and how it was being monitored on a daily basis. It was noted that data was now being provided in relation to home working including details of assessing and monitoring that work.

SEND and the Written Statement of Action was referred to and it was reported that there was also a self-evaluation of the SEND provision in place.

There had been the launch of the Alternative Provision Strategy, which had been required due to the data provided that evidenced that Dudley were high within the League Tables for exclusions and it was clear that a process was required to reduce exclusions.

The principals of the Alternative Provision Strategy were referred to and the need to continue to work on ensuring that children were not excluded in the first instance.

An inclusive pathway had been put into place with a number of packages of support which could include mentoring specialist support and introductions to Connexions, and there was currently an opportunity being advertised for the secondment of an employee internally in order to help with those support services.

Work was being conducted with both Multi Academy Trusts and maintained schools in order to provide alternative provision.

It was stated that although illegal off-rolling was not an issue in Dudley, the position would continue to be monitored.

In relation to those pupils passing exams, numbers were significantly impressive with 48% of those pupils with special educational needs achieving higher results.

Elective Home Education (EHE) remained an issue nationally, with a spike identified in Dudley during September 2020. The position was immediately communicated to the DfE who were aware of the national spike which had been masked largely by parents being anxious for their children to be in school, which presented the Authority with the need to separate those who were anxious and those who were generally home educating.

All parents had to be assessed in order to determine whether they were in a position to home educate, with the current caseload involving 425 assessments. Approximately 100 were in the assessment process, and since September, 32 of those children had returned to school.

was stated that of those children being home educated, 50% were from primary education and 50% were from secondary education with no reception children being home educated.

In terms of capacity to deal with the EHE assessments there was the intention to recruit an additional post.

Work was being conducted closely with Children Missing Education Teams.

Arising from the presentation of the report submitted Members asked questions and the Head of Education Outcomes and Inclusion responded as follows: -

- The data in relation to the number of children in school with SEND would be circulated to Members.
- In relation to making schools more inclusive, schools were encouraged to provide a base for respite care in order to provide structured activities for children, for example during break times. The example of the provision of a sensory garden was referred to.
- By making schools more inclusive that would result in financial savings especially in relation to costly out of Borough placements.
- Should it become apparent that a school could not meet a child's needs a further assessment would be carried out.
- It was noted that the Chair had written to the Secretary of State in relation to the EHE guidance not being robust enough and requesting further robust guidance.
- In order to determine whether parents/carers were in a position to home educate, the financial implications of providing a tutor would also be considered.
- In relation to off-rolling, census data would continue to be examined and monitored.
- Work had been completed on the Place Planning Strategy for the Borough and all schools had been consulted. Due to the expected reduction in birth rates, four schools had agreed to reduce pupil admission numbers, as the numbers being admitted were substantially below their published admission number, and the Authority were under a duty to re-examine pupil numbers. In terms of the Halesowen area of the Borough there were problems with secondary school capacity, with Earls, Leasowes and Windsor High Schools agreeing to work together to provide a solution, for example to extend their capacity for more pupils. There would be cost implications as that may result in erecting additional buildings or extending current buildings.
- In relation to additional capacity within the North of the Borough, work was being conducted with Mark Grundy the Chief Executive Officer of the Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust with regards to investigating the extra capacity that may be available.

The Chair thanked the Head of Education Outcomes and Inclusion for his extremely comprehensive report.

The Vice Chair again referred to the incomplete Equality Impact Assessment Clause within reports and the Acting Director of Children's Services undertook to raise the issue with Officers.

Resolved

- (1) That the report submitted on Education, be noted.



- (2) That the Head of Education Outcomes and Inclusion be requested to provide Members with the data in relation to the number of children attending mainstream school with SEND.
- (3) That the Acting Director of Children's Services be requested to raise the issue of completing the Equality Impact Assessments within reports accurately in the future.

The meeting ended at 8.00pm

CHAIR



Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 17th February 2021

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Dudley Children's Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report for 2019-2020

Purpose

1. To present the Dudley Children's Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report to the Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that:
 - Members consider and comment upon Dudley Children's Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report for 2019-2020.

Background

3. Local Safeguarding Boards were established by the Children Act 2004 which required each local authority to establish a Board to ensure effective coordination between agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area.

The Social Work Act (2017), and subsequent revision of the Statutory guidance; Working Together (2018 version) has abolished Local Safeguarding Children Boards and redirected the statutory duties under the leadership of three key safeguarding partners, being Local Authority, Police and Health (Clinical Commissioning Group) with support from wider partners.

These new arrangements came into effect from September 2019. During this transformation, Dudley adopted a 'life course' approach to safeguarding and the Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership (DSPP) was created. This report therefore reflects work carried out between September 2019 and March 2020.

4. The DSPP is the overarching strategic group which oversees the work of the Childrens Safeguarding Partnership Group and the Safeguarding Adults Board, enabling a life course safeguarding approach across the Partnership.

5. Partners across Dudley and the wider Black Country have embraced the new statutory guidance with regards to Safeguarding. Further work is required in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) around the processing of contacts, the quality of referrals and consistent threshold. This work will be undertaken on a multi-agency basis through the MASH Operational Group, the MASH Strategic Board and will be included in the Improvement Plan.
6. Since the implementation of the first lockdown in March 2019, the DSPP Executive made a decision to meet weekly (a commitment which has continued) to ensure that safeguarding arrangements across the life course have remained safe and effective. DCSPG have been positively assured about the management of services and outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Finance

7. A breakdown of how the DSCB / DSPP was funded can be found as set out on page 8 of the DCSPG Annual Report

Law

8. New arrangements for Safeguarding were introduced by the Social Work Act 2017 and the revised publication of Working Together 2018.

Equality Impact

9. The DSPP work to prevent the abuse, neglect and harm of all children and young people within Dudley, inclusive of all children and their families; respecting their individual levels of ability, gender, gender identity, race, religion and belief systems and sexual orientation. The multi-disciplinary partnership aims to reduce the impact of inequalities through the coordination of services aimed at addressing these issues.
10. This report does not conflict with the Councils Policy on Equality.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

11. The multi-agency training offer has been impacted by Covid 19. This has meant that 'in person' face to face training is no longer an option at this point in time. However, the core training offer has been converted to e learning and now training is starting to be offered as 'virtual' face to face.

Commercial/Procurement

12. There are no commercial or procurement implications arising from the content of this report

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

13. Neglect, exploitation and abuse in childhood are known to be important determinants of physical and mental health problems that can impact across the rest of a child's life. It is critical that Safeguarding Partnership co-ordinate work to prevent and respond to neglect, abuse and exploitation; and help build resilience in those children, young people and their families that have experienced adversity.
14. The new safeguarding arrangements across the life course are already providing valuable opportunities to better co-ordinate safeguarding support and health support through transition from childhood to adulthood.
15. The joint priorities across the life course have enabled end to end discussions around safeguarding support, providing the best possible help for families at the right time.
16. Dudley Safeguarding Children Partnership will remain vigilant with regard to emerging safeguarding issues in particular around mental health, as they affect children and young people, especially in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and will respond to ensure that all agencies come together, are supported and provide assurance regarding their safeguarding responsibilities



Catherine Driscoll
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer:

Sam Anderson
Telephone: 01384 815533
Email: sam.anderson@dudley.gov.uk

List of Background Documents

Appendix 1 – DSCPG Annual Report 2019-2020



Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership

Dudley Safeguarding Children Partnership Group Annual Report 2019/20

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Introduction from the Independent Scrutineer

I am pleased to present this first report of the Dudley Safeguarding Children Partnership Group (DSCPG) that covers the period from 29 September 2019 to the 31 March 2020 and highlights areas of good practice and learning which is a key role for the Partnership

The transition from Local Safeguarding Children Boards to multi agency safeguarding arrangements has provided the opportunity to review and strengthen how we work together to safeguard children and look to make better use of the resources we have across the partnership. Since becoming Independent Scrutineer for the DSCPG and Independent Chair for the Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership (DSPP) for Dudley in September 2019, we have appointed a new Safeguarding Partnership Manager to oversee the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements across the life course. Our statutory partners, West Midlands Police, Dudley Clinical Commissioning group and Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council work collectively with a range of partners and organisations across the life course to deliver effective safeguarding. It has been particularly challenging this year when, at the end of the reporting period, we were faced with the global pandemic, Covid 19. Details of how safeguarding was managed during the COVID-19 crisis will feature more strongly in the next annual report. We know there will be lessons to be learnt nationally and globally from the crisis.

I would like to thank the dedicated people who work across all of the organisations in Dudley who are working to promote the welfare and safety of children and support children, young people and their families, particularly in these challenging times. I have seen first-hand the amazing and inspiring work carried out daily by our partners, key workers and voluntary organisations to keep people safe in the Borough.

We will continue to ensure that safeguarding children remains a priority and I look forward to updating you in our next annual report about the work we are doing around our new priorities for 2020-22. These are;

- 1. Preventing Violence Across the Life Course**
- 2. Neglect across the Life Course**
- 3. Exploitation Across the Life Course**

Finally, I would like to thank the chairs of the subgroups and to the Safeguarding Business Unit for their hard work and support.

Dr. Paul Kingston

Independent Scrutineer, Dudley Safeguarding Children Partnership Group

About Dudley

Dudley is a metropolitan borough formed in 1974. It is located on the edge of the West Midlands. Dudley is at the heart of the Black Country, which also includes the neighbouring boroughs of Sandwell and Walsall and the city of Wolverhampton.

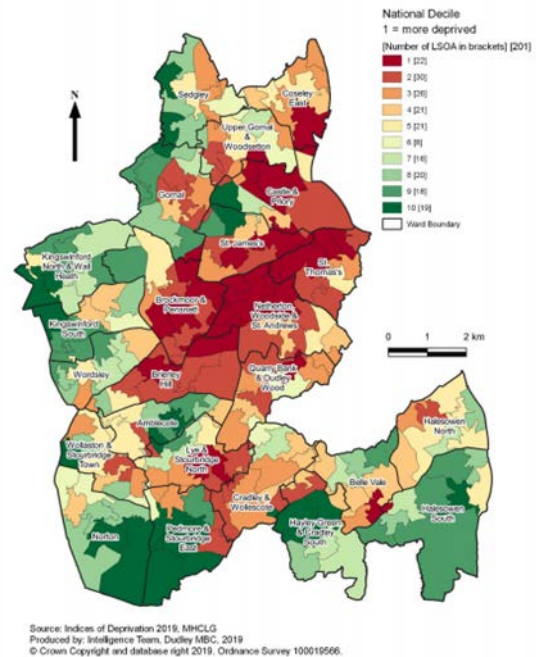
The population has been growing at a modest but sustained rate in recent years, with 16,441 more people in the Borough now compared to the 2001 estimate.

Deprivation, Child Poverty and Family Income

A total of 76,187 children and young people aged 0 to 19 live in Dudley (Mid-Year population estimates 2019). This is 23.7% of the total population in the area.

The proportion of children and young people from minority ethnic groups is rising and in January 2020, they represented 20.3% of the school population up from 16.0% in 2012. The number of children for whom English is an additional language is 11.0% in January 2020 up from 10.7% in 2012. (Source: School Place Planning team/ School census)"

The proportion of children and young people from black minority ethnic groups is rising and in 2019, they represented 26.3% of the school population up from 16.0% in 2012. The diversity of ethnic groups has increased particularly in terms of migration from Eastern Europe. There has been a rise in the number of children for whom English is an additional language (10.7% in 2012 to 11.9% in 2019). (Source: School Place Planning team)



Both absolute and relative child poverty has remained an issue in Dudley with rates significantly higher than England. The most recent data available shows that 19.0% of dependent children in Dudley aged under 16 live in absolute low-income families and 23.8% within relative low-income families. For both measures, Dudley continues to have a significantly higher percentage than England however is not statistically significantly different to the West Midlands. (Source: PHE. Public Health Outcomes Framework)

The proportion of people in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance had been declining, but the trend has reversed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In October 2020, 2,197 people in Dudley Borough were claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), equivalent to 1.1% of the working age (16-64) population. This is 602 people more than October 2019. The claimant rate in Dudley remains higher than the West Midlands percentage (0.8%) and England percentage (0.9%). (Source: NOMIS)

The mean annual wage for Dudley residents working full-time was £29,995 in 2020, below the national figure of £32,237. (Source: ONS)

Education, Employment and Training amongst Young People

The number of young people (aged 18-24) claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) had continued to decline up until the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In October 2020, there were 70 (0.3%) compared with October 2019 where this was 25 (0.1%). Dudley is equal to both the regional (0.3%) and national (0.3%) percentages. 21.4% of claimants aged 18-24 in

the Borough had been claiming JSA for longer than 2 years, higher than both regional (21.3%) and national (17.0%) averages. (Source: NOMIS)

Health Inequalities

The infant mortality rate in Dudley is 5.4 per 1,000 live births for 2015-17. This is a small decrease on the previous year's rate but statistically significantly higher than the national rate. (Source: Primary Care Mortality Data (PCMD), NHS Digital)

Smoking in early pregnancy in 2018/19 was 15.7%, statistically significantly higher than the West Midlands and England average. (Source: Public Health Outcomes Framework, Public Health England)

Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks has seen a healthy increase during 2018/19 (1,311 children) over 2017/18 (895). However issues with data quality mean the data cannot be easily benchmarked alongside regional and national performance. (Source: Public Health Outcomes Framework, Public Health England)

Primary course immunisation coverage in the first year of life in 2018/19 within Dudley 94.8% was above the England average of 92.1% and the WHO target of 95%. Whilst the immunisation rate in the West Midland and England has been declining for over 5 years the percentage in Dudley has generally not followed this pattern. However, Dudley has seen a notable drop from 96.1% in 2017/18. (Source: Health Profiles, Public Health England)

Reception children overweight (including obesity) rates in 2018/19 are greater in Dudley (25.5%) compared to England (22.6%) and the West Midlands (23.9%). The difference between Dudley and England also is of statistical significance and has been for the past 6 years. (Source: Public Health Outcomes Framework, Public Health England)

A decline in teenage pregnancy rates in Dudley has resumed in 2018 despite a plateau in previous years. Although the overall pattern has been a decreasing trend since 2000 there have been a few occasions where there has been a small increase from one year to the next. Currently Dudley's under 18 conception rate (19.3 per 1,000) is not statistically different to England (16.7 per 1,000) or the West Midlands (19.1 per 1,000). (Source: Public Health Outcomes Framework, Public Health England)

The proportion of 9- and 11-year olds bullied at or near their school has remained above 25% over the last 8 years, results in March 2018 show that 29% of Primary school pupils said they had been bullied at or near school in the past 12 months. (Source: Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire)

Governance Arrangements

Role and Functions of Dudley Safeguarding Children Partnership Group (DSCPG)

The Children and Social Work Act (2017) set out provisions to replace Local Safeguarding Children Boards with new flexible working arrangements, to be agreed at a local level by the three key agencies as defined in Working Together 2018, namely, the Police, Clinical Commissioning Groups and Local Authorities.

These partners are under a new statutory duty to make arrangements to work together, with other relevant partners, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.

Whilst implementing the statutory requirements to develop the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements regarding children and young people, Dudley safeguarding partners agreed on a programme of wider change. This integrates the safeguarding work streams of both the

Children and Adults Safeguarding Boards. Our arrangements extend beyond the remit of the requirements as defined in Working Together (2018), and include the functions defined in the Care Act (2014), which requires every local authority to establish a Safeguarding Adults Board (an “SAB”) for its area, with the purpose of helping and protecting adults in the situations defined in the legislation.

In all its activities, the DSCPG advocate that the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all Dudley’s children and young people is ‘everybody’s responsibility’.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined by “Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018” as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of Children health or development
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

In order to fulfil its core duties the DSCP has developed a range of initiatives, plans, policies and procedures for safeguarding and promote the welfare of children and young people by:

- Undertaking reviews of the effectiveness of each agencies safeguarding arrangements with regards to section 11 duties.
- Focusing on the impact of all forms of child abuse and neglect, including a Neglect Strategy
- Learning, and disseminating learning, from local and national research and case reviews
- Developing effective mechanisms and protocols that support the effective commissioning of local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- Consistently identifying indicators of the prevalence of all forms of child abuse and neglect in Dudley and measuring progress in tackling these
- Maintaining an overview of the range of provision, services and interventions delivered to reduce the impact of abuse and neglect
- Supporting and scrutinising steps taken to reduce risk of abuse and neglect
- Monitoring, supporting and scrutinising the improvement of the quality of practice and impact across partner agencies
- Improving and integrating performance monitoring
- Supporting communication and information sharing
- Liaising with frontline practitioners to identify the barriers to translating lessons learned into practice and strategies to overcome these
- Developing the findings of all reviews activities into specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related actions.
- Establishing robust processes to hold individual members to account and gain assurance of the effectiveness of their organisation’s arrangements.
- Developing meaningful relationships with children, young people, families and the wider communities, and consulting with them with regard to service developments
- Understanding the profile and perspectives of Dudley’s children and young people by asking for their views, listening and responding to them.
- Agreeing and overseeing the mechanisms for developing and maintaining safeguarding multi-agency policies and procedures
- Evidencing how individual members of DSCP have challenged one another and held other local boards to account, for example the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Supporting the learning and developmental needs, including the provision of multiagency training for the children’ workforce.

- Making recommendations to Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership Executive in regard to supporting, commending and challenging safeguarding policy and practice across agencies and the workforce
- Ensuring that the 'business' agreed by DSPP is carried out effectively

Membership of DSCPG

During April to September 2019, the partnership operated under the former governance of Dudley Safeguarding Children Board. The table below shows the current membership of the DSCPG under the new Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership governance structure which came into effect from 29 September 2019.

Agency
DSPP Business Manager
DSPP Learning and Development Coordinator
Dudley CCG
Dudley MBC - Children's Safeguarding, Practice and Quality Assurance
Dudley MBC - Communications
Dudley MBC - Education, SEND, Family Solutions, Early Years and Youth
Dudley MBC - Intelligence, Performance & Policy
Dudley MBC - Lead for Education
Dudley MBC - Legal Services
Elected Member
Safeguarding in Education Reference Group
West Midlands Police

Funding Arrangements

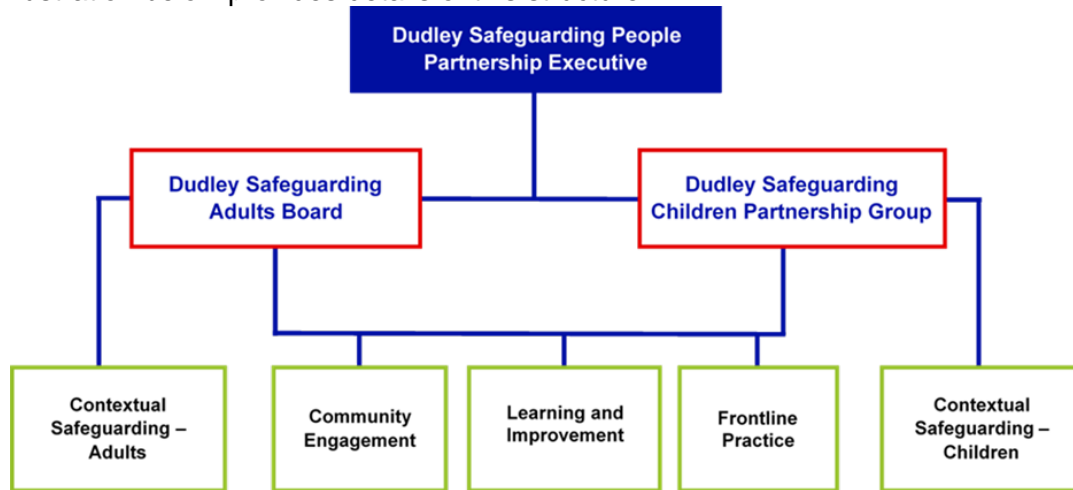
Below is the overall annual income as agreed by partners for 2019 -20 to support the delivery of the DSCP functions and objectives. This includes covering the cost of any reviews, funding a training programme, agreed events; including annual conferences, annual licenses and subscription costs, and any independently commissioned pieces of work, including costs for the Independent Chair. The income revenue from partners also supports the resourcing of a business unit.

2019-20	£
Dudley MBC - Core Budget	£210,300
Dudley CCG	£107,100
West Midlands Police	£13,300
Dudley Group Hospitals NHS Trust	£4,000
FE Colleges	£3,500
National Probation Service	£1,500
CAFCASS	£550
Community Rehabilitation Company - CRC	£1,500
Income from Internal Schools	£23,800
Income from Academies	£14,600
Total	£380,150

Structure and Arrangements

The Dudley Safeguarding Children Partnership replaced Dudley Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB) with effect from 29th September 2019 and established its new governance arrangements to combine the responsibility for safeguarding children and adults under the guidance of Working Together 2018 and the Care Act 2014.

The illustration below provides details of this structure:

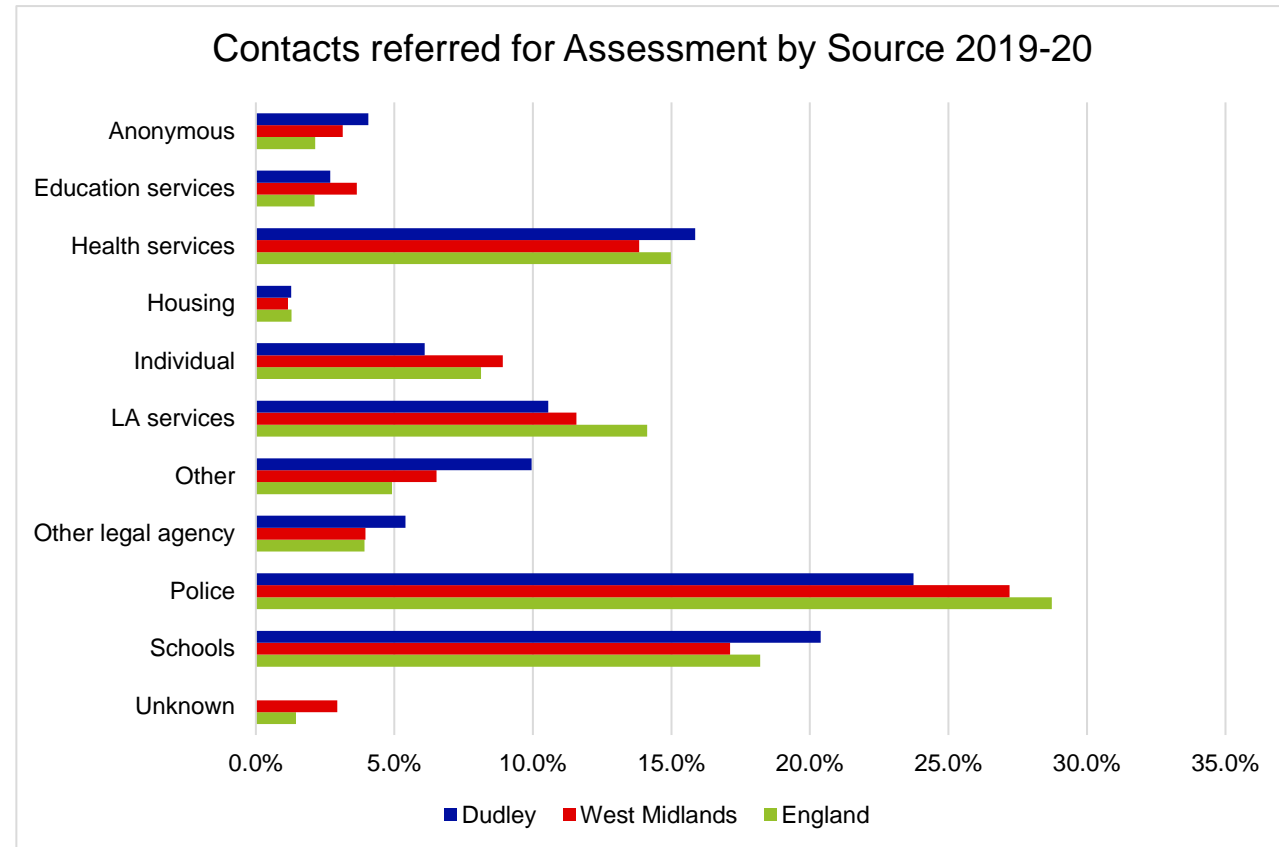


The DSPP sub group structure consists of the overarching Executive Group, the Dudley Safeguarding Adults Board (DSAB) and Dudley Safeguarding Childrens Partnership Group (DSCPG). Both the Adults Board and Children Partnership Group are responsible for the ensuring the Executive direction is delivered through a variety of mechanisms and also ensuring the Executive group has a clear line of sight of multi-agency safeguarding within Dudley.

Performance Data

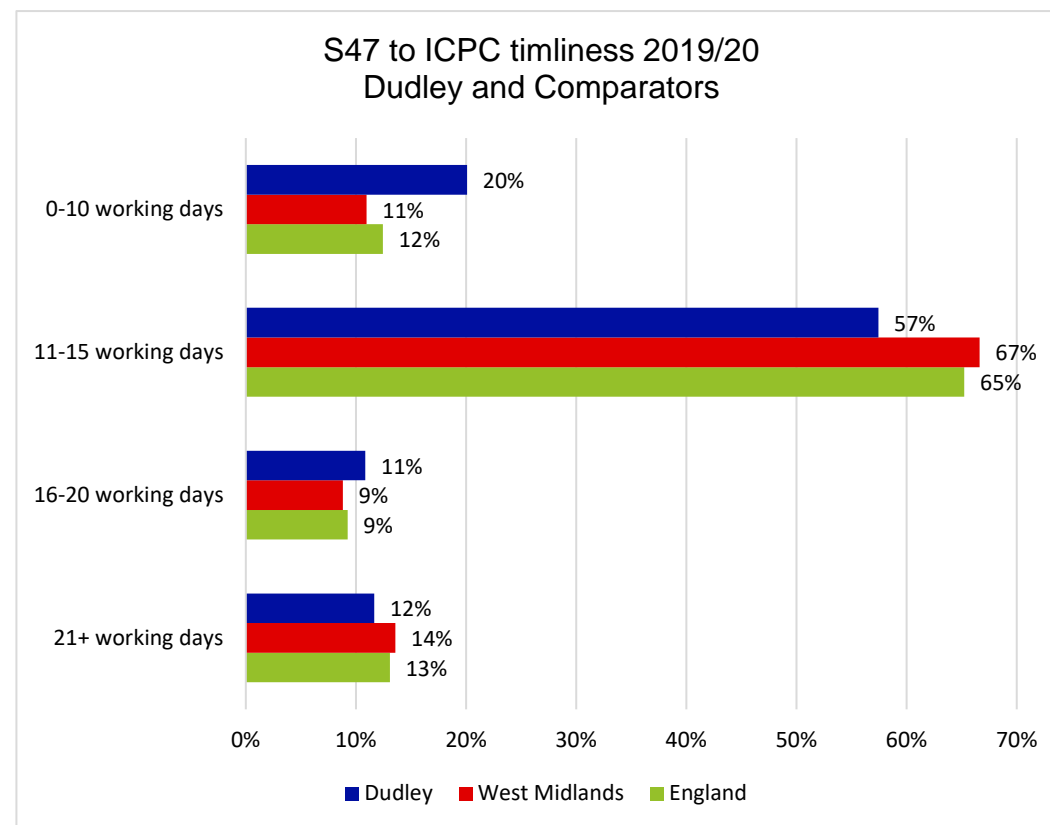
Referral by source

Source	Dudley	West Midlands	England
Anonymous	4.1%	3%	2.1%
Education services	2.7%	4%	2.1%
Health services	15.9%	14%	15.0%
Housing	1.3%	1%	1.3%
Individual	6.1%	9%	8.1%
LA services	10.6%	12%	14.1%
Other	10.0%	7%	4.9%
Other legal agency	5.4%	4%	3.9%
Police	23.7%	27%	28.7%
Schools	20.4%	17%	18.2%
Unknown	0.0%	3%	1.4%

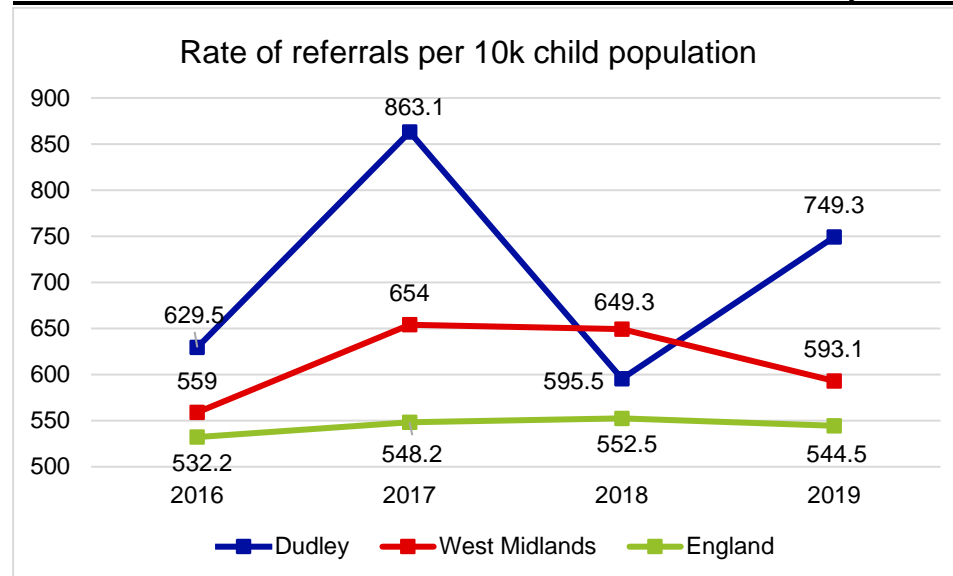


Section 47 to ICPC timeliness

Duration between start of Section 47 enquiry and ICPC	Dudley	England	West Midlands
0-10 working days	20%	12%	11%
11-15 working days	57%	65%	67%
16-20 working days	11%	9%	9%
21+ working days	12%	13%	14%

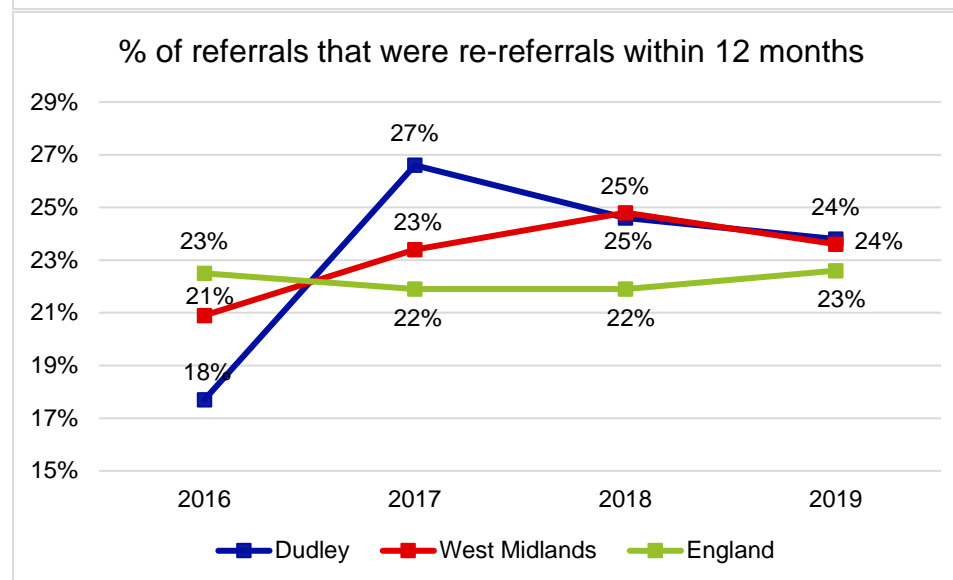


Rate of referrals and re-referrals within 12 months of a previous referral



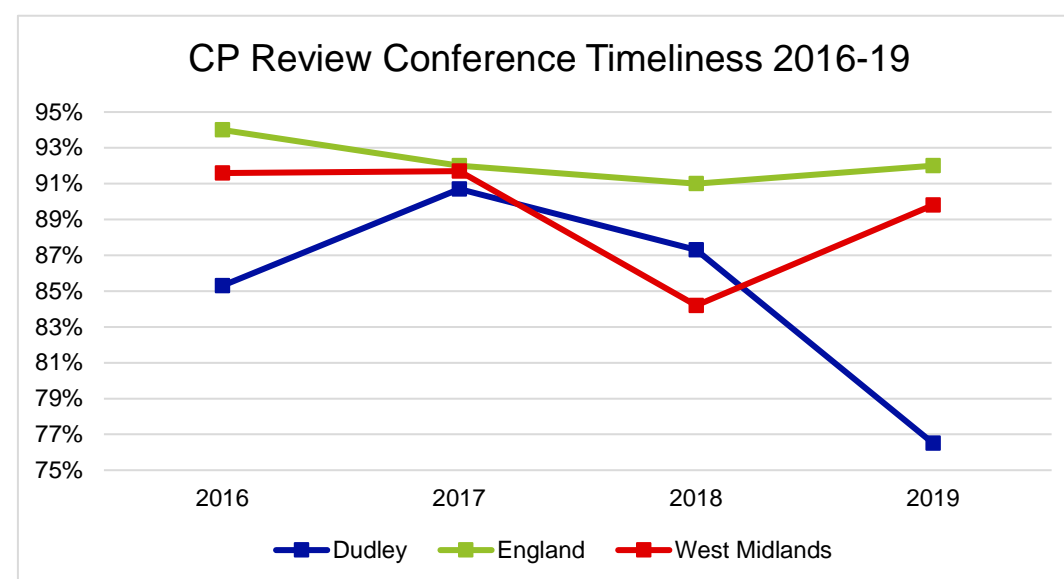
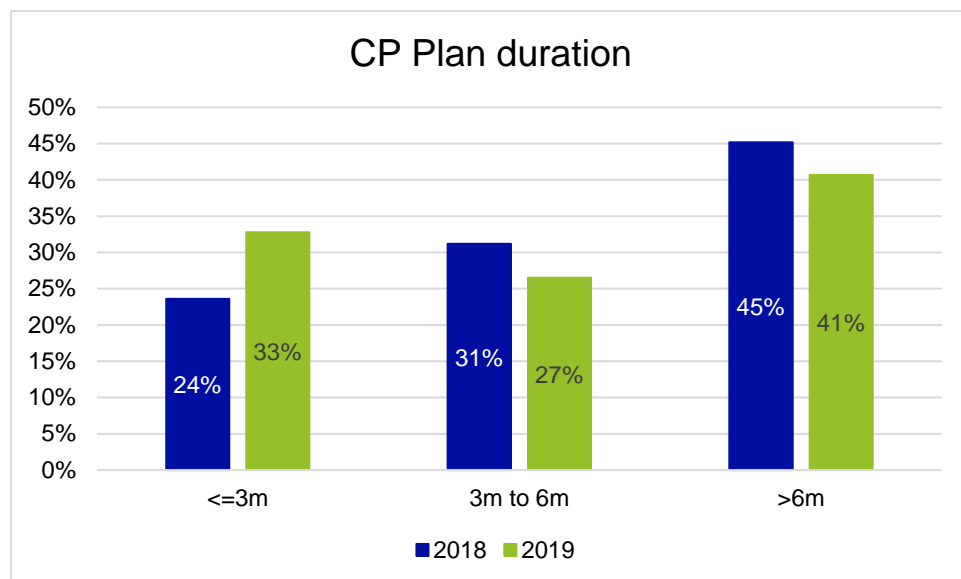
When the local authority receives a referral and information has been gathered during an assessment (which may have been very brief), in the course of which a concern arises that a child maybe suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, the local authority is required by Section 47 (S47) of the Children Act 1989 to make enquiries.

In 2019 the number of referrals per 10k child population in Dudley was higher than regional and national figures, there has also been a significant increase in referrals compared to the previous year (595.5 in 2018 to 749.3 in 2019).



The percentage of referrals that led to a re-referral within 12 months has decreased in Dudley over the past 2 years, now aligning with regional figures.

CP Plan duration and Conference Timeliness



Early Help

There was a 14% increase in the number of Early Help Assessments (EHAs) completed compared to 2018-19.

- There was an increase in internal EHAs by 12%, and external EHAs by 17%.
- There was a near even split between internal and external completions of EHA. 55% completed internally 45% externally.
- The number of cases Early Help closed with a positively outcome increased by 35% compared to 2018-19.
- The number of these cases re-referred back into Level 3 services also decreased to 41%, compared to 53% in 2018-20.
- The number of Contacts received into Family Centres in 2019-20 increased by 36% compared to 2018-19, rising to nearly 14,000.
- Family Group Conference was invested in which lead to in an expansion of capacity by four FT posts. This resulted in 346 referrals which was an increase 83.06% from previous year and a 103 Family Group Conference plans being delivered which was an increase of 66.12% from previous year.
- A strong partnership with Public Health enabled growth in delivery of Parenting groups and interventions from 400 parents to over 700 which is a 75% increase

	Total 2018/19	Total 2019/20
Completed Internal EHA's	1289	1340
Completed External EHA's	941	1133
Total No. of contacts received at Family Centres	4072	5215
Total No of Footfall at centres	-	36162
Total No of requests for advice/support at family centres	-	2420

Partnership Working

There is a continued strong working relationship between partners in Dudley and this has continued to grow and develop in strength. Each agency has provided an overview of achievements during 2019-20 as well as key areas to focus on in the following 12 months.

Dudley MBC

Children's Social Care have continued their improvement journey overseen by the Children's Services Improvement Board. The Improvement Board consists of multi-agency partners who work with Children's Services to improve outcomes for children.

Work has been undertaken to stabilise the workforce and improve the rate of permanent social workers in Children's Social Care. This has been successful reducing the rate of agency staff by over one third in the period.

Children's Services have developed strong and collaboratively working relationships with partners across the Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership.

Key Achievements:

The main Children's Social Care office has been expanded to allow for the Children in Care workforce to also work from this building, meaning most. Children's Social Care staff work from one building.

The Centre for Professional Practice has been fully recruited to and continues to serve a pivotal role in developing practice and quality assurance across Children's Service. Children's Services gained some momentum in progressing work around a new electronic system (Liquid Logic). The new system will bring significant improvements to the way that children's case records are recorded and our ability to produce performance data.

A joint 16/17-Year-old Homelessness Protocol between Housing and Children's Services was developed in September 2019, to ensure that homeless 16- and 17-year olds would have a consistent service when experiencing homelessness.

The Quality Assurance Framework was developed, which included case file audits which are carried out alongside practitioners. Quarterly reporting and 7-minute briefings were produced by the Centre for Professional Practice. A new Directorate Performance Scorecard was developed in December 2019, which allowed children's Services to better evidence performance in all service areas.

Family Support

"At first I was worried about it and thought that it was social services. I've been through all that before, so at first it took me some time to help me understand the difference. This part is important".

This was the reaction from a lone parent being supported by Dudley MBC's Family Centres which have developed into a crucial early help support mechanism and a source of innovation and ambition.

Routed in Dudley's updated Early Help Strategy 2018-2021, Dudley's Family Centres are the driving force behind ensuring integration and systems leadership across five geographic clusters. Dudley's Family Centres host a range of diverse children's support services who facilitate and engage support for families with the greatest levels of need before there is an escalation of need into statutory services.

There has been an increase in Early Help Assessments and the split of these assessments completed internally and externally shows the strong partnership between partners and the embedded understanding that working together to safeguard the children and young people of Dudley is everyone's responsibility.

Through successful systems leadership, mature multi-agency working arrangements and a steadfast focus on innovative practice Dudley MBC and our wide range of partners ensure that needs are met by the right service at the right time.

The feedback below from a mother highlights the impact Early Help Services had on her daughter.

'Good morning .. I would just like to thank you very much for all the help you have given us over the last few months ...you are truly amazing. I really think without you ... would never have gone back to school again. I am very pleased to say ... is now enrolled at special school and it is her first day today!'

Family Support areas for development:

- Achieve target of 200 EHA per month.
- Achieve a 50/50 split of EHA completed internal and externally.
- Improve timeliness for of EHA.
- Reduce the number of refusals to engage in Early Help.

Integrated Youth Support

Connexions

Connexions were able to regain the Matrix Standard demonstrating delivery of high-quality information, advice and guidance. The service has commenced a partnership with the Careers & Enterprise Company to support schools in delivering a quality careers curriculum and were the first area in the Back Country to begin a pilot focusing on young people with SEND. Connexions became the first local authority partner to the One Million Mentors mentoring programme beginning with an introductory training session to a group of staff volunteers in February 2020. Staff have been able to achieve employment and apprenticeship outcomes for a few Care Leavers who were struggling to get interviews and had become despondent by working closely with local employers.

Youth Offending Service

The Youth Offending Service has adapted its way of working from a traditional “offender management” approach to one that puts the child very much at the forefront of every aspect of service delivery. This has resulted in the service seeing every young people we engage with as a “Child First, Offender Second”. Greater emphasis has been placed upon understanding the real lived experience of children, and the adverse childhood experiences that many of them would have encountered. This has led to practitioners adopting a relationship-based approach with a view to strengthening factors for desistance – in the ultimate hope that this approach will enable children to remain free of engaging in anti-social & criminal activity.

Over the past year closer and stronger ties have been developed with statutory partners such as Children’s Social Care, resulting in a significant proportion of our intervention being carried out with young people in a prevention & diversion capacity, in conjunction with Social Workers from across the borough. Child Criminal Exploitation continues to be addressed, via the newly formed Contextual Safeguarding Hub.

Child and Adolescent Response Team (CART)

Edge of Care and Reunification

- Families have been supported to prevent children entering care
- Children have been supported back into their family home having experienced a period of being in care
- The voices of children, young people and their parents have been captured throughout the CART planning process.
- Monthly reviews of CART work with families have taken place to ensure that actions and targets are being completed and that positive outcomes are achieved.

Domestic Abuse

- The CART IDVA has supported young people who have experienced domestic abuse to reduce their risk from harm.
- Young people have been supported through court proceedings.
- Extra resource has been given to this area of work to ensure that the increase in young people experiencing domestic abuse as a result of covid can receive support.
- A support group has been developed for young people experiencing domestic abuse
- Support is being provided for parents who are experiencing child to parent violence.
- The Domestic Abuse Service procedures have been reviewed.

Missing from Care and Home

- Return home interviews have been provided for children who have been reported missing to the police.
- The return home interviews capture the voice of the child
- A task and finish group has reviewed the missing procedures to enable more joined up approach across services to meet the needs of young people who go missing
- Regular attendance at the Regional missing meeting has enable the missing service to learn from work being completed in other local authorities.
- Data reports are provided on a monthly basis to monitor the completion of return home interviews

Elective Home Education

- During the period April 2019 – March 2020 the numbers of children registered as receiving their education via Elective Home Education grew steadily throughout the year from 337 children in April 2019 to 354 children in March 2020.
- Throughout the year the total number of instances where children were registered as EHE was 460 children. This is higher than the monthly count as children will return to a mainstream school during the year.
- Since 2015/16 the number of children registered as EHE has been increasing annually.
- When the authority is notified of a parent electing to home educate advice and guidance is provided to ensure the parent understands their responsibilities and are prepared to develop and education provision that provide a suitable, full time education for their children.
- Dudley has an Officer for Elective Home Education who is also responsible for supporting the education of children ascribed to a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller heritage. The current increase in EHE cases has placed pressure on this role and requests for increased resources have been made.
- The officer for EHE & GRT maintains an 'Active' case load and children registered as EHE who are on a Child Protection Plan, Child in Need Plan, or an Education Health & Care Plan are part of the active case load.
- Children who are looked after by the local authority should not be EHE and should be provided with education via a mainstream school.
- The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for EHE is under review and will be strengthened to ensure we provide sufficient challenge and support especially in the areas of Safeguarding and support for those with SEND or an EHCP.

Children Missing Education (CME)

- Parents have been supported to secure a school place for their child
- Safe and well checks have been completed to safeguard children we are not on a school roll
- The CME Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been reviewed
- A process is now operational to monitor and review children whose whereabouts are unknown with sign off provided by Divisional Leadership Team (DLT).

- More placements are now available for year 11 pupils with the CME officer advocating for them at the Fair Access Panel. The Fair Access Panel is in place to ensure that unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable, who it has not been possible to secure a place through the normal in year admissions process, are offered a place at a school as quickly as possible. This includes admitting children to schools that are already full. No school is asked to take a disproportional number of children who have been excluded from other schools or who may have challenging behaviour

Youth Service

The Youth Service has delivered a combination of individual support, young people and families work, play provision, youth group work and targeted detached activity and a well-established youth voice team.

Despite the range of delivery methods, the team has remained focussed on quality and the improved outcomes for young people whilst staying true to their professional youth work practice.

This is supported by the following feedback examples from a social worker:

“It is evident from the work completed by Andy and from speaking to him how passionate he is about wanting to make a change for the young person and his family.

I can see how hard Andy has worked and the positive relationship built with the young person who feels able to open up which is fantastic.

Andy displays a very good understanding of the families presenting needs and showed the ability to self-reflect upon his own role within the family unit and the need to work WITH the family and to empower them to make their own decisions to move forward.”

Youth Service key achievements:

- Good partnership working across Family Solutions, Childrens Services and wider partners
- Duke of Edinburgh young people donated 2821 hours to the local community equating to a social value of £12,271
- Over 4500 children and parents/carers attended Play Week 2019 with 100% positive feedback
- Sycamore Adventure wins a national Play Award from Children and Young People Now
- Lloyd French wins the Community Engagement Award reflecting the success of all the youth workers in engaging the young people and families that are referred through for support in order to achieve good outcomes
- Young people on the Children in Care Council deliver a total of 2066 voluntary hours with 10 young people volunteering at least 100 hours each and the overall membership seeing an increase of over 500% since the initial relaunch.
- Dudley Youth Council have volunteered a total of 2780 hours and "[I've been involved in] Children's Scrutiny Committee,
- Planning, providing advice to people in the community, fundraising, social events, meetings

Areas for development in 2020/21

- Children's Social Care will continue to stabilise and develop the workforce through the updated Workforce Development Strategy.
- Further work is required in MASH around the processing of contacts, the quality of referrals and consistent threshold. This work will be undertaken on a multi-agency

basis through the MASH Operational Group, the MASH Strategic Board and will be included in our Improvement Plan.

- Development of work to identify and support children and young people who are experiencing all forms of exploitation. This is being achieved through the development of the Contextual Safeguarding Hub and the multi-agency work with the DSPP Contextual Safeguarding sub group.
- Children's Social Care has a priority to develop effective use of the Public Law Outline to ensure that where risk is not reduced by child protection plans, that pre-proceedings work is undertaken more swiftly.
- Work will continue on developing the Performance Information and ensure that managers at all levels have a good understanding of how to track and improve performance in their teams.
- Development and improvement in the timeliness of strategy discussions on open cases, remains a challenge. Children's Social Care, Police and the CCG continue to work on this.

West Midlands Police

West Midlands Police operates on both a geographical and thematic model. Dudley has a dedicated Neighbourhood Policing Unit (NPU) with the NPU Commander being the strategic lead for the Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership. In addition there is representation in the DSPP and the sub groups from a senior leader in the Public Protection Unit (PPU), Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID), and other NPU leaders. The PPU lead chairs the sub group for Contextual Safeguarding of Children. Between these members there is a communication channel with other force departments and teams who have a responsibility to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

Building an effective workforce

Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID) has appointed 3 new criminal exploitation co-ordinators to cover the Black Country area – with one being dedicated to Sandwell and Dudley. Their role is to attend partnership safety planning meetings to share information and help safeguard the young person. They also act as a bridge between the safeguarding of the child and any criminal investigation that may be ongoing. This mirrors the existing support to CSE safeguarding which has been in place from the Public Protection Unit previously, and which continues now.

The Public Protection Unit (PPU) commenced a recruitment campaign in early 2020 in order to aim to fill all vacancies in the department by September 2020. This campaign saw a number of new officers join the department on child abuse, domestic abuse, and sexual offence investigation teams.

Police officers are invested into the MASH to assist with managing demand and to provide early police support to information sharing as a result of referrals. This was also complemented by moving 3 other police officers into the MASH to support multi agency joint visits to children. These officers now form the MAET (multi agency enquiry team).

This co-location of staff ensures a more consistent working relationship, and earlier visits to children who need to be seen by both police and a social worker.

Operation Encompass – where WMP notify Dudley schools when one of their pupils is exposed to a domestic abuse incident – continued in 2019/20 after previously being trialled in Dudley for the WMP region. This process ensures that schools are informed of an incident which may have adversely affected a child in the previous 24 hours so that staff can understand the factors that may be affecting that child in school and provide appropriate support if required. This is in addition to any information sharing as a result of a referral that meets the threshold for MASH.

Missing Persons (Mispers) - Young People

In 2019 West Midlands Police changed practice in relation to the risk assessment and recording of missing persons, including children. Where previously there had been use of an “absent” category, which did not result in recording on the COMPACT system (for recording missing persons) and no automatic reporting to the local authority this has now changed. “Absent” reporting has been replaced with “no apparent risk” as a category and regardless of risk assessment the missing person will be placed on COMPACT and an automatic referral made to the relevant local authority. This has resulted in a much higher number of children being referred to the local authority and subsequently receiving a return home interview.

Key Achievements

In 2019/20 recorded Child Abuse incident fell by the first time in a number of years from 2691 child abuse related incidents in 2018/19 to 2378 this year. The development of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub in Dudley initially lead to a steady increase in recorded incidents as both the public and agencies working with children were able to more easily make safeguarding referrals, including crime, without needing to know exactly which agency to go to. These referrals allow for a more rapid assessment of risk, better information sharing, and ensures that the relevant agencies agree to the next steps at the earliest opportunity. The addition of MAET officers invested into the Dudley MASH by West Midlands Police has assisted in ensuring this increased demand is appropriately dealt with. To see recorded child abuse incidents decrease is in part a result of the MASH working consistently for a number of years and now leading to a reduction in incidents recorded by WMP.

Within these child abuse figures are incidents recorded by WMP with a CSE (child sexual exploitation) marker. This incidents have reduced at a greater rate than the overall child abuse incidents. In 2018/19 there were 132 CSE incidents recorded in Dudley, with only 18% of these leading to a confirmed crime being recorded. In 2019/20 there were 93 CSE incidents but with 29% of these leading to a crime being recorded. As a crime is usually only recorded when either a victims confirms this or when there is other evidence available to do so, this would suggest that despite CSE incidents falling it is now far more likely that police and other agencies are able to find supportive evidence, or to support a victim in making a disclosure of a crime.

Areas for development in 2020/21

As part of the national increase in police officer numbers by 2023, the Child Abuse department will be expanding from 2021 with 5 new posts added to the Dudley & Sandwell investigation team and 4 new CSE investigators for the Black Country. This will increase the capacity of these teams by around 20%.

The partnership approach to tackling exploitation with develop in 2021 with the expansion of operational meetings to include all forms of exploitation and not just CSE. This will ensure that young people at risk of country lines and criminal exploitation will have the support they need, and that offending can be more effectively disrupted as a partnership.

Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group

Dudley CCG in partnership with Dudley Safeguarding Children Partnership is committed to improve outcomes for all children and young people. The welfare of children who come into contact with health services either directly or indirectly is paramount and all staff have a responsibility to ensure that best practice is followed, including compliance with statutory requirements.

The CCG has a Designated Senior Nurse for Children’s Safeguarding and Designated Nurse for Looked after Children who liaise closely with the Clinical Lead and the Chief Nurse.

The CCG contracting process reflects the safeguarding requirements of the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 to support outcomes-focused practice along with adult colleagues to develop a “Think Family” approach to

safeguarding. Statutory Guidance- Promoting the health and wellbeing of looked-after children (2015) is also reflected in contracting arrangements for Children in Care.

Key Achievements:

- Dudley CCG have continued to contribute to multi-agency safeguarding practice and partnership working arrangements. This has included attendance at all Dudley People Partnership meetings and participation in the work of all the sub groups
- The CCG Designated Nurses have chaired the DSPP Learning and Improvement sub group on behalf of the partnership.
- The Designated Nurse for Looked After Children attends Corporate Parenting Board on behalf of Dudley CCG
- The CCG has undertaken further work in 2019/20 in conjunction with the other Black Country CCG's to progress a number of work streams which include
 - The development of a Black Country Safeguarding strategy
 - Children in Care including health assessment QA framework
 - Safeguarding supervision
 - Safeguarding quality assurance and data collection framework. Including the development of a safeguarding dashboard which provides a mechanism for highlighting areas of good practice and identifying any areas that need development
 - Safeguarding training standards leading to equitability across the Black Country.
- The CCG lead the Female Genital Mutilation work group. The group are responsible for the development and management of an FGM strategy producing an FGM strategy for Dudley. The strategy is based on the 3 priorities of
 - Protection
 - Provision
 - Prevention

In order to progress the strategy and raise awareness of the implications of FGM within Dudley, a Working Group was established, the governance of which was transferred from the former DSCB to the Safe and Sound Board via the DA Strategic Group. As FGM is specifically a female only issue it was agreed that it should not be brought under the FM and HBA agenda. The FGM working group has a wide membership and meet on a quarterly basis to raise awareness both for practitioners and for the general community.

- The Designated Nurse for Looked After Children chairs the multi-agency Health of Children in Care (CIC) Strategic group. The aim of which is to monitor the delivery and improve the delivery of health outcomes for Children in Care and to focus on service development for known priority health needs for CIC
- The CCG jointly commission the Young Health Champions (DYHC) project and work closely with the project lead. DYHC provide training for young people to become Young Health Champions in schools, colleges and the community. Young People are given training and signpost other young people to supportive services and receive accurate information to develop resilience and informed decision making. Young people are also offered opportunities to participate in a variety of projects coordinated and supported by the project and its partners
- The CCG have been instigative in developing a process for the involvement of health safeguarding specialists (Named or Designated Nurses and Doctors) in strategy meetings (particularly those involving suspected NAI) to ensure senior specialist health oversight in complex cases.
- Dudley CCG hosted a multi-agency Harmful Practice Conference in November 2019. The conference agenda included FGM, Breast ironing, Harmful practice based on faith/belief, honour-based abuse and forced marriage.
- Commencement of supervision for Named Doctors across Dudley and Walsall. This is delivered by the Designated Doctor and Nurses and has been well received. The

sessions include the involvement of MASH managers in order to develop collaborative working relationships between CSC and health medical colleagues. Medical staff are also now involved in the quarterly partnership meetings with the same aim.

- Participation at regional and local safeguarding networks to share best practice and Information on key developments in the safeguarding arena, updates and current trends/information are shared via the DCCG newsletter along with e-mails to safeguarding leads providers and practice managers.
- Dudley Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) Safeguarding Quality Review Meeting (SQRM) aims to safeguard Dudley residents through effective high-quality formal communication and partnership working applying the priorities of the Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership (DSPP) in order to achieve best local outcomes. Dudley CCG seeks assurance from all commissioned providers regarding safeguarding arrangements. The SQRM is established within the Integrated Assurance Committee structure in accordance with Dudley CCG statutory safeguarding responsibilities and provides assurance regarding the health economy actions to the DSPPB and the Children and Adult's Dudley Safeguarding Partnerships Groups as requested.
- Development of a CCG Safeguarding Team work plan which aims to:
 - Improve collaborative working within the team.
 - Ensure safeguarding is embedded across all provider organisations and within the CCG.
 - Raise awareness of the roles and responsibilities of the safeguarding team
- The development of safeguarding commissioning standards that will be applied to all procurement and contracts.

Areas for development in 2020/21

To continue work collaboratively with Black Country colleagues to share best practice and develop equitable safeguarding practices across the Black Country and to ensure safeguarding practice development and support links to the changing commissioning arrangements across the health care economy.

Continuing to work in close partnership with Dudley People Partnership to support and progress future safeguarding arrangements across the borough

To work to improve the dissemination from learning reviews (CSPR/SAR/Local Learning Reviews) and audit to frontline practitioners.

To work with the Chief Nurse from the newly developed Dudley Integrated Health and Care Provider to establish safe and effective safeguarding practices and appropriate service provision for Children in Care in line with their statutory responsibilities.

Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust

The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust recognises that effective, timely and robust safeguarding is fundamental to protecting children and young people in our care and within the wider community. The focus in 2019/20 reflects the approach of Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership by ensuring an integrated safeguarding adult and children service with an emphasis on ensuring staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills to recognise and act on abuse across the life course.

There has been a new appointment to Head of Safeguarding in December 2019 and a renewed focus of increased visibility of the safeguarding team around the Trust, to ensure that our service is proactive in supporting staff and raising awareness of safeguarding issues. The provision of our safeguarding training has been reviewed and updated to increase accessibility and improve the quality and relevance to staff undertaking training.

There has been an improved focus on ensuring actions and learning from Children Safeguarding Practice Reviews are implemented and shared. The provision of safeguarding supervision for staff has been strengthened by additional staff being trained to provide supervision and the emphasis on the benefits and importance of supervision has been supported by a new Safeguarding Supervision Policy. The numbers of staff accessing supervision has increased this year. The role of the paediatric liaison service has been reviewed and updated to provide a more proactive and responsive service whilst maintaining provision of essential communication to our local partners. The Trust safeguarding team continue to work closely with partner agencies through engagement with joint working initiatives and local priority agendas.

Key Achievements during 2019/20

- Safeguarding supervision
 - Increase in number of trained supervisors
 - Increased availability of safeguarding sessions
 - Increased compliance from community midwives
 - Positive feedback from CCG regarding provision of supervision
- Recruitment:
 - Head of Safeguarding
 - Designated Doctor for Safeguarding and Child Death
 - Designated Doctor for Looked After Children
 - Named Midwife for Safeguarding
- Safeguarding consultant rota increased to 6 doctors on rota
- Safeguarding peer review in place
- Renewed training strategy providing wider variety of learning opportunities and more frequent training requirements
- Comprehensive review and update of Safeguarding Hub pages to provide easier access to information and signposting
- A more efficient and effective system available for the Paediatric Liaison Nurse to review daily attendances of children and young people attending the emergency department
- Provision of SUDIC training to partner agencies
- High quality independent management reviews with excellent critical analysis and identification of learning evidenced in feedback from Case Review authors
- Recognition from CCG regarding overall improvement of the Trust safeguarding service
- Routine Enquiry for domestic abuse screening being sustained at 90-100% compliance following review of process
- Implementation of FGM Information Sharing process to ensure all new born females at risk of FGM can be identified nationally
- CP Information Sharing process embedded in maternity practice enabling unborn babies on child protection plans to be safeguarded.
- Dudley maternity selected for national pilot for Graded Care Profile 2- Antenatal (GCP2A), a practical tool to support midwives and health visitors with early decision making to prevent suboptimal parenting, early neglect or abuse can having lasting consequences on children's future emotional and physical health
- Increase in named nurse time out in wards and departments
- Implementation of the Child Death Review Meetings
- Promotion of safeguarding across the organisation by increased invisibility of safeguarding team and new safeguarding posters distributed
- Safeguarding Learning Events relaunched in Sept 2019 and opened to partner agencies
- Continued meeting of time sensitive responses to scoping exercises and Internal Management Reviews

- Active representation, involvement and action to improve safeguarding services across the Black Country STP, including commitment to newly established Black Country Child Death Overview Panel and eCDOP.
- Transition clinics for patients with Learning Disabilities

Areas for development in 2020/21

- Increased assurance of safeguarding children processes across the whole Trust including for 16- and 17-year olds
- Increased staff and public awareness of local and national safeguarding agenda, priorities and learning across the Trust
- Improve staff awareness, confidence and skills in identifying, risk assessing and supporting victims of domestic abuse
- Improved governance and accountability for implementation and embedding of recommendations from external and internal safeguarding reviews
- Improved safeguarding documentation systems and processes
- Improving evidence that children and young people have been listened to and their wishes and feelings taken into account

How:-

- *Annual Improvement Plan*
- *Annual Audit Plan*
- *Trust Safeguarding Strategy*
- *Robust policies and procedures*
- *Restructure of safeguarding team and increased resources*
- *Development of Trust safeguarding steering group*
- *Training and supervision*
- *Benchmarking against national standards*
- *Partnership working within Trust and with external agencies*
- *Increase visibility of Trust safeguarding Team*
- *Promotional and media resources*
- *Peer reviews*
- *Engagement of patients*
- *Patient Stories*

Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

The Trust staff and safeguarding teams continued to work hard to support the safeguarding of their most vulnerable children, adults and families. The Teams continue to promote best practice, ensure safeguarding was everyone's business and incorporate the Think Family approach across all areas of practice. New ways of reaching out to Children in Care and their carers was commenced by way of offering more varied clinic times.

Key Achievements in 2019/20

- Safeguarding teams continued to work and support all Trust staff and partners despite continued challenges relating to resource
- Staff volunteered and were trained in the LeDeR review process (a programme helping to improve the quality of health and social care for people with a learning disability) in order to support this process
- New staff were added to the Safeguarding Teams which allowed improved resilience and cover across the teams
- A revised Safeguarding Children Supervision Policy was ratified and rolled out during the last quarter of 2019/20, with both positive feedback and continued implementation of next steps in 2020/21. This has enabled the staff to feel more confident in safeguarding those on their caseload
- The Team supported all aspects of safeguarding reviews for adults and children

An audit on the new Children in Care (CiC) clinic offer was undertaken to get the views of the children attending these. This was to see if the more flexible offer of timings for these children showed increased attendance. The number of respondents, while small, showed that these were more suitable and further suggestions were made. A further audit was done, and while numbers remained low, the children felt that these greater met their needs. The CiC team continue to look at ways of improving the service they run.

Areas for development in 2020/21

The Trust merged with Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Trust in April 2020 to become Black Country Healthcare NHS Trust. The main change will be to work with all of the Teams to bring safeguarding together to ensure equity of service delivery across the Trust, with harmonising of policy, procedures and related safeguarding practice.

Ensure that safeguarding becomes embedded in the new reporting and incident management systems, as well as patient records.

Dudley Council for Voluntary Services

In 2019 with the endorsement of the DSPP, Dudley CVS undertook an Early Help and Safeguarding audit of 102 organisations which are known to offer activities or services for children and families with 73 responses received. The responses identified a number of gaps in skills and training which the team set about resolving through a calendar of specialist training and networking opportunities. DCVS worked closely with staff from Early Help to draft agreed voluntary sector specific guidance which was shared with voluntary, community groups, charities and faith settings across the borough.

In addition there was a programme of one to one support provided to newly- established organisations which included an action plan and more specialist support to those who most needed it.

Key Achievements

DCVS worked with Local Authority colleagues to deliver almost 7000 free school meals in just 8 days at the end of March 2020.

The voice of young people continues to feature across the sector, their voice have reflected a need to diversify during lockdown and shift most activity online. Some young people have reflected this model of delivery has not only enabled them to access activities they would normally have been able to but have also reported a growth in confidence and sense of belonging. There has been an increase in the number of children and young people accessing activities from BAME communities.

Areas for development in 2020/21

There has been a significant focus on helping Voluntary Community Organisations to operate this year. There have been opportunities for them to come together, network, share diversification ideas and receive government and governing body guidance as to the procedures that they have been required to adopt.

There is still work to be done, to monitor and bring organisations together however it is difficult to plan constructively due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

A range of voluntary sector providers are continuing to support the most vulnerable children and young people through door stop and garden visits and working closely with local schools to support the safeguarding and pastoral needs of the families who professionals had the most concerns about.

Organisations are continuing to work with partners to provide hot meals and food for those most in need and are continuing to work with the LA to develop a more strategic approach to reaching families in 2021.

Healthwatch Dudley

Healthwatch Dudley values the important work and priorities of the new Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership and throughout the last year have continued to raise awareness of key safeguarding messaging, promote training opportunities and encourage people to raise concerns.

Healthwatch Dudley re-joined the Board in July 2020 and has been working with the Safeguarding Partnership Business Manager, to identify opportunities where our experience of community influence in decision making can have the greatest impact, ensuring local people have a loud and clear voice in improving safeguarding systems and practices.

Public Health

Public health is not a frontline service, but commissions a variety of services for children & young people which involve elements of safeguarding. Public Health Dudley has also led on GCP2 training across the Borough in conjunction with the DSPP.

Key Achievements

The children's services commission by public health are; health visiting, school nursing, family nurse partnership, young people's; sexual health services, substance misuse services and lower level mental health & wellbeing services. During the year, Public Health has ensured these providers adhere to their contract commitment regarding safeguarding, attending all necessary safeguarding meetings and fulfilling audit requirements completing any actions identified. The nursing teams attend Safeguarding Quality Review Meetings, public health have also attended these meetings to ensure all actions are met.

All commissioned services have an element in their contract which asks for the users (children & young people) views to be gathered and used to inform their future offer. During the year services have adapted their offer and support based on feedback and engagement with the users on how they would want to continue to access provision. Young people are still able to access support when needed and how they prefer to access.

Areas for development in 2020/21

The Public Health 0-19 services will transfer to the Dudley Integrated Health and Care (DIHC) provider from April 2021, an organisation integrating primary care across Dudley with community physical and mental health services. Public Health are working closely with these providers and the DIHC to ensure whilst these services adapt and reform into a more integrated service, the voice of the child and safeguarding are paramount in the planning. The integration should provide greater sharing of information and remove any duplication or gaps in provision, offering a better service and outcomes.

Annual Monitoring functions

DSCPG monitors the progress and receives updates in other areas of notable interest to the safeguarding agenda. The following section summarises each of these areas.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

The profile of CSE continues to grow in Dudley, there are clear processes in place for agencies when raising concerns around young people that may be at risk of CSE. Referrals are steady in to the CSE Team which are screened by the local authority CSE Coordinator and the Police CSE Coordinator, these are screened on a regular basis and MASE meetings organised robustly.

MASE meetings are scheduled on a regular basis, discussing those at Medium/High Risk of CSE. There is clear recognition to have a Contextual Safeguarding approach to those at risk of Exploitation not just CSE.

Key Achievements

- NRM Champions been trained to deliver training across Children's services to support the wider Modern Slavery agenda
- Number of NRM's being completed for children has increased, both CSE and CCE young people are being identified as those being at risk
- MASE meetings are well attended, key agencies all contributing
- Support for young people not only around CSE but also CCE. This mirrors the support that is currently offered for CSE (Barnardo's and Phase Trust)
- Good relationship with partners, especially our Voluntary services
- CSE and Missing operational group has been amalgamated, these are now discussed in one meeting rather than two. A new agenda was developed to incorporate both meetings
- Training is ongoing, an Advanced CSE Training has been developed and delivered, this is specifically designed for social workers and those working directly with young people at risk of CSE
- Police have contributed and supported a number of operations with Trading standards to help identify young people that may be being exploited in one of our areas of concern.
- Young people in Dudley continue to be safeguarded against Sexual exploitation, agencies work closely together in order to safeguard children and young people.
- Completed a MACFA which showed that partners worked closely together in order to safeguard children. Some good findings came out of the audit which has moulded our practice
- CSE Coordinator is still an active agency within the MASH
- Various two hours briefing sessions have been delivered across schools
- MASE meetings adapted quickly to virtual meetings/conference calls when going into lockdown, which ensured young people could still be discussed and there was no drift for cases or support being received.
- Updated dataset which records MASE meeting attendance and risk levels

Areas for development in 2020/21

- Further development of the Contextual Safeguarding Hub to address exploitation
- One meeting that oversees Exploitation (CSE/CCE) and Missing
- Training to be developed which incorporates basic Contextual Safeguarding and not just CSE or CCE. There is still a need to have a more advanced training for each one, but there should be a basic level which covers both.
- New screening tool/risk assessment developed and embedded to look at all exploitation
- Updated data set to incorporate the whole of exploitation
- MASE meetings to continue to run effectively throughout COVID-19
- Contextual Safeguarding to be embedded in to the new Liquid Logic system

- MACE to be developed to address CCE, this could mirror the current MASE process

LADO

The procedures, Allegations of Abuse against Persons who Work with Children (including Allegations Against Carers and Volunteers), are based on the framework for managing allegations made against an adult who works with children as detailed in Working Together 2018 and Keeping Children Safe In Education 2020.

An allegation may relate to a person who works with children who has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

The revised version of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 has an additional point to above, a person in a Position of Trust has:

- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

The role of LADO

Working together guidance requires each local authority to identify a 'Designated Officer' (LADO) with responsibility for the management and oversight of individual cases where there is concern in relation to a person who works in a position of trust with children. Their role is to provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations, to liaise with other agencies and monitor the progress of cases to ensure they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent within a thorough and fair process. The LADO also chairs Position of Trust Meetings (multi-agency safeguarding meeting) this meeting involves relevant professionals (and the police if it appears an offence has been committed) to consider the information/risk and how best to proceed.

The LADO in Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council works with representatives across agencies in Dudley and also regularly works with LADO's in other local authorities where individuals undertake activities with children across different local authority boundaries. Furthermore, the LADO will liaise with agencies outside of Dudley where allegations relate to those working in Dudley but whose employers may not be local (for example independent fostering agencies or education employment agencies based out of the Borough).

Key Achievements

- The LADO has updated and delivered briefings on the Management of Allegations process on behalf of DSPP multi-agency. These have been well received and completed with the Safeguarding Lead for Education to enhance and raise individual and employer's awareness of safer working practices.
- Delivered bespoke briefings, when requested by the agency and/or when it has been identified that they would benefit from a tailored session. Agencies included, Health, Social Care, Residential CH, Transport, Religious organisations
- Produced an information leaflet for carers/parents of the child(ren) explaining the management of allegations process.

Areas for development in 2020/21

- Continue to raise awareness about LADO service/process to partner agencies by delivering multi-agency briefings on behalf of DSPP and single agency briefings as requested

- Updated key documents/policies for the DSPP in line with changes in recent guidelines including KCSI 2020.
- Contribute to the preparations and facilitation of a seminar for religious organisations to raise awareness of the role of the LADO, reporting mechanisms and the Management of Allegations process
- LADO to continue to work with data improvement team to ensure more sophisticated and smarter capturing of information
- Attend training & be involved in the implementation of a state-of-the-art electronic confidential recording system on Liquid Logic for the Management of Allegations process
- Report on the timeliness of POT meetings being within 5-7 working days if threshold is met
- Continue to attend West Midlands Regional LADO Network Meetings 4 x yearly and National LADO Conference annually
- To maintain and build links with LADO's locally/nationally

Missing children and young people

The Missing Service works with children and young people who are reported missing from their home address or care. A missing and found referral known as a compact is received from West Midlands Police.

At the weekly meeting patterns, trends and vulnerabilities are considered and mitigating action is taken as required. Referrals to partner agencies and sharing of information with relevant parties are made i.e. Dudley Integrated Violence and Exploitation Reduction Team (DIVERT). Cases that need to be escalated are referred to Children's Missing Operation Group (CMOG) which is chaired by the Police.

Key achievements

Quarterly data has continued to be collated by the management information team. The data isolates the missing episodes which receive a West Midlands Police compact so better reflects the performance of Dudley's Missing Service. However further work by the management information team is required to capture data in relation to Dudley children who go missing whilst living out of borough.

From the 1st April 2019 until 31st March 2020 there were 602 missing episodes by 220 children. 84% of these children were offered a return home interview.

Of those offered an interview 63% were completed. The main reason why an interview was not completed was because the child had gone missing again, the parent/child declined the interview or children were from other local authorities and the home authority chose to complete their own return home interview. Of those that were completed 71% were completed within 72 hours as per the national requirement. The Missing Service offers three appointments before recording the non-completion as declined.

Areas for development in 2020/21

The main development for 20/21 will be to ensure that the revised Missing from Care and Home procedures are agreed and circulated. Training will need to be provided for staff. The training will also include the implementation of safety planning for children in care who are at risk of going missing with the aim of preventing initial and repeat missing episodes.

During 20/21 further work will be required with placement providers to ensure that Dudley children placed out of borough receive a return home interview. A mechanism for recording that the return home has been completed on liquid logic will need to be agreed. Similarly return home interviews completed by the home authority for a child they have living in Dudley

need to be recorded on Dudley's case management system. This will enable a more accurate data set to be available to senior managers and will also ensure that intelligence including emerging themes from return home interviews are shared and responded to.

Safeguarding in Education

Key achievements

- Safeguarding in Education Reference Group (SERG)

Continuation of Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) attending bi-monthly meetings to ensure that schools have a voice in respect of safeguarding matters, training offer and safeguarding support. Members of SERG act as a conduit between schools and the local authority. Schools within Dudley share effective safeguarding practice and members are accountable for the development of policies and procedures

- DSL Forum

- Speakers from partner agencies share knowledge and update DSLs from all Dudley schools on current safeguarding themes.

- Training Programme

Training materials Safeguarding Trainer developed and sent to DSLs to deliver to whole school staff throughout 2019/20 include:

- CSE/CCE/County Lines
- Early Help strategy
- Neglect strategy
- Threshold training
- Mental Health and Wellbeing

Briefing sessions delivered by Safeguarding Trainer to thirty schools in 2019/20 include:

1. Fabricated and Induced Illness
2. Children and Families in prison
3. Homelessness

- Annual whole school Safeguarding Training package

A full safeguarding training programme developed and sent to all schools for DSLs to deliver to all their staff at the start of each academic year.

- Bespoke Training

Safeguarding Lead attends any identified schools with LADO to deliver Managing Allegations and Safer Working Practice briefing sessions

- Safeguarding support in schools

Safeguarding Lead visits any specific schools identified with a view to offering advice and support with their safeguarding arrangements or supports the school with specific safeguarding issues/concern

- s175 Audit Compliance checks

The purpose of the above is to provide assurance to DSCPG that schools' safeguarding systems are in operation in accordance with s175/s157 Schools Self-assessment Audit, undertaken in January 2018/19. In order to reassure the DSCPG of schools' continuous effective safeguarding arrangements, a combination of a s175 Audit Challenge workshop and visits to several LA and non-LA Schools, to check their audits, was undertaken between January 2020 – March 2020

Areas for development in 2020/21

Safeguarding Trainer to:

- Continue to develop DSL training using evaluations from training delegates to improve content and delivery

- Devise an online e-learning DSL Refresher training course, to ensure training is readily accessible so DSLs can renew their status without leaving their setting and the school is compliant with statutory safeguarding arrangements.
- Develop podcasts and short briefing sessions which DSLs can download and access in their own time

Safeguarding Lead to:

- Support the Safeguarding Trainer to devise an online e-learning DSL Refresher training course, to ensure training is readily accessible for existing DSLs
- Participate in a Task & finish group to develop a Transgender Policy for Education Settings
- Support MASH Service Manager to re define the role of Education Officer in MASH, to include attendance at Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART) meetings, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and act as the representative for Operation Encompass.
- Implement a DSL training traded service offer to all schools in Dudley and educational settings within neighbouring boroughs
- Strengthen school/LA link in respect of Children missing/persistent absences in education
- DSL forum planning 2020/21 to include speakers and safeguarding themes

Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

The death of a child is a devastating loss that profoundly affects all those involved. The process of systematically reviewing the deaths of children is grounded in respect for the rights of children and their families, with the intention of learning what happened and why, and preventing future child deaths.

Every family has the right to have their child's death sensitively reviewed in order, where possible, to identify the cause of death and to learn lessons that may prevent future deaths.

The purpose of a review and/or analysis is to identify any matters relating to the death, or deaths, that are relevant to the welfare of children in the area or to public health and safety, and to consider whether action should be taken in relation to any matters identified. Where it is identified that action should be taken by a person or organisation, they will be informed.

The governance and responsibility for ensuring child death reviews are carried out is no longer held by Local Safeguarding Children Boards and is now held by 'child death review partners', who, in relation to a local authority area in England, are defined as the local authority for that area and any clinical commissioning groups operating in the local authority area as set out in the Children Act 2004 (the Act), as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

In the Black Country the 'child death review partners' are the Black Country Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups:

- Wolverhampton Council; Sandwell Council; Walsall Council; Dudley Council
- Wolverhampton CCG; Sandwell and West Birmingham CCG; Walsall CCG; Dudley CCG.

The partners have made arrangements to review all deaths of children normally resident in the local area and, where it is considered appropriate, for any non-resident child who has died in their area.

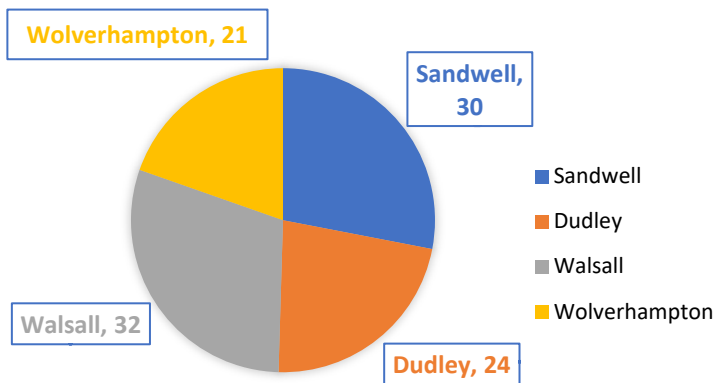
The processes to be followed when a child dies are currently outlined within “Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018: Chapter 5 Child Death Review Processes and Child Death Review: Statutory and Operational Guidance 2018”

The Black Country Child Death Governance Structure has allowed for the development and monitoring of consistent Child Death Review practices across the Black Country. Progress over the past year includes:

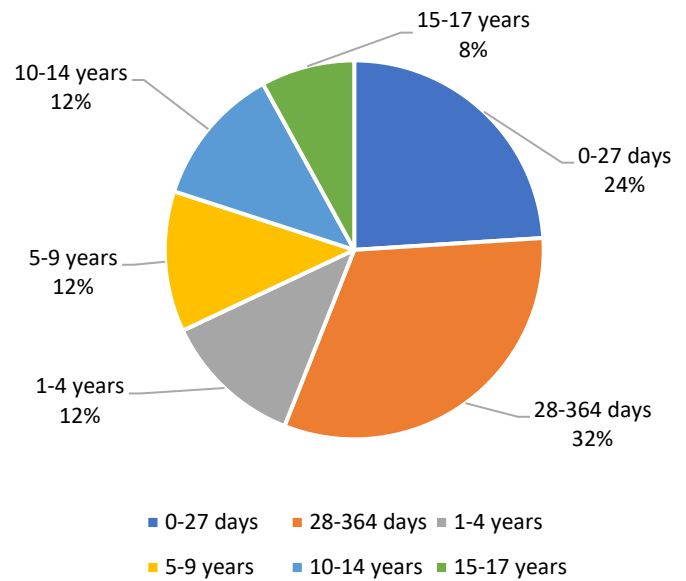
- An Independent Chair has been recruited to Chair both the Strategic Partnership and the Operational Panels
- An administrator has been recruited to support with the Child Death processes
- A budget for CDOP reviews and strategic/business functions has been secured on a partnership basis
- Two operational panels now review deaths on a Black Country footprint; neonatal and non-neonatal. An independent neonatologist attends the neonatal panel to offer an impartial view. This is reciprocated and a neonatologist from Wolverhampton attends Staffordshire’s neonatal panel.
- A lay member has been recruited to the operational panels to offer a parental perspective.
- The operational panels are attended by professionals on a rota basis and feedback any learning and opportunities through professional networks. Members are expected to represent their geographical area and professional role.
- Panels are reviewing up to 15 deaths at each meeting.
- All four hospitals in the area are carrying out Child Death Review Meetings
- Peer audits have been scheduled to ensure legislation is being adhered to.
- The four CCGs are combining into one Black Country CCG, and so will be incorporating the child death review processes.
- The electronic notification and data collection system, eCDOP, has been embedded into practice. Data from eCDOP flows into the National Child Mortality Database and so contributes to a reliable national picture of child deaths.
- A combined Annual Report has been drafted and is awaiting ratification from the Strategic Child Death Partnership and will be available from 14 December 2020
- A Business Plan has been developed and progress is monitored by Strategic Partners
- Through the National Child Mortality Database, the Black Country has fed into real time data supporting the national understanding of the impact of the current pandemic

Summary of data 2019/20

Black Country Deaths



Dudley Deaths



Infant Mortality

Infant Mortality continues to be an area of concern across the Black Country.

In response to this, the Child Death Overview Panel will be combining action plans from across all four areas to support existing workstreams and progress issues. Alongside safer sleeping (see figure 5), there will be a focus on the following areas:

- Maternal smoking during pregnancy
- Smoking in the household
- Consanguinity
- Late booking and as a consequence to this delay of support services
- Maternal obesity

Unexpected Deaths

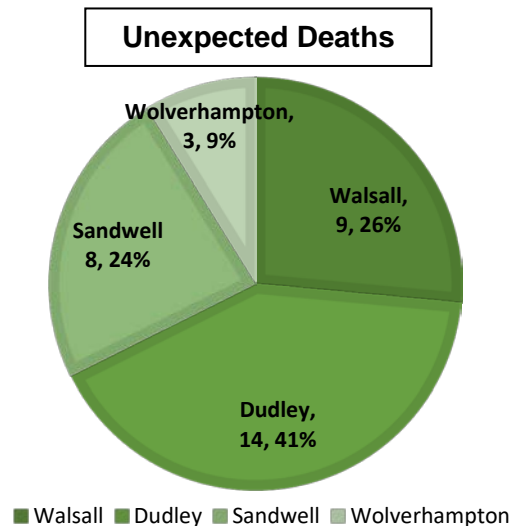
Out of the 107 deaths that happened in 2019-2020, 33 were unexpected deaths and there was a Joint Agency Response initiated for each of them.

Further analysis of these deaths showed that in 10 of the 33 unexpected deaths, unsafe sleeping practices were identified as below:

- 60% were co-sleeping
- 50% Mum taking medication for depression
- 60% Dirty/poor home conditions

- 90% Maternal smoking/smoking in the home
- 30% Sofa sleeping
- 10% Alcohol abuse
- 30% Substance misuse
- 20% Low birth weight
- 20% Overcrowding
- 60% Child snuggly/ill previously
- 20% Bumpers/pillows in cot
- 10% Unsafe feeding practices

As a result of this analysis, a region wide focus group has been formed to address this through strategies and campaigns.



Next Steps and Objectives

- Embed the role of the Independent Chair into the Strategic Partnership and Operational Panels
- Develop the Key Worker Role to ensure the voice of the child/parent is reflected
- Identify bereavement support for professionals working within the child death arena
- Explore the use of different methods of disseminating learning from child deaths (e.g. social media etc)
- Support the consolidation of the new Black Country CCG
- Develop and contribute to strategies being developed and rolled out (Safe Sleeping/ICON)
- Escalate issues of administrative support within local hospital/CCG
- Submission and ratification of the CDOP annual report
- Development, ratification and implementation of the Black Country SUDC protocol. In 2020 – 2021 there are plans to develop a Black Country wide on call health response for unexpected deaths.

Multi-Agency Training



256 Hours of training accessed for Dudley Safeguarding Children Board Courses which meant that over 4,700 hours of training was taken by individuals within the Dudley borough.

45 courses were delivered during the financial year



1445 places were offered via DSCB for training courses, 1148 bookings were made on the combined DSAB/DSCB Event Management system.

227 delegates failed to attend which lead to over 1,400 hours lost valuable CPD and networking time.



Delegates representing 38 different services or organisations have been able to network and build relationships on multiagency training.

862 delegates have successfully completed approved training.



During September 2019 the processes that the DSCB operated under changed as Dudley created a Safeguarding partnership.

Training around Adverse Childhood experiences (ACEs), Core Working Together, Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2), Management of Allegations, Neglect, Safeguarding Children online, Thresholds were some of the 14 courses that took place during 19/20.

Some courses have been run jointly with the Dudley Safeguarding Adult Board of which we have provided a breakdown as follows.

Joint DSAB/DSCB courses and data.

- 56 Hours of training accessed for Joint courses which meant that over 1,700 hours of training was taken by individuals.
- 12 courses were run during the financial year
- 379 bookings made on the DSAB/DSCB Learning system.
- 124 delegates failed to attend which lead to over 600 hours lost valuable CPD and networking time
- Delegates representing 41 organisations have been able to network and build relationships on multiagency training.
- 172 have successfully completed training

Feedback from DSCB/DSPP Introduction to Domestic Abuse training.
This course was run in Partnership with the National Centre for Domestic Violence

90% of attendees felt that the course met its training aims.

100% said they felt more competent in the area of Domestic Abuse post training.

- ...trainer was exceptional and was extremely knowledgeable and her pace was set just right, I could fully understand the presentation that Karen delivered. Thank you.
- I have only selected the 'too short' option for length of time because I could have listened to Karen all day. She was very real with situations and this was not text book delivered. Personally, I was a victim myself and if I had support from these agencies I may never have suffered as long. I now have more understanding so I can help others professionally. Thank you Karen and I hope your sessions carry on for a very long time.
- Brilliant informative course and speaker
- This course was fantastic. It was well worth attending - just a shame that so few schools have attended the first two sessions.
- Great to hear about the work of NCDV and how we can refer to them and how they can help people we come into contact with - I wish I had been on this course a year ago, because it could have really helped me to better support a victim of DA I have been involved with since September.

Feedback from DSCB/DSPP Introduction to Child Criminal Exploitation
This course was run in Partnership with NAVIGATE

90% of attendees felt that the course met its training aims.

100% said they felt more competent in the area of Child Criminal Exploitation post training.

“A well-presented and informative course, it was in a relaxed atmosphere where contributions felt valued”

“Fabulous course would fully recommend maybe promote in university's for trainee nursing associates nursing student etc I only found out on external placement with school nursing team or to NHS staff”

They also said that the training would improve future practice by:

- One thing that's really stood out was to remember regardless of criminal activity that children or young people are involved in they are still victims themselves we can easily forget this and see them only in a bad light or yobs or criminals but to really see them also as victims brings a whole new understanding and perspective and therefore engagement with all children and young people will be with a whole new insight and support thank you this training was amazing and I fully recommend it Andrea
- Have an up to date knowledge of indicators to look out for Better awareness of the resources and agencies around that can support.
- Understanding the different agencies that I can refer young people to support from. Understanding of the different ways that children and young people can be exploited.

Serious Case Reviews / Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

A Child Safeguarding Practice Review (previously known as a Serious Case Review (SCR)) is undertaken when a child dies, or the child has been seriously harmed and there is cause for concern as to the way organisations worked together. Additionally, Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships may decide to conduct a CSPR if a child has been seriously harmed in accordance with the guidance in Working Together 2018:

Serious child safeguarding cases are those in which:

- abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected and
- the child has died or been seriously harmed

Some cases may not meet the definition of a 'serious child safeguarding case', but nevertheless raise issues of importance to the local area. That might, for example, include where there has been good practice, poor practice or where there have been 'near miss' events. Safeguarding partners may choose to undertake a local child safeguarding practice review in these or other circumstances.

The primary purpose of a CSPR is for agencies and individuals to learn lessons to improve the way in which they work, both individually and collectively, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Progress has been made over the last 12 months to ensure that all local and Serious Case Reviews are completed as per WT 2015 guidance. Going forward, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR) will replace SCRs using system methodologies in an attempt to identify and embed learning within shorter timescales.

The DSPP (formally DSCB) have also completed 3 local multi-agency reviews and learning from these has also been shared as written briefings and will be available on the DSPP website.

Key Achievements

- Meetings of the former SCR sub group of the DSCB were held 5 times during the reporting period. The last being November 2019, when the DSCB was superseded by the Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership (DSPP) and the SCR sub group merged with the SAR sub group of the former Safeguarding Adults Board to form the Learning and Improvement sub group which manages both adult and child reviews.
- Two cases using the former Serious Case Review Process were undertaken during the reporting period.
- One Local Learning Review was undertaken during the reporting period.
- The SCR sub group work plan for 2020/21 was reviewed and updated
- Terms of reference for the L&I sub group were developed and agreed
- Action plans from all reviews were monitored and updated throughout the year.
- A SCR risk register was developed and reviewed
- There is a dedicated business unit support officer to support the L&I sub group and associated reviews.

Case Study

The families of all children subject to an SCR/CSPR are contacted to inform them of the process and request their involvement in the review. The two children involved in the SCR's during the reporting period unfortunately did not respond to the author at any point in the process.

A Local Learning Review undertaken during the reporting period involved a young person at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation. It was clear from the scoping exercise that the young person had reported that they "prefer" the company of older people and did not feel that they are a victim or at risk of exploitation.

The young person failed to recognise their own risky behaviours and the potential danger they are in. The young person has stated quite clearly to professionals that:

"If you take me home, I'll just go missing again"

There was evidence of longstanding neglect and abuse which has resulted in deteriorating behaviour, anger issues, regular absconding and mental health issues. Despite the young person and family being discussed in a number of multi-agency meetings, outcomes for the young person did not improve and parents appeared not have parental control. Mother struggled to appropriate boundaries in order to keep the child safe.

The young person is now in an out of borough placement, has a dedicated support worker and has started to engage with professionals.

Areas for development in 2020/21

- Review of CSPR process to ensure adherence to statutory timelines. Chairs of L&I sub group to work with the DSPP Business Unit to streamline review process
- Agree process for review sign off across adult and children sectors.
- To align Rapid Response processes for both adult and children reviews.
- Development of a pool of review authors from all organisations (adult and children). DSPP Executive Chair to deliver review writing session.
- To review the terms of reference of the L&I sub group after 6 months to ensure appropriate membership and governance processes.

Voice of the Child

When working with children or young people it is essential to gain a clear picture of their wishes, thoughts and feelings. It is good practice to ask the child or young person which practitioner they would like to gather this information from them.

- the right of a child or young person to be heard is included in the UN Convention of Rights
- the Children's Act 2004 emphasises the importance of speaking to the child or young person as part of any assessment
- the importance of speaking to a child or young person and gathering their views has been consistently highlighted in lessons learned from Serious Case Reviews.

In too many cases local and national reviews have found:

- a child was not seen frequently enough by the professionals involved, nor was asked about their views or feelings
- agencies did not listen to adults who tried to speak on behalf of the child and who had important information to contribute
- parents and carers prevented practitioners from seeing and listening to the child
- practitioners focused too much on the needs of the parents or adults, especially vulnerable adults and overlooked the implications for the child
- agencies did not interpret their findings well enough to protect the child.

What do we mean by 'the child's voice'?

This not only refers to what children say directly, but to many other aspects of their presentation. It means seeing their experiences from their point of view.

Why is the child's voice important?

It means that children feel listened to, plans are more successful when they are involved, and prompt decisions are made about safeguarding when necessary.

Case studies evidencing the voice / contribution of children have been received from partners, a selection of which can be found at appendix 1.

Summary

2019/20 was a transitional year for safeguarding children in Dudley, with the newly formed Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership.

During 2020/21 Dudley Safeguarding Children Partnership will continue to embed agreed strategic priorities and the work of the subgroups, whilst engaging with and listening to the voice of children and young people to reflect their priorities for keeping them safe from harm. The DSPP priorities for 2020/22 are:

- 1. Preventing violence across the life course**
- 2. Neglect across the life course**
- 3. Exploitation across the life course**

Learning from Practice Reviews (both locally and nationally) will be shared widely to improve practice and procedures where required. We will examine the quality of safeguarding work across the Partnership through our audits and information gathering and work together to address issues and to identify gaps in service provision for children. We will develop our work to support the most vulnerable children and, those with complex needs and disabilities to achieve a good transition into adulthood and work with partners to provide the right help and support where it is needed.

Dudley Safeguarding Children Partnership will remain vigilant with regard to emerging safeguarding issues as they affect children and young people, especially in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and will respond to ensure that all agencies come together, are supported and provide assurance regarding their safeguarding responsibilities.

Appendix 1 – Voice of the Child case studies

Case Study 1

Young person has been supported through her exploitation, she has made disclosures to professionals that have been supporting her and made a statement to the Police which has led to an ongoing Police investigation.

Professionals curiosity and gut instincts contributed to this young person disclosing this information. Her case was closely monitored, and the family were supported well. Mom initially had no understanding of CSE and felt her daughter was making the choice to 'have sex' with all these males however through a lot of work with the family she began to understand exactly how her daughter was exploited and started treating her as a victim instead of blaming her for what happened. She could then start truly supporting her daughter the way she needed it. It was a struggle and there were many ups and downs along the way, however professionals were able to support this child and family to stop her exploitation. There are still issues within the family home which they will continue to receive support with.

She received a lot of support which has recently ended at her request, she now wants to move on with her life and forget about what happened to her. She is a bright young person who has a positive future ahead. At times she found all the professionals being involved quite overwhelming, we addressed this through MASE/CPP to make sure she was fully involved in her plan. It was really important to make sure she felt that she had choices and that this support wasn't anyone telling her what to do but supporting her through the abuse she suffered.

She felt strong enough to move on with the next chapter of her life and attend college, she requested for her one to one work/support with Barnardo's to stop which it did.

Case Study 2

The return home interview includes an opportunity for the child to be spoken to alone so that their views can be captured. The child's voice is listened to and appropriate course of action taken following the one to one conversation.

For example, child X was contacted to complete a return home interview. She went missing following an argument with her carer and ended up with her boyfriend child Y. During the Missing Officer's conversation with child X, it appeared that she was in company with child Y and was very concerned about him as his mother did not want him back home, so he had nowhere to go for the night. Child X advised that her boyfriend wasn't allowed at her house and she was refusing to return home without knowing that he had somewhere to stay. If accommodation was not resolved both children would have been reported missing and would have been on the streets for the night.

The missing officer spoke to both children and listened to the situation they were experiencing. Child Y had previously presented himself homeless at Dudley Council Plus, but due to his age he had been referred to Children Services. Child Y explained to the Missing Officer that his relationship with his mother had broken down. The missing officer liaised with the allocated social worker who confirmed that papers had been submitted for a placement search. The Missing Officer advocated on behalf of child Y and overnight emergency accommodation was secured for him by his social worker.

The missing officer listened to child X and worked through the circumstances surrounding the argument that had resulted in her going missing. She was encouraged to return to her

carer for the night. As a result of listening to both children a further missing episode was prevented, and both children had somewhere safe to sleep.

Case Study 3

A 14-year-old female was brought into the Emergency Department by ambulance presenting with mental health issues and suicidal thoughts. She was accompanied by her sister who was 18 years old. The history taken from the ambulance crew stated that she had run away from home and had been missing for 2 days. On return, she had love bites on her neck and told her parents that she had been with her 16-year-old boyfriend which caused an argument.

This young person was now living with her father following a period of time spent in foster care due to maternal mental health issues which meant her mother could not provide adequate care. The Emergency Department contacted social care who advised that the young person was known to them and that the parents had stated they did not want her to return home.

Further concerns emerged during the medical assessment which prompted the nurse to complete a Child Sexual Exploitation screening tool. These concerns included evidence of bruising to her neck and breast, she admitted to giving the wrong details to her parents in relation to her boyfriend's age and address, missing school and social media use. These concerns were also documented on a Multi-Agency Referral Form and the police were contacted directly.

The young person was admitted to the paediatric ward for a mental health assessment and safeguarding. The concerns regarding potential exploitation were new concerns and the nurse was able to recognise the indicators which prompted completion of the risk assessment tool to evidence the concerns and initiate a strategy discussion. There was evidence of good multi-agency communication from the Emergency Department and paediatric ward with social care and the police. By identifying the concerns early this would hopefully improve outcomes for the young person.

Appendix 2 - Dudley MBC Participation and Engagement

Children's Services have begun work on elevating and joining up work on participation and engagement, which is referred to as 'Voice and Influence'.

The aim is to meaningfully seek feedback on services, from all children, young people, families and partners and to strengthen the influence of shaping of services

The work around 'Voice and Influence' links to the Quality Assurance and Learning Framework. Feedback from families is an integral part of 'knowing ourselves' and understanding the impact interventions are having upon children and families .

Some of the existing participation and engagement work was already taking place across Children's Services is as follows:

- **Early Help**

- In Early Help parents are supported to complete questionnaires, following intervention.
- The voices of children, young people and their parents/carers are included in assessments.
- Early Help staff attend community events to raise awareness of the services that they offer.
- Coffee mornings have taken place to engage with families in the community.

- **Children in Care Council/Care Leavers Forum and Dudley Youth Council**

- Young people have been part of senior manager recruitment panels.
- Children and young people have provided comments on Dudley's Local Offer.
- Dudley has a dedicated Participation Officer who works with the CIC/CL Council and Dudley Youth Council (DYC).
- Work has been undertaken with young people to find out their preferred method of communication with their key worker.
- Young people have commented upon the 16/17 Homeless Protocol.

- **Safeguarding and Review**

- In December 2019, the IRO Service asked children in care about their experience of the IRO Service. Children were asked a number of questions around their experiences of the IRO Service and their IRO. For example, children were asked if they knew who their IRO was, 69% said yes. The outcomes of the survey has helped shape the IRO Service Plan. The IRO survey will be an annual event.
- An event took place with children in care, in February 2020. All children were aged 12-17 and feedback was sought in relation to their views on their IRO, what they thought about their Reviews and their views on co-chairing their meetings.
- Parental engagement work in Children's Social Care is also being developed. A questionnaire for parents whose children are subject to child protection plans was undertaken during the Covid 19 lockdown, when Child Protection Conferences were being undertaken virtually. The findings were helpful in understanding parents' views about virtual meetings. Some parents enjoyed the virtual meetings and found them less intimidating. This feedback is being used to develop a hybrid way of working through the pandemic and into the recovery phase.

- **Centre for Professional Practice (CPP)**

- CPP seek the views of children and their parents/carers as part of audits.
- Particular tools have been developed by the CPP to use with children and families.
- The Principal Social Worker (PSW) and CPP are involved in the Parent Participation Project with Camden and Bexley.
- The Principal Social Worker and CPP are members of the West Midlands Teaching Partnership (WMTP) sub-group on Participation. There are plans for a WMTP Annual Event around Participation.

- Dudley are involved in the West Midlands Teaching Partnership developing of a regional participation strategy.
- CPP are in the process of creating a role for a care experienced young person.

- **Residential Services**
 - Consultation with children and young people on changes within the Home
 - Weekly/Monthly House Meetings

- **SEND**
 - The SEND Team has introduced a Co-Production Meeting as part of the 20-week process for parents, school staff, other professionals involved and young people, at which the draft ECHP is co-produced.
 - There is multi-agency communication and culture group that is developing the communication strategy and this group is co-chaired with parents.
 - The SEND Team have a dedicated Local Officer and Participation Officer who works with Parent Carer Groups to co-produce the Local Offer.
 - The Participation Officer is also setting up participation activities with a number of groups of young people to co-produce the Local Offer

- **Education Strategy Summary**
 - The Education Strategy for Dudley 2020-21 was launched with all internal stakeholders, elected members, schools, academies and Chairs of Governors during the first half of the Autumn term. It was well received, as intended, in providing the essential framework to all of the borough's education and inclusion work, and a coherent context for all of the other workstreams and initiatives.

Next steps

The Participation Strategy will be developed alongside work being undertaken in the Participation and Engagement Sub-Groups. The development of the Participation and Engagement Strategy will include the views of children, young people and their parents/carers.

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 17th March 2021

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Children and Young People's Plan: January 2021 – January 2022

Purpose

1.
 - To share the Improvement Plan and update Scrutiny Committee on progress of delivery of improvements, in response to Ofsted's priority areas for improvement.
 - To update the Scrutiny Committee on all activity which is underway and / or is planned by Dudley Council, through the Children's Services Directorate and our partners to help safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people across Dudley.
 - To highlight critical areas within the service where further work is needed.
 - To provide members with the opportunity to raise and be assured that Children's Social Care has taken swift and decisive action to provide a responsive service to children in need, in care and those in need of protection.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Scrutiny Committee:-
 - Note the Improvement Plan and progress on outcomes and performance against the delivery commitments and timeframes laid out in the Improvement Plan
 - Note the wider Children's Services Improvement initiatives within the Local Authority and partner organisations that embed the cultural and operational changes required to achieve sustained improved outcomes for Dudley children and young people.
 - Corporate leaders understand the Improvement Plan and drive changes to support improvement within corporate directorates and strategic partnership boards and support the development of frontline practice and engagement with children/young people.

Background

3. The Improvement Plan has been developed following the Ofsted Focused Assurance Visit undertaken in October 2020, with a focus on how Dudley's Social Care has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of Covid-19 restrictions.

Furthermore, the Improvement Plan supports the transformational changes taking place including several short term and long-term projects that are planned, which will be delivered over the next 18 months.

Robust arrangements have been put in place to track progress through fortnightly Children's Services Improve Programme (CSIP) Project Group sessions which are chaired by the Service Director for Children's Social Care. A progress report is produced to provide updates to the Improvement Board, which meets at 6-weekly intervals.

OFSTED Priority Areas for Improvement:

4. Our recent Ofsted visit provided us with priority areas, which coupled with our own analysis will form our immediate priorities in the Improvement Plan;
 - Priority 1: Leadership
 - Priority 2: Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
 - Priority 3: Quality of Assessment and Plans
 - Priority 4: Pre-Proceedings – Public Law Outline
 - Priority 5: Permanency
 - Priority 6: Education at Key Stage 4 (Children in Care)
 - Priority 7: Case Transition
 - Priority 8: Non-familial abuse and Exploitation
 - Priority 9: Supervision, Quality Assurance and Management Oversight

Improvement Plan – What we have done and plan to do as well as our impact and evidence – Progress so far

5. **Priority 1: Leadership – What we need to Improve**
Instability in the senior leadership team and staff changes throughout the service, have contributed to the drift in the local authority's improvement journey.

What Ofsted said

There are serious weaknesses in many service areas in Dudley. This is because of long-standing instability in the senior leadership team that has led to delays in addressing strategic and practice deficits.

Our Improvement Plan: Progress so far: What we have done, plan to do and our evidence and impact so far

- We have appointed a permanent Director of Children's Services (DCS). The DCS commenced employment in Dudley on 22nd February 2021.
- We have appointed permanently to both the Service Director for Children's Social Care and the Service Director for Early Help/Schools and SEND. (October 2020)
- We have an almost permanent establishment in the Senior Leadership Team. We are recruiting to our final Head of Service role, that has been vacant since the end of January 2021. Each Head of service has lead responsibility for the Improvement Plan 9 priority areas.
- We have shared the Improvement Plan with staff in a series of staff workshops. 290 members of staff attended; they now have a greater visibility, understanding and involvement in the improvement journey. Staff have reported a greater understanding of our improvement priorities.
- The Service Director and the Director of the Children's Services continue to meet with staff across the service in 'Time to Talk' sessions, on a monthly basis to ensure that they have a good understanding of any issues that staff face and of what is working well. This will ensure their visibility and that staff feel supported with the tools to do their jobs well.
- We have re-invigorated our Social Work Recruitment Strategy with a plan to increase the number of permanent social workers in the service. At present, 73% of social work staff are permanent. Our objective is to have 85% permanent staff by Quarter 4 (31st March 2022).
- We are also working to ensure that alongside our permanent recruitment, we attract and recruit good, experienced agency staff to ensure that we continue to provide responsive support and help to Dudley children and young people.
- We have put in place robust governance to drive the improvement plan at strategic and operational level.
- We are currently reviewing our panels in order to streamline them and increase their effectiveness. Our objective is to ensure that outcome focussed panels, which make the right decision for our children /young people provide targeted cost-effective supportive packages that effectively match addressed needs.
- Practitioner and management core training, launched by Dudley's Centre for Professional Practice and is now underway with a focus on driving improvement and upskilling staff in all core and priority areas.
- 26 managers ranging from Team Managers, Service Managers across Children's Services will commence management core-skills training.

Our ultimate ambition is to engender within our managers, collective accountability, collaborative working, an understanding of what good looks like and a desire to continually improve our services to children and young people in Dudley.



6. **Priority 2: Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub – Strengthening our Front Door: What needs to improve?**

Improve the Timeliness and quality of decision making in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

What Ofsted said

Contacts with children's services are not responded to quickly enough. Decision-making is too slow and not always appropriate in how best to respond to children's needs. The RAG (Red Amber Green) rating system to prioritise children is not effective, meaning that an appropriate, timely response to needs and risks is not routinely achieved.

Our Improvement Plan:- Progress so far: What we have done, plan to do and our evidence and impact so far

- We have recruited a permanent Service Manager for MASH, Emergency Duty Team, Exploitation Hub. Service Manager for Family Solutions has been in post since December 2020.
- Our decision making in MASH is improving on a month to month basis. The percentage of Contacts progressed within one working day was 69% in November 2020. In January 2021 our performance improved to 76%.
- We have put in place regular improvement meetings with the MASH management team utilising a project improvement approach
- We have put in place simplified business processes and developed better understanding of our new systems amongst MASH staff.
- We have completed a baseline audit of approximately 400 September contacts, to identify areas of improvement across contacts from all partner agencies. This was reported to the MASH Strategic Board in December 2020. The findings from the audit have informed the improvement activity and multi-agency training within MASH.
- We have commenced monthly multi-agency audits to enable partners to understand Dudley's thresholds and make good referrals (with consent where appropriate) to enable timely and appropriate response to risks and the support needs of children and young people.

7. **Priority 3: What needs to improve?**

Improve Quality of Assessments and Child Focused Plans

What Ofsted said

Assessments of children are overly descriptive and do not fully analyse the impact of children's situations on their health and development and longer-term outcomes. The child's voice and lived experiences are captured in assessments but do not always sufficiently influence planning. Child in need and child protection plans are not effective due to the lack of specific, child-focused and time-bound actions. This means that it is difficult for families to understand what changes are required to improve children's circumstances, and what will happen should the changes not be made.

Our Improvement Plan:- Progress so far: What we have done, plan to do and our evidence and impact so far

- We have developed a child friendly 'Plan on a Page' for our children in care. Children and young people were involved in development of the plan. The plan is shorter, written in children/young person friendly language, which enables them to understand why they are in care and what we, as Corporate Parents and partner agencies will do to ensure their needs are met. This is now being piloted.
- We have reconfigured the way we measure assessment performance by separating out those resulting from new referrals and those from regular updated assessments. This change will ensure a clearer picture of how we are doing in relation to timely assessment of new and/or known families.
- Our Target for new Assessments authorised in a 45 working day target; 85% in line with stat neighbours.
 - o Target 75% April 2021
 - o Target 80% June 2021
 - o Target 85% August 2021
- We plan to evidence impact on children's experiences, through 'plans' and 'assessment' audits as part of the monthly audit cycle and during Practice Week in March 2021
- Developing SMART Plans' training commenced on 14th December 2020. More sessions are available throughout 2021. The right workers will be targeted. 36 social workers, 17% of workforce, have attended 3 workshops on 'SMART Plans' training from 14th December 2020 to 31st January 2021. More training is in place to ensure that 83% of the remaining staff access this much needed training in the next 3 months and all appropriate workers within the next 6 months.
- Assessment and Analysis training has been rolled out, being held on 8th & 14th January, 9th February 22nd April and 9th June 2021. All appropriate staff will receive this training within the next 6 months. The training cycle will consider the learning from audits
- A full audit programme, covering all 9 priority areas of the Childrens Services Improvement Plan commenced in January 2021.
- Audits of assessments have been undertaken in December 2020 by the Centre for Professional Practice (CPP) team; the learning has been incorporated into the Assessment & SMART Plans Training.
- We will increase the functionality to evidence partner agency involvement in all processes/reviews through our new Liquid Logic system. Partnership involvement will be reported into the Dudley Safeguarding Partnership Children's Group

8. Priority 4: What needs to improve?

Timely application of the Pre-Proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline (PLO)

What Ofsted said

Where the circumstances of children on child protection plans do not improve, they are not considered at legal gateway panel (LGP) soon enough and the pre-proceedings stage

of the PLO process is therefore delayed. This means that children are left in situations for significant periods of time where risks are not reduced.

Our Improvement Plan:- Progress so far: What we have done, plan to do and our evidence and impact so far

- The Service Director has chaired Legal Gateway Panel (LGP) on several occasions in November as part of a review of LGP and to identify learning.
- The Court Progression Manager (permanent) is now back in post - as of 1st December 2020.
- The Interim Head of Children and Families/Chair of LGP has now incorporated the Family Group Conferencing Coordinator into LGP, as well as having FGC involvement in Child Protection Progress Panel.
- Liquid Logic is now able to track partner agency involvement in child protection core groups. In November 82% of core groups took place within timescales. This was an improvement on the October figure of 75%. We plan to implement robust business intelligence reporting on multi-agency involvement in core groups by 31st March 2021. Timely core groups which include partners with the right experience and skills will drive progression of child protection plans and identify where families should be progressed to pre-proceedings.
- Child Protection Progress Panel began on 12th January 2021. Panel will provide structure around child protection cases at 9+ months, with earlier recognition where pre-proceedings would be appropriate. Out of the 365 children subject to child protection plans in February, 94 have been on CP Plans for 9+ months.
- We have now implemented the pre-proceedings and care proceedings workspace (Public Law Outline) into the Liquid Logic System with a plan to have a robust system tracker by 31st March 2021. This will enable a more robust approach to the visibility and management of pre-proceedings. Number of CYP in pre-proceedings process 7 sibling groups as of February 2021.
- To engender a consistent multi-agency contribution to core groups, leading to more effective child protection plans, we have developed new multi-agency core group guidance – including expectations of all partners. This was shared in February 2021.
- We have completed an audit of 69 unborn (prebirth) children. The findings used to inform the developing PLO pre-birth pathway and training across Children's Services and partner agencies by 30th April 2021. This will enable a better understanding and clarity of the pathway, how it works and where to get information from. By end of September 2021 (Quarter 2), impact will be evidenced through staff surveys.

9. **Priority 5: What needs to improve?**

Prioritising progression of Permanency plans for children where long-term fostering, adoption, special guardianship or reunification will secure the best permanent homes for them.

What Ofsted said

There is insufficient understanding, oversight and grip of permanence planning. Tracking systems are underdeveloped and do not help to effectively support timely decision-

making for children on their journey to achieve permanence. This means that many children with a plan for long-term fostering are not being formally matched soon enough. This has delayed family finding and matching timeliness for a small number of children whose plan has been for adoption. The delay in introducing a special guardianship policy and support offer means that too many children remain subject to care orders.

Our Improvement Plan:- Progress so far: What we have done, plan to do and our evidence and impact so far

- Our Permanency Strategy, together with permanency Terms of Reference have been completed; this was shared with all staff across the service in staff workshops – January/February 2021. We now have a structure around the area of permanence for practitioners and their managers to adhere to. This includes strengthened working arrangements with the Regional Adoption Agency (Adoption @ Heart) as well as strengthening the role of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs). There are robust arrangements to achieve permanency for existing cohorts of children and any new children, to be well embedded by Quarter 2 (30th September 2021). Impact will be evidenced through audit and performance analysis in a Head of Service led Performance Permanence Meeting.
- Our target for permanency planning of children by the 2nd Children Looked After Review is 90% by 30th April 2021. In December 2021, 71% of children who entered care had permanency plans by their 2nd Children Looked After Reviews.
- Within Practice Week in December 2020, training was delivered to staff on Life Story work for practitioners and foster carers. Adoption at Heart provided training on partnership-working, roles and responsibilities in permanence planning. 3 day - Achieving Permanency training is now underway since February 2021. Our plan is to ensure that targeted staff receive appropriate training and management support, so that they have the skills and understanding to progress children's permanency in a timely manner.
- The new Special Guardianship Order 'No Detriment' decision has been signed off by the Lead Cabinet Member for Children. Children are now being identified where an Special Guardianship Order (SGO) may be appropriate. The Policy will be produced by 31st March 2021. Managers and staff are aware of the decision and are now progressing SGO plans for children where carers have already agreed to the Order. Further work has been undertaken by Service Managers to identify other children for whom an SGO might be an appropriate permanence option. Currently there are 26 SGO assessments underway.
- An SGO Panel is now taking place on a fortnightly basis, reviewing and tracking SGO plans for children.

10. **Priority 6: What needs to improve?**

Improve the Quality and Impact of Education for children in care at key stage 4 and post 16 qualification and attainment.

What Ofsted said

There is a lack of a strategy to improve pupils' outcomes in key stage 4. As such, there are still too many pupils leaving secondary education without formal qualifications. Consequently, their ambitions for post-16 education are limited by their prior attainment.

Not enough children and young people are successful in securing apprenticeships or moving on to university.

Our Improvement Plan:- Progress so far: What we have done, plan to do and our evidence and impact so far

- Since December, we now have a Connexions Personal Advisor linked to the Leaving Care Team, so that young people leaving care benefit from improved partnership working within the Council to increase chances of acquiring apprenticeships.
- We have delivered training to social workers to ensure that they provide aspirational support to children in care. On 7th January 2021, 6 social workers attended introduction to 'e-PEP' training. 11 Practitioners attended 'Education, Health Care Plans and Aspirations' training on 8th December 2021.
- The Education Attainment Strategy has been developed and implemented to improve all the outcomes of children in care; with a particular focus on pupils' outcomes in Key Stage 4 and post 16 qualifications.
- 8 young people have been supported with targeted tuition in functional skills. 2 of these have secured a level 2 qualification in numeracy. The remaining 4 are continuing with their training.
- Our target to increase the number of 19-25 care leavers in education, employment and training to 49.5% by Quarter 2. 41.7% of care leavers aged 19 – 25 are in education, training or employment as of February 2021.
- Within this strategy, we have developed a pathway programme that has targeted young people in care or leaving care who have left school with no qualifications. The percentage of 16 & 18-year-olds in care or leaving care who are not in education, employment and training (NEET) is 2.7% (5 children in total). These 5 children are receiving targeted support.
- Apprenticeship and Tertiary education strategy will be implemented by 31st March 2021, with the objective of increasing the number of children/young people in care or leaving care entering apprenticeships and tertiary education.
- The Dudley Virtual School (DVS) piloted a programme of children chairing their own Personal Education Plans (PEPs) in September 2020. This was successful and the DVS is now planning to roll this out in the Spring 2021 term. This will enable children/young people to have more influence on their PEPs. Young people spoke positively of this experience
- The Virtual School has also established connectivity with the Youth Offending Service (YOS), the Care Leavers Team and their networks to ensure all young people, including those in secure units and others over the age of 18, are offered the opportunity for a PEP. This will ensure that children/young people at risk of offending are supported in their education to reduce involvement in criminality and create more opportunities.
- To enable a system-wide approach to education, the development of the Dudley Education Strategy, developed by Education Services, specifically referencing



Children in Care and Care Leavers

- Preparation for Adulthood Strategy has been developed by the SEND Improvement Programme, to be launched by 31st March 2021 and aligned the education of children in care and care leavers.

11. **Priority 7: What needs to improve?**

The Case Transition points across all service areas to prioritise the needs of children and reduce unnecessary changes of workers.

What Ofsted said

When assessments conclude, children experience further delays in the progress of plans due to another change of worker. A new transfer policy, implemented in July 2020, has not improved practice.

Our Improvement Plan:- Progress so far: What we have done, plan to do and our evidence and impact so far

- We have reviewed and launched the Transfer Protocol and monitor the timely transfer of children's cases. The revised Transfer Protocol was signed off in January 2021 and shared with staff across the service. Importance of timely transfer to reduce drift and delays in children's plans continues to be emphasised in training and drop-in sessions for practitioners and managers. Liquid Logic data is being used to evidence the timely flow of work across the system.

As a result of this children will experience more timely and effective intervention because their plans are not stalled by transfer delays.

12. **Priority 8: What needs to improve?**

The pace of progression in the development of Non-familial Abuse and Exploitation

What Ofsted said

Children at risk from non-familial abuse or exploitation are not always supported well enough in order to reduce risk. The development of a hub model to improve children's experiences is beginning to help the local authority gain a better understanding of its local problem profile. However, services across the partnership are still disjointed. There is a lack of effective integration between children's services and the police in the response to children who go missing.

Our Improvement Plan:- Progress so far: What we have done, plan to do and our evidence and impact so far

- Exploitation Strategy has been completed. This is now being implemented with progress monitored through the Exploitation sub-group chaired by DCI Lambert – West Midlands Police. As a result of this, children/young people at risk of non-familial abuse and exploitation will receive coordinated multi-agency response that will reduce the level of risk.
- A phase 2 scope (January – April 2021) of the Exploitation Hub, has been completed. This sets out the staffing/structural changes in this period. As a result of this, children

and young people at risk of exploitation are receiving a more dedicated service, from appropriate staffing expertise.

- Training has been rolled out across Children's Services and partner agencies to enable staff to have a well-developed understanding of the complexities of exploitation, feel confident and well trained. Evidenced through staff surveys by Quarter 2 (end of September 2021).
- Children who have been reported missing will receive timely Return Home Interviews; the information from the interviews will be used to support children/ young people to reduce risk of missing and exploitation.
- As the Exploitation hub continue to improve its robustness, this is enabling more children to receive support timely. In January 2021;
 - o 6 new children/young people's cases were referred to the Exploitation Hub
 - o 38 children were reported missing
 - o All 38 children offered return interview
 - o 30 agreed to be interviewed
- Our partnership bid for support under the TCE Tackling Child Exploitation programme has been successful, which will provide 7 days of expert consultation into transition to adulthood for young people in January/February.
- Between 1st and 14th February, the Police will led a County Lines Intensification Week. During that week a pilot on one aspect of Police and Social Care joint working was undertaken. The evaluation of this small pilot will be used to develop the service further.

13. **Priority 9: What needs to improve?**

Improve the effectiveness of Supervision, Quality Assurance and Senior Management Oversight

What Ofsted said

Social work supervision is variable in quality and impact. It is too frequently descriptive, task-focused, not reflective, lacking in depth and not directive enough to help social workers to prioritise their work. The quality assurance and advocacy element that the independent reviewing officer service should bring to the oversight of children's care and progress of plans is largely ineffective in resolving delays.

Our Improvement Plan:- Progress so far: What we have done, plan to do and our evidence and impact so far

- The Head of Safeguarding is leading on a piece of work to strengthen the senior leadership response to serious incidents, process into the DSPP for serious safeguarding cases and referral to the National Safeguarding Panel.
- As a result of this, all senior leaders are beginning to have a better understanding of processes around serious safeguarding incidences. Evidence will be through better, more timely responses and embedding the learning across Children's Services.

- The Supervision Policy has been revised following consultation with managers and Practitioners Forum. This was shared during the Improvement Plan workshops with practitioners and managers in January and February 2021.
- Supervision training for managers is forming part of the Core Skills for Managers 5-day Program, running from February to May 2021. Management oversight and supervision will be evidenced through scheduled supervision auditing.
- The performance for case supervision within the measure of one month was 45% in November. A review of approach and measure of supervision was completed in February 2021 meaning that we have more accurate performance data. We aim to achieve a target of 95% supervision by 30th April 2021

Case Supervision target profile:

- o 70% February 2021
 - o 85% March 2021
 - o 95% April 2021
- Where children are at the highest levels of risk and need, practitioners will have more frequent case supervision. This will improve the timeliness and quality of supervision.
- The Quality Assurance and Learning Framework was completed and shared with managers and IROs in February 2021. Responses to Quality Assurance activities, particularly audits / Independent Reviewing Officer Dispute Resolutions will be timely and evidence improvement in the support and protection that children receive.
- An audit of complaints was undertaken in November 2020. Lessons from audit has been incorporated into staff training. A programme of training/complaints workshops will be completed by April 2021 with an aim of improvements in responding to complaints in a timely manner;
 - o Quarter 2 - 71%
 - o Quarter 3 - 75%
- Within Liquid Logic, we will be able to evidence more clearly, management responses to IRO Dispute Resolution and closing the loop activity on audits. This will result in better tracking and reporting of management responses to children's plans where the dispute resolution protocol has been initiated.
- An analysis of training needs/achieved for Restorative Practice is underway. This includes requesting partners' commitment to Restorative Practice from March 2021
- We will evaluate caseloads for social workers based on area of services with target caseloads of 18. Our figures for December 2020 were;
 - o Stat Neighbours – 18,
 - o West Midlands – 17.9
 - o National – 17.4
 - o Average Caseload per Social worker – 24.1
- We will define and agree approach for multi-agency audits, Multi Agency Case File Audits (MACFA), to share learning and challenge across partners by March 2021. MACFA Days have been planned quarterly, with a minimum 5 children's cases audited. Learning and sharing events/engagement across partners will be scheduled



each quarter. This will lead to improvements in practice.

Finance

14. As part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, Children's Services are to receive £6.150m growth in 2021/22 which will address current spending pressures mainly for placements for looked after children and home to school transport. However, saving targets of £1.340m in 2021/22 rising to £2.140m by 2023/24 are expected to be achieved, which needs to be considered as part of Children's Services overall context.
15. At the time of writing this report there is no specific funding identified to support the Children's Services Improvement Plan, except for £0.170m identified via the MTFS process to provide additional resource for the Children with Disabilities Team. Any further costs associated with the Improvement Plan must be met from within existing resources.

Law

16. The Education and Inspections Act 2006, along with its associated Regulations, empowers the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) to, amongst other things, inspect and regulate children's social care services, in order to ensure those services are suitable for children in need and potentially vulnerable young people, as defined by the Children Act 2004, Childcare Act 2006, Education Act 2002, etc.
17. If a local authority fails to co-operate with Ofsted or its services do not improve, the Secretary of State for Education is entitled to intervene and take the action that they consider necessary, which could initially involve directing Ofsted to conduct further investigations.
18. By developing and implementing the Improvement Plan agreed with Ofsted, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council is ensuring that children and young people in its area received a suitable service and complying with its duty to co-operate with Ofsted.
19. The swift implementation of the SGO no-detriment policy will result in an increased number of applications to the court for Discharge of Care Orders to be substituted by Special Guardianship Order. It is noted that circa 26 SGO assessments are underway, and this will have a financial and personnel impact of the delivery of such necessary change. Ongoing discussions will need to take place between the Service Director and Principal Solicitor around this impact.

Equality Impact

20. The Improvement Plan is not a policy document. It sets out improvement priority areas which affects a number of policy documents that may require Equality Impact Assessments to be undertaken. The improvement plan is a framework with which improvement activities will take place. Where a specific policy or a change needs to be implemented, Equality Impact Assessment will be considered. No Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as a result. The improvement plan does not focus on designing new or redesigning existing services. As a result, no Equality Impact

Assessment has been completed. Any decisions made in respect of some processes within the Improvement Plan, will consider the importance of undertaking Equality Impact Assessments.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

21. All Organisational Development/Transformation implications contained within the Improvement Plan have been identified and the HR/OD Business Partners for Childrens Services have been fully engaged to ensure all HR processes and procedures are followed. Recruitment to all positions within the staffing structure has been undertaken in accordance with HR policies and procedures.

Commercial/Procurement

22. There are no commercial or procurement implications associated with this report.

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

23. Improvements to supporting and maintaining the attachments children and young people make in their formative years are key for their health & wellbeing, stable positive attachments create more resilient young people who will eventually become our future community residents.
24. Keeping young people where possible within their communities will help with their connectivity.
25. All processes should be reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to meet the needs of this population and are fit for purpose, also checking they do not have a negative impact on wellbeing and safety.



Catherine Driscoll
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer:

Andrea Stone
Telephone: 01384 814309
Email: andrea.stone@dudley.gov.uk

Children first and at the heart of all we do

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

January 2021 to January 2022

Improving services for children and families



Children first and at the heart of all we do

FOREWORD



As Lead Member for Children's Services I know that the Leader of the Council and my fellow members are committed to ensuring that the services we deliver will have children at the forefront of their thinking.

This Improvement plan works together with all our partners to deliver strong, safe and preventative services to children of Dudley to enable them to fulfil their full potential.

Cllr Ruth Buttery, Cabinet Member for Children's Services



Dudley Council has the highest ambitions for our children and young people.

Revitalized council leadership arrangements, a cross political and partner improvement programme have accelerated our efforts to support and strengthen the services that we deliver to children and families.

Alongside this there is momentum and a strong commitment to building and strengthening our alliances with partners to improve our collective offer to children and young people. Where strengths are discovered, they will be built upon and where weaknesses are found, they will be challenged and overcome.

Kevin O'Keefe, Chief Executive Dudley Council





As Director of Children's Services, I am passionate and care about the rights and needs of all children and young people.

Enabling and supporting children and young people to aspire, achieve and believe in themselves, regardless of the adversity they may have faced is the ultimate ambition and outcome I want for them.

To achieve this outcome, I am equally passionate on improving services for Dudley Children and Young people. It is clear there is a real commitment from politicians, partners and staff to making a real difference to ensure that children are at the heart of everything we do. Dudley Council is committed to protecting vulnerable children and families in need of support and protection.

This Children's Services Improvement Plan document brings together all the activity which is underway and / or is planned by Dudley Council, through the Children's Services Directorate and our partners to help safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people across Dudley.

The Improvement Plan supports the transformational changes taking place including several short term and long-term projects that are planned, which will be delivered over the next 18 months.

I am confident that we are now working at pace to drive the improvements forward and have a committed workforce who want to make a difference to children and young people. We remain committed to delivering high quality, safe services and working with our partners, and we will continue to ensure that services improve for children and their families across the Borough.

Catherine Driscoll, Director of Children's Services



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1.0 GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The governance of the improvement is overseen by the newly revised Improvement Board, which meets every six weeks. The Improvement Plan will report to the Council's Cabinet and ultimately the full Council.

Scrutiny of the Improvement Boards activities will be provided by the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

The Improvement Board will be informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. It will report to the Health and Wellbeing Board as to how its activities fulfil this and are delivering better outcomes for children.

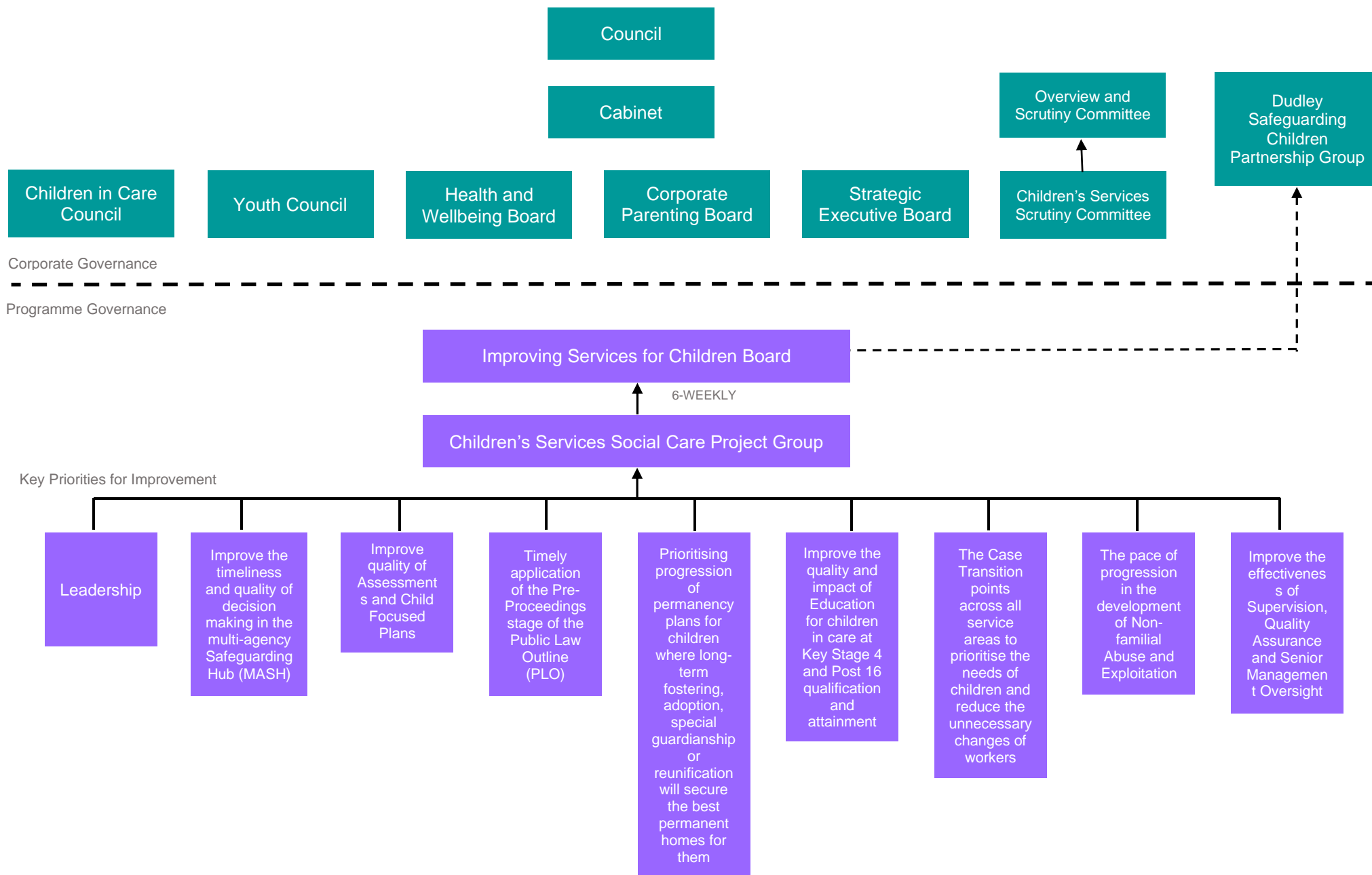
The Improvement Board will report to the Dudley Safeguarding Partnership to provide assurance that its activities are ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

The Director of Children's Services will provide progress updates to all bodies through a single consistent reporting framework based upon an agreed data set and appropriate actions identified by the Improvement Board. These actions may include items to be undertaken by the key stakeholders as well as Dudley Council.

It is the responsibility of all the key stakeholders to ensure the improvement plan is part of the agenda, discussion, and scrutiny in the named committees, boards, and working groups; and within their respective organisations as part of the assurance for the DfE that improvement and sustainability is owned and the responsibility is shared across the partnership for continuous progress.

The overarching responsibility of the improvement plan remains with the Council in respect of corporate resources, systems, and policy changes.





2.0 HOW WILL WE CREATE THE ENVIRONMENT TO ACHIEVE THE PRIORITIES AND WHAT WILL THIS LOOK LIKE?

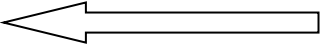
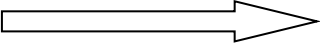
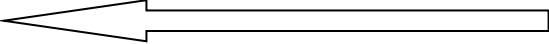
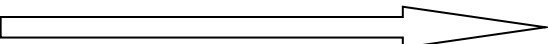
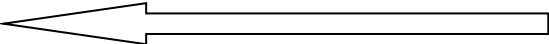
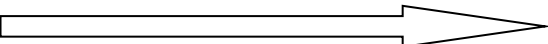
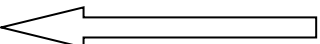
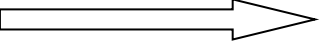
We are working towards 'good', so, how will we know when we get there? We are developing services to provide good experiences for children and young people. We are measuring our success and impact on children's experiences through the following evaluation categories, and the detailed descriptors that sit beneath.

Experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Experience of children in care and care leavers	Impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families
Early Help	Making good decisions for children	Strategic partnership
Identifying and responding to children's needs and appropriate thresholds	Participation and direct work with children and care leavers	Learning culture
Making good decisions and providing effective help	Helping and protecting	Performance management
Management oversight of frontline practice	Health	Workforce
Participation and direct work with families	Learning and enjoyment	
Identifying and responding to all types of abuse recognizing the vulnerability of specific groups of children	Stability and permanence	
	Care leavers and transitions	



3.0 FIRSTLY, WE NEED TO FOCUS ON OUR TOP PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Our recent Ofsted visit provided us with priority areas, which coupled with our own analysis will form our immediate priorities.

Experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Experience of children in care and care leavers	Impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families
Timely application of the pre- proceedings stage of Public Law Outline (PLO)	Prioritising the swifter progression of plans for children where long-term fostering, adoption, special guardianship or reunification will secure the best permanent homes for them	Senior leadership roles, including the Director of Children's Services (DCS) need to be filled substantively
The timeliness and quality of decisions in MASH	Improve the quality and impact of education for children in care at key stage 4 and post 16 qualification and attainment	
 The pace of progress in the development of responses to non-familial abuse and child exploitation 		
 The case transition points across all service areas 		
 The quality of assessments and child focused plans 		
 The effectiveness of supervision, quality assurance arrangements and senior management oversight 		



OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 1

Leadership

(Responsible officer – Helen Ellis, Acting Director of Children’s Services)

What do we need to improve?

Instability in the senior leadership team and staff changes throughout the service, have contributed to the drift in the local authority’s improvement journey.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have appointed a permanent DCS We have a full permanent establishment in the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new DCS will start on the 22 Feb 2021 Each Head of Service has lead responsibility for our 9 priority areas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are reviewing our Social Work recruitment strategy with a target of 85% permanency by the Quarter 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current Staff permanent 73%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Time to Talk” sessions with all staff commence from January 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 37 staff 17% Staff attended “Time to Talk” sessions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The improvement plan was shared with staff in a series of workshops Staff programme update workshops to be held once a quarter with at least 75% attendance/engagement We have established practitioner forums held every 6 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 290 staff attended the improvement plan briefings Staff have a greater visibility, understanding and involvement in the improvement journey Improved staff ownership through being involved in improvements work. Evidence of feeling more involved through staff survey Quarter 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully auditable Quality Assurance & Learning Framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Head of Services out of 5 attended Quality Assurance & Learning Framework training in January 2021

Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight and challenge provided by the CEO, Cabinet Member and DCS to improve scrutiny and capacity monitoring • Robust delivery focused governance in place to drive the improvement plan through to operational level by February 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All SLT have input, buy in and commitment to the CSIP • Robust approach to delivery focused activity across SLT • Strong scrutiny to assure delivery
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 2020 Practice week theme “Hear my story, Hear my voice” to focus training on the voice of the child, to drive quality improvements around the voice of the child all through assessments and plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Hear my story, Hear my voice” training through practice week attended by 255 staff (in 544 sessions). • Feedback has been positive. Evidence of impact will be reviewed through thematic audits. • Assessment audits showing stronger voice of the child
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 6th January 2021, Dudley’s Centre for Professional Practice launched its training programme for 2021. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners and managers shared that they found the briefing informative and that they felt included in the improvement journey.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are currently reviewing all the Panels in order to streamline them and increase their effectiveness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome focused streamlined panels will be in place
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Improvement Plan will be shared with practitioners and managers across Children’s Services. Heads of Services led the interactive sessions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 290 practitioners, managers and IROs attended the briefing on 26th January 2021 and 4th February 2021. The sessions were well received. Practitioners and managers shared that they found the briefing informative and that they felt included in the improvement journey. • Our workforce will understand and be able to articulate the Improvement Plan and reflect it in their practice.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioner and management training launched by Dudley’s Centre for Professional Practice and is now underway with a focus on improving outcomes for children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26 managers ranging from Service Managers to Heads of Service across Children’s Services will commence training.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every manager across Children's Services will attend a cohort of 5-day core skills manager's training to start by February 2021 and be completed by May 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent approach to management across the teams evaluated through feedback and staff survey in quarter 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust performance management framework will be implemented across Children's Services by 28th February 2021 • Team dashboards which provide practitioners and managers with real time performance will be available to staff from February 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners and managers start using reports to better understand the business performance. • Practitioners and managers start using the reports to drive improved outcomes for children. • Performance reporting focused on giving all staff the right information monitoring the quality of services.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in Partners in Practice with South Tyneside on Fostering by February 2021 with Permanence & Quality Assurance work to commence by 22nd February 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specification on outcomes expected has been agreed with South Tyneside.
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic Abuse Bill Stakeholder's event – 29/01/2021. • Stakeholder evaluation of the impact of domestic abuse on the outcomes for children and plan of action to be presented by March 2021 • Define metrics for ongoing monitoring impact of domestic abuse on outcomes for children by April 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better visibility and understanding of the impact across partners, supporting joined up approaches to tackling domestic abuse.

OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 2

Improve the timeliness and quality of decision making in the multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

(Responsible Officer – Karen Graham, Interim Head of Children and Families)

What do we need to improve?

Contacts with children's services are not responded to quickly enough. Decision-making is too slow and not always appropriate in how best to respond to children's needs. The RAG (Red Amber Green) rating system to prioritise children is not effective, meaning that an appropriate, timely response to needs and risks is not routinely achieved.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have recruited a permanent Service Manager for MASH, Emergency Duty Team and Exploitation Hub and a Team Manager. Both will join the MASH on 18th January 2021. Service Manager for Family Solutions has been permanent since December 2020. 2 permanent social workers have been recruited into MASH. Define and implement approach to monitoring % of permanent staff and staff attrition by March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust management oversight for children's contacts, improving decision making Next Working Day for timeliness. 71.4% Local Authority permanent staff in MASH Social Workers and Team Managers combined Managers have shared information about the MASH Project with staff.
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The percentage of Contacts progressed within one working day was 69% in November 2020. Improve timeliness of decisions and accuracy of recording in MASH, including the recording of evidence gathered from the partnership. Additional resources in place to support improved performance of timeliness of contact decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance in November was lower than the target of 95%. January 2021 performance – 77.1% Target to achieve 80% in February 2021 Target to achieve 90% in March 2021 Target 95 % by end of April 2021 Stat Neighbour performance – [%]

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a structured improvement system approach to tackle the MASH Contact Decision performance. • Implement continuous improvement meetings into business as usual with the management team utilizing the improvement approach • First phase has identified numerous issues with systems and processes with detailed action plan underway for resolution by end of February 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved contact time performance, supporting delivery of the targets for February, March and April • Improved visibility of business process performance through analysis as part of weekly meetings in place by February 2021 • Simplified business processes and better understanding of systems, evidenced through a staff survey in Quarter 2 once improvements bedded in.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline audit of approximately 400 September contacts to be undertaken to identify areas of improvement across all partners by December 2020 • Presentation of findings to the MASH Strategic Board in February 2021. • MASH Improvement plan initiated by February 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joined up partner approach to improving services through MASH, improving working together • Improvement to support achieving the contact performance targets above • Improved timeliness of response to concerns raised about children and young people
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi- agency training for MASH staff, linked to the learning audit, is being developed jointly by the Service Manager for Children's MASH, the Service Manager for Adult MASH, DSPP and CPP by 31st January 2021 – this will be rolled out from February 2021. • Audit tools approved January 2021 • The theme/focus of February audit is quality Ambulance Service contacts. • Audit training has been delivered to MASH Operations Group in January 2021. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners understand Dudley's thresholds and make good referrals (with consent where appropriate) to enable timely response to risks and support needs of children and young people.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened the MASH Operations Group with improved membership and will include regular multi-agency audits. 	<p>All improvement supporting that the right children will be referred appropriately to MASH. The volume of inappropriate referrals will reduce, thus allowing more time to progress appropriate contacts at level 4.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Multi-Agency Threshold document has been updated in draft and is currently under consultation during the month of January 2021 • Develop full referrals business intelligence by April 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target Rate of appropriate Contacts into MASH [%] by Quarter 2 • Current rate of appropriate Contacts into MASH: [%] and [Volume]
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners in Adults and Children MASH will be attending shared learning workshops with the initial workshop taking place on 24th February 2021. Thereafter the workshops will be held monthly, and learning will be disseminated via multi- agency update briefings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joined learning between Adults and Children MASH as well as DSPP partners.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Children's and Adults MASH Strategic Board has been agreed at the Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership held on 17th December 2020. TOR by end of January 2021. • Clear operational demarcation and practice between Adults MASH and Childrens MASH • Childrens Services specific monitoring in place by March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will support a more seamless approach between Children's and Adults Services in our strategic planning around risks across whole family. • This will support transition planning and think family approaches.

OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 3

Improve Quality of Assessments and Child Focused Plans

(Responsible Officer – Karen Graham, Interim Head of Children and Families)

What do we need to improve?

Assessments of children are overly descriptive and do not fully analyse the impact of children's situations on their health and development and longer-term outcomes. The child's voice and lived experiences are captured in assessments but do not always sufficiently influence planning. Child in need and child protection plans are not effective due to the lack of specific, child-focused and time-bound actions. This means that it is difficult for families to understand what changes are required to improve children's circumstances, and what will happen should the changes not be made.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two groups of young people, 5-12 and 13 plus have developed their plan on a page IRO have developed child friendly CLA review report in consultation with children and the Children in Care Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children feeling involved in developing their plans Plans focused around what the children have highlighted in the plan on a page More child focused plans
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70.3% of new assessments were completed within 45 days in November. We have reconfigured the way we measure assessment performance by separating out those resulting from new referrals and those from regular updated assessments. Implement measure for monitoring of re-referrals as part of Directorate Dashboard Scorecard by March 2021 Developed full referrals business intelligence by April 2021 	<p>This change will ensure a clearer picture of how we are doing in relation to timely assessment of new and/or unknown families.</p> <p>Assessments authorized in 45 days target</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> December 2020 = 50.3% (76) of 151 assessments January 2021 = 47% (109) of 232 assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35% increase in volume of assessments 30% increase of assessments achieving 45 days Target Assessments completed in 45days: 85% in line with stat neighbours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target 75% April 2021 Target 80% June 2021 Target 85% August 2021

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of impact on children's experiences to be identified through 'plans' and 'assessments' audits as part of the monthly audit cycle and during Practice Week in March 2021 • 'Developing SMART Plans' training commenced on 14th December 2020. More sessions are available throughout 2021. The right workers will be targeted. • Assessment and Analysis training has been rolled out, being held on 8th & 14th January, 9th February 22nd April and 9th June 2021. The training cycle will consider the learning from audits. • Full audit programme implemented covering all 9 priority areas of the Childrens Services Improvement Plan by January 2021 • Audits of 'all plan types' has been undertaken as part of the Quality Assurance and Learning Framework (QAF) program in January 2021 • Audits of assessments have been undertaken in December 2020 by the Centre for Professional Practice (CPP) team; the learning has been incorporated into the Assessment & SMART Plans Training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan audits have identified the need to improve the core group meetings as part of the child protection planning • 36 social workers, 17% of workforce, have attended 3 workshops on 'SMART Plans' training from 14th December 2020 to 31st January 2021.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start SMART planning dip audits from March 2021 – Target of 25% of new plans audited every month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [%] and [NUMBER] of plans audited that are SMART
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will increase the functionality to evidence partner agency involvement in all processes/reviews through our new Liquid Logic system. Partnership involvement will be reported into the Dudley Safeguarding Partnership Children's Group. • Define and implement monitoring mechanisms for input across all partners by March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of assessments with partner engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ [%] assessments with Education ○ [%] assessments with Police ○ [%] assessments with Health ○ [%] assessments with Other partner agencies

OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 4

Timely application of the Pre-Proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline (PLO)

(Responsible Officer – Karen Graham, Interim Head of Children and Families)

What do we need to improve?

Where the circumstances of children on child protection plans do not improve, they are not considered at legal gateway panels soon enough and the pre-proceedings stage of the PLO process is therefore delayed. This means that children are left in situations for significant periods of time where risks are not reducing.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Service Director has chaired Legal Gateway Panel (LGP) on several occasions in November as part of a review of LGP and to identify learning. The Court Progression Manager (permanent) is now back in post - as of 1st December 2020. The Interim Head of Children and Families/ Chair of LGP has now incorporated the Family Group Conferencing Coordinator into LGP, as well as having FGC involvement in Child Protection Progress Panel. Improvement activity to be incorporated into the local improvement plan by February 2021 	The review will identify areas for development in the LGP process, paperwork and practice.
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liquid Logic is now able to track partner agency involvement in child protection core groups. In November 82% of core groups took place within timescales. This was an improvement on the October figure of 75%. Core group meetings on schedule 95% of the time by April 2021 Implement robust business reporting March 2021 	<p>Timely core groups which include partners with the right experience and skills will drive progression of child protection plans and identify where families should be progressed to pre-proceedings.</p> <p>Number of meetings held on time 86.6% January 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ [%] attended by Education ○ [%] attended by Police ○ [%] attended by Health ○ [%] attended by Other partner agencies

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection Progress Panel begins on 12th January 2021. • Panel will provide structure around child protection cases at 9+ months, with earlier recognition where pre-proceedings would be appropriate. • Out of the 365 children subject to child protection plans, 94 have been on CP Plans for 9+ months. • Aim for average duration of 365days for plans >9months 	<p>Service Manager oversight of child protection planning will result in a reduction in the length of child protection plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of plans >9months old – 116 (8/12/21) • >9months CP Plans average duration – 386 days
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target current age of CP Plan – To be defined by April 2021 • Target plans >9months old – To be defined by April 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target current age of CP Plan – [WEEKS/MONTHS] • Target plans >9months old – [NUMBER] by [DATE]
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have now implemented the pre-proceedings and care proceedings workspace (Public Law Outline) into the Liquid Logic System. • Pre-proceedings tracking in LCS by March 2021 • Childrens pre-proceedings progress to be monitored using new pre-proceedings report currently being developed and due by March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More robust approach to the visibility and management of pre-proceedings • Number of CYP in pre-proceedings process 7 sibling groups as of February 2021
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit of 69 pre-birth cases was completed • Findings used to inform the developing PLO pre-birth pathway • CPP and operational social work staff will link this to the main PLO pathway. • Training and guidance are being developed from this audit work. • Pathway, guidance and training to be completed by April 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding and clarity of the pathway, how it works and where to get information from • Evidenced through Staff Survey Quarter 2

Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have developed new multi-agency core group guidance – including expectations of all partners. • Guidance was completed on 23rd December 2020 and signed off on 7th December in the Dudley Safeguarding Partnership Children's Group. • Centre for Professionals Practice are developing good practice guidance Pre-Proceedings (Public Law Outline). • Consultation with Midwifery, voluntary partnerships networks e.g. Black Country Women's Aid and Family Nurse Partnerships. To be completed by February 2021 with draft guidance for approval and publication by March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent multi-agency contribution to core groups, leading to more effective child protection plans. • Improved understanding, awareness and working together across partners evidenced through partner survey and engagement quarter 2
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OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 5

Prioritising progression of Permanency plans for children where long-term fostering, adoption, special guardianship or reunification will secure the best permanent homes for them.

(Responsible Officer – Heidi Henderson, Head of Children in Care & Placement Resources)

What do we need to improve?

There is insufficient understanding, oversight and grip of permanence planning. Tracking systems are underdeveloped and do not help to effectively support timely decision-making for children on their journey to achieve permanence. This means that many children with a plan for long-term fostering are not being formally matched soon enough. This has delayed family finding and matching timeliness for a small number of children whose plan has been for adoption. The delay in introducing a special guardianship policy and support offer means that too many children remain subject to care orders.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Court Progression/Permanency Officer has been re-instated in post. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective tracking and progression of permanency plans for children in and out of court processes. As of February 2021, 74 sibling groups in court proceedings and 31% on target with 69% anticipated to breach the 26week target (currently being reviewed with Family Justice Board)
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A draft Permanency Strategy has been completed and is now out for consultation with Heads of Service. The Strategy will be shared with staff as part of the Improvement Plan Workshops during February and March. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We now have a structure around the area of permanence for practitioners and their managers to adhere to. Evaluated through staff feedback and staff questionnaire quarter 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new Special Guardianship Order 'No Detriment' decision has been signed off by the Lead Cabinet Member for Children. Children are now being identified where an SGO may be appropriate. The Policy will be produced by 20th January 2021. An SGO Panel is now taking place on a fortnightly basis, reviewing and tracking SGO plans for children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managers and staff are aware of the decision and are now progressing SGO plans for children where carers have already agreed to the Order. Further work has been undertaken by Service Managers to identify other children for whom an SGO might be an appropriate permanence option.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of Reference for Achieving Early Permanence (AE) Panel, which ensures operational leadership for all children in care will be produced by 15th January 2021. • Terms of Reference agreed and AE Panel initiated by February 2021 • There are robust arrangements to achieve permanency for existing cohort and any new children to be well embedded by Quarter 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity and robust approach to the monitoring and management of the permanence processes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving Permanency 3-day training offered to practitioners from February to July 2021 - 120 places. • Within Practice Week in December 2020, training was delivered to staff on Life Story work for practitioners and foster carers; Adoption at Heart provided training on partnership-working, roles and responsibilities. • IROs have a Development Day on 28th January 2021 where the Improvement Plan will be shared with an emphasis on their role in permanence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted staff receive regular training and management support to ensure that they have the skills and understanding to progress children's permanency in a timely manner.
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new TOR sets out the partnership working between Social Care, Adoption@Heart and Dudley Lighthouse Links. • New arrangements evidence early permanency planning of children from within 6 weeks of becoming looked after. • 90% target permanency planning at the 2nd LAC review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened process around early permanence planning through strengthened relationships with Adoption@Heart. • 90% target permanency planning at the 2nd LAC review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ December 2020 – 71.4% ○ January 2021 – [%] ○ February 2021 – [%] ○ March 2021 – [%] ○ April 2021 – [%]

OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 6

Improve the Quality and Impact of Education for children in care at key stage 4 and post 16 qualification and attainment.

(Responsible Officer – Andrew Wright, Head of Virtual School)

What do we need to improve?

There is a lack of a strategy to improve pupils' outcomes in key stage 4. As such, there are still too many pupils leaving secondary education without formal qualifications. Consequently, their ambitions for post-16 education are limited by their prior attainment. Not enough children and young people are successful in securing apprenticeships or moving on to university.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since December, we now have a Connexions Personal Advisor linked to the Leaving Care Team. We have delivered training to social workers to ensure that they provide aspirational support to children in care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people benefit from improved partnership working within the council to increase chances of acquiring apprenticeships. On 7th January 2021, 6 social workers attended introduction to 'e-PEP' training. 11 Practitioners attended 'Education, Health Care Plans and Aspirations' training on 8th December 2021.
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Education Attainment Strategy has been developed and implemented to improve all the outcomes of children in care; with a focus on pupils' outcomes in Key Stage 4 and post 16 qualifications. Target to increase the number of 19-25 care leavers in education, employment and training to 49.5% by Quarter 2 Within this strategy, we have developed a pathway programme that has targeted young people who have left school with no qualifications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 young people have been supported with targeted tuition in functional skills. 2 of these have secured a level 2 qualification in numeracy. The remaining 4 are continuing with their training. 41.7% as of care leavers are in education, training or employment as of February 2021. % of 16 & 18-year-old who are not in education, employment and training (NEET) is 2.7% (5 children in total).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeship and Tertiary education strategy implemented by March 2021 • The Virtual School (DVS) and YOS have been working together to ensure that young people who are in care and in custody and those at risk of offending, to ensure that they are supported in their education outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High number of children entering apprenticeships and tertiary education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Virtual School piloted a programme of children chairing their own PEP in September 2020. This was successful and the DVS is now planning to roll this out. • The Virtual School has also established connectivity with the Youth Offending Service (YOS), the Care Leavers Team and their networks to ensure all young people, including those in secure units and others over the age of 18, are offered the opportunity for a PEP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have been able to have more influence on their PEPs. • Children at risk of offending are supported in their education to reduce involvement in criminality and create more opportunities.
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the Dudley Education Strategy specifically referencing CiC and CLA developed by Education Services • Preparation for Adulthood Strategy, developed by SEND Improvement Programme launched by March 2021 and aligned with Childrens Social Care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System wide approach to Education • System wide approach to Preparation for Adulthood including education/training, housing, health and community inclusion

OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 7

The Case Transition points across all service areas to prioritise the needs of children and reduce unnecessary changes of workers

(Responsible Officer – Karen Graham, Interim Head of Children and Families)

What do we need to improve?

Ensure that transfers between teams are conducted according to best practice and in a timely manner so that this does not contribute to drift and delay in plans.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with children, young people, parents and carers to better understand their experiences through the system Set up feedback channels and mechanisms for ad hoc and regular feedback. First review of feedback to be undertaken and learning leading to improvement actions by March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better understanding of the experiences of the children Ability to target improvement for transition points Children feeling part of improving the Dudley system
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The revised Transfer Protocol will be signed off on 15th January 2021 with a plan to share with staff during the Improvement Plan workshops with practitioners in January/February. Café drop in updates on the Transfer Protocol will be offered by the Centre for Professional Practice. Heads of Service are using Liquid Logic to track timely transfer of children's cases by identifying those cases that remain in services for longer than they should do. Cases are moving more easily across the service areas. The Management Information Team are currently developing a performance report to track and evidence timely transfer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children will experience more timely and effective intervention because their plans are not being stalled by transfer delays.
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and implement improved protocols for communication to partner agencies involved with children by March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better cross partner communication at transfer points and case transition

OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 8

The pace of progression in the development of Non-familial Abuse and Exploitation

(Responsible Officer – Karen Graham, Interim Head of Children and Families)

What do we need to improve?

Children at risk from non-familial abuse or exploitation are not always supported well enough in order to reduce risk. The development of a hub model to improve children's experiences is beginning to help the local authority gain a better understanding of its local problem profile. However, services across the partnership are still disjointed. There is a lack of effective integration between children's services and the police in the response to children who go missing.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A phase 2 scope (Jan – April 2021) of the Exploitation Hub, has been completed. This sets out the staffing/structural changes in this period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and young people at risk of exploitation are receiving a more dedicated service, from appropriate staffing expertise.
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-day CSE training is now in place for practitioners and managers. This is a rolling course. Staff have been booked onto the DSPP Prevent training courses in January, with further courses to be identified by March 2021 National Referral Mechanism (NRM) training is being offered to practitioners in January. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children at risk of non-familial abuse and exploitation will receive coordinated support from consistent members of the Hub - this will have a positive impact on their safety and wellbeing. Staff will have a well-developed understanding of the complexities of exploitation, feel confident and well trained. Evidenced through staff questionnaire quarter 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have developed an Exploitation Dashboard and heatmap (mapping geographical areas). Return interviews implemented as standard routine for all missing to better understand the support needs by March 2021 Evaluate the Exploitation Hub to identify areas of pressure and improvements by March 2021 	<p>January 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 new cases through Exploitation Hub 38 children reported missing 38 children offered return interview 30 Return interviews undertaken

Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A draft Exploitation Strategy has been completed. The draft is out for consultation week commencing 4th January with the aim of having the Strategy signed off by the DSPP at the end of January. • A draft TOR for a new multi-agency high risk exploitation (CSE/CCE) panel has been written in draft by DCI Dez Lambert, Chair of the Exploitation Sub-Group. New Exploitation Meeting by February 2021. • Our partnership bid for support under the TCE Tackling Child Exploitation programme has been successful, which will provide 7 days of expert consultation into transition to adulthood for young people in January/February. • Between 1st and 14th February, the Police will lead a County Lines Intensification Week. During this week a pilot on one aspect of Police and Social Care joint working will be undertaken. The evaluation of this small pilot will be used to develop the service further. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people at risk of all forms of exploitation will receive a coordinated multi-agency response that reduces risk.
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OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 9

Improve the effectiveness of Supervision, Quality Assurance and Senior Management Oversight

(Responsible Officer – Nicola Hale, Head of Safeguarding, Practice & Quality Assurance)

What do we need to improve?

Social work supervision is variable in quality and impact. It is too frequently descriptive, task-focused, not reflective, lacking in depth and not directive enough to help social workers to prioritise their work.

The quality assurance and advocacy element that the independent reviewing officer service should bring to the oversight of children's care and progress of plans is largely ineffective in resolving delays.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to Resource Panel has been chaired by the Acting DCS or Service Director for Social Care since 1st December 2020. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is beginning to provide more rigor around children's placements and develop some consistency/understanding across the SLT.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Head of Safeguarding is leading on a piece of work to strengthen the senior leadership response to serious incidents, process into the DSPP for serious safeguarding cases and referral to the National Safeguarding Panel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All senior leaders are beginning to have a better understanding of processes around serious safeguarding incidences. Evidence will be through better, more timely responses and embedding the learning across Children's Services.
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The performance for case supervision within the current measure of one month was 45% in November. Undertake review of approach and measure of supervision by February 2021 Case Supervision to achieve 95% by April 2021 Case Supervision target profile: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70% February 2021 85% March 2021 95% April 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where children are at the highest levels of risk and need, practitioners will have more frequent case supervision. This will improve the timeliness of supervision.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Supervision Policy has been revised following consultation with managers and Practitioners Forum. This will be shared during the Improvement Plan workshops with practitioners and managers in January and February 2021. • We have revised the way we record and measure case supervision using the newly implemented Supervision form, meaning that we have more accurate performance data. • Supervision training for managers will form part of the Core Skills for Managers 5-day Program, which will run from February to May 2021. • Second practice week focusing on thematic audits scheduled for March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management oversight and supervision will be evidenced through scheduled supervision auditing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ February [%] ○ March [%] ○ April [%] ○ May [%]
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Quality Assurance and Learning Framework completed and shared with managers and IROs February 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to Quality Assurance activities, particularly audits / Independent Reviewing Officer Dispute Resolutions are timely and evidence improvement in the support and protection that children receive.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An audit of complaints was undertaken in November 2020. • Lessons from audit incorporated into staff training • Programme of training/complaints workshops to be completed by April 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in responding to complaints in a timely manner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quarter 2 – 71% ○ Quarter 3 – 75% ○ Quarter 4 – [%]
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within Liquid Logic, we will be able to evidence more clearly management responses to Dispute Resolution and closing the loop activity on audits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better tracking and reporting of management responses to children's plans where the dispute resolution protocol has been initiated. This includes rigorous tracking of the audit closing the loop activities.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of training needs/achieved for Restorative Practice • Partners commit to Restorative Practice from March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authority staff trained – [%] • Partners Trained – [%]
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caseloads evaluated based on area of services with target caseloads being: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Average per social worker - 18 	December 2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stat Neighbours – 18, • West Midlands – 17.9 • National – 17.4 • Average Caseload per Social worker – 24.1

Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define and agree approach for multi-agency audits, Multi Agency Case File Audits (MACFA), to share learning and challenge across partners by March 2021 • MACFA Days planned quarterly, minimum 5 cases • Learning and sharing events/engagement across partners scheduled each quarter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared learning leading to improvements in practice
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Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 17th March 2021

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Update on the Youth Offending Service Inspection Action Plan

Purpose

1. To inform the Committee of the progress made against the Youth Offending Service Action Plan and service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Members:-
 - Note the content of this report.
 - Comment on and provide support to aid the progress of the Action Plan and COVID-19 working arrangements.

Background

3. Members received a report in September 2019 on the findings from the Youth Offending Service Inspection. Arising from that report Members recommended that an update be provided in relation to progress against the Inspection Action Plan.
4. Dudley Youth Offending Service (YOS) was inspected by HMI Probation over a two-week period commencing 8th April 2019. This inspection was part of a national programme of inspection carried out by HMI Probation and was carried out under the new inspection framework, which was introduced in August 2018.
5. The inspection covered three broad areas of practice. These were
 - The arrangements for organisational delivery.
 - The quality of court work (those subject to a Court Order).

- The quality of out of court disposal work (those subject to a Community Resolution, Youth Caution or Conditional Caution).

6. Overall, the service was rated as “requiring improvement”.
7. The Inspectors found some significant areas of good practice particularly in relation to planning and delivery of work to support young people’s desistance from offending. However, inspectors went on to identify that Dudley’s rating was pulled down by the quality of work to keep young people safe. This, they say, has been the case with many other areas that they have inspected.
8. The inspectors found that education provisions for children known to the service was poor and has not merited the strategic attention it deserves.

The inspectors made the following five overarching strategic recommendations: -

9. The Chair of the YOS Board should:

Work with the Management Board members, in order that they understand their role, function, data and performance for the YOS, to enable them to advocate on behalf of children and young people known to the service.

10. The YOS Management Board should:

Ensure that children and young people who are known to the service receive their statutory entitlement to education and access to high quality education/training services, which are matched to their needs and interests.

11. Develop an Out of Court Protocol which clarifies the rationale for decision making and includes a performance management system to monitor the effectiveness of this area of work.
12. Strengthen the Partnerships use of performance reports and data analysis in order to influence future service delivery.

13. The YOS Manager should:

Enable staff to assess accurately the risk to a child’s safety and wellbeing and of risk of harm to others and to make sure that the risks are reviewed and managed effectively.

14. The remaining elements of the report drill down into the specific areas of practice that is either highlighted as good practice or areas for improvement.
15. There were two areas of specific concern which were rated as inadequate. Further analysis has taken place since receiving the report to understand the issues in

more depth. The first is regarding reviewing cases, particularly in relation to changes to the risk posed by or to a young person. Our investigation identified significant work being undertaken to safeguard and protect the young person, however this was not recorded in a manner required by the inspectors, and although plans had been updated, the assessments had not been adjusted as appropriate. The other area to highlight was in relation to assessments for Out of Court disposals. This was recognised as an area of weakness. As no national guidance had been given to YOS's we endeavoured to create our own, this was seen as unacceptable by the inspectorate.

16. Through the Action Plan, those above and other areas highlighted for improvement have now been addressed, a copy of the Action Plan was submitted and approved by the Inspectorate. The Youth Justice Board are required to monitor its implementation and locally the responsibility sits with the YOS Management Board.
17. Unfortunately, this rating remains with the service until the next inspection which will be 2 to 3 years in the future

Progress against the Action Plan

18. The following areas have been implemented since the last Children's Services Scrutiny Committee;
 - The YOS Plan for 2019/2020 was submitted to and approved by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) which contained the relevant Inspection Action Plan.
 - The implementation of the Health Review is now being implemented with the Lead Officer from Dudley Integrated Health and Care NHS Trust (formerly CCG)
 - Staff training has taken place with an emphasis on desistance, safeguarding and recording.
 - The Contextual Safeguarding Group continues to meet as a new sub-group of the Safeguarding People's Board arrangements and further developments are taking place to inform future practice.
 - A comprehensive data set to inform the YOS Board on progress against performance was developed. This is also utilised in the bi-monthly performance challenge.
 - Robust arrangements are now in place for the scrutiny of issues relating to young people who are not in education/training or employment.
 - A review of YOS policies and procedures took place and has a rolling programme.
 - An audit of cases against the new National Standards took place, which demonstrates good practice against these standards.
 - Disproportionality is now considered at each performance challenge.
 - Links have been made with the development of the Liquid Logic Social Care System which went live in November 2020.
 - Audit cycles for cases are now embedded in practice.



- Working arrangements have been consulted upon and developed in partnership with the Police with sign off.
- An Assessment Framework was developed for out of court work and is now embedded.

COVID-19 and Dudley's Youth Offending Service

19. The Youth Offending Service (YOS) has adapted its way of working from a traditional "offender management" approach to one that puts the child very much at the forefront of every aspect of service delivery. This has resulted in the service seeing every young person we engage with as a "Child First, Offender Second". Greater emphasis has been placed upon understanding the real lived experience of children, and the adverse childhood experiences that many of them would have encountered.
20. This has led to practitioners adopting a relationship-based approach with a view to strengthening factors for desistance in the ultimate hope that this approach will enable children to remain free of engaging in anti-social and criminal activity.
21. Dudley's YOS have also over the past year developed closer and stronger ties with statutory partners such as Children's Social Care, resulting in a significant proportion of our intervention being carried out with young people in a prevention and diversion capacity, in conjunction with Social Workers from across the Borough.
22. Dudley's YOS also continues to carry out our specialist function, more recently related to addressing Child Criminal Exploitation, which we are doing by working closely with the newly formed Contextual Safeguarding Hub.
23. Since the introduction of the first lockdown in March 2020, the Youth Offending Service has had to learn how to adapt its work practices in order to continue to provide a service during this time.
24. The Service transferred a number of areas of work through an IT platform via Zoom, Teams or WhatsApp. This included Referral Order Panels, Out of Court Disposal Panel Meetings and Prevention and Diversion meetings. The YOS engaged with other agencies and professionals, again through this medium.
25. This included the courts, which had closed completely and the Secure Estate. With the courts not operating as normal, a back log in sentencing was created, which is still being dealt with at the moment. The Secure Estate stopped families and professionals visiting the units with engagement via social media platforms.
26. All open cases went through a rigorous analysis and was rated red, amber or green, dependant on the offence or risk posed. Those rated as red continued to receive time limited face to face contact.



27. Groupwork facilities were still available online, these included the Knife Crime Programme, Street Violence Programme, Street Doctors and the Drive Alive Programme. We also provided Victim Support packs, coupled with an online victim feedback questionnaire.
28. Key partnership work continued to be delivered via online activity for the preparation of College or employment, health and wellbeing programmes and literacy and numeracy.
29. Reparation which is normally carried out directly with a victim or within the community was not possible, so therefore the Reparation Co-ordinator created packages of activities to be carried out at home with the young people and their families. As the initial COVID-19 lockdown eased, and we were allowed to meet up in open spaces, practitioners took this opportunity to work with young people creatively in these open spaces.
30. Despite the unusual circumstances the YOS has been performing well against two of the three National Indicators of reducing First Time Entrants and Reducing Re-offending. There is a slight increase in the number of young people in custody however, the numbers are small and therefore, care should be taken when interpreting the information. However, this is still a reduction on the previous annual comparator.

YOS Data - April to September 2020

31. First Time Entrants (FTE) (January-2019 to December-2019 – rates of FTE per 100,000)

When the FTE rate per 100,000 is examined, Dudley had a higher rate (203) than the Youth Offending Team (YOT) Family average (154), but lower than the national (204) and West Midlands (268) averages.

When compared with the previous year's data, Dudley was at 260 FTE and is now at 203 FTE per 100,000.

32. Re-offending (rates listed as average number of offences)

January-2018 to December 2018 (year): Dudley's performance (2.45) was better than the YOT Family average (4.2), the national average (3.93) and the West Midlands average (3.84).

October-2018 to December 2018 (quarter): Dudley's performance (2.25) was better than the YOT Family average (3.95), the national average (3.89) and the West Midlands average (3.5).

33. Use of Custody (rates per 1000 of the age 10-17 population)



For the period October 2019-September 2020: Dudley (0.29) had a higher rate than the YOT Family average (0.13), the England & Wales (0.1) average and the West Midlands average (0.16).

Finance

34. There are no financial implications arising as a result of this report.

Law

35. Youth Offending Teams are a statutory multi-agency service required by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
36. The Youth Justice Board are required to monitor the effectiveness of the Youth Justice system as set out in Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
37. HM Chief Inspector of Probation's responsibilities are set out in Section 7 of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, as amended by the Offender Management Act 2007, section 12(3)(a). This requires the chief inspector to inspect (section 1) and report to the Secretary of State (section 3) on the arrangements for the provision of probation services.
38. Under Section 7(6) of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, HM Chief Inspector of Probation is also conferred to inspect and report on Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), established under section 39 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and bodies acting on their behalf.

Equality Impact

39. The Youth Offending Service works with young people that are experiencing a range of social, personal and health challenges. The multi-disciplinary makeup of the team aims to reduce these inequalities through the delivery of services aimed at addressing these issues.
40. This report does not conflict with the Council's Policy on equality. Services are provided in line with the requirements of the Equalities act 2010 and seek to limit the potential impact of contact with the criminal justice system.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

41. There are no issues arising from this report as previous prevention pathways were developed prior to the inspection.

Commercial/Procurement

42. There are no commercial or procurement issues arising from this report.



Health, Wellbeing and Safety

43. Dudley Youth Offending Service is a statutory multi-agency service with staff from the Local Authority, Police, Probation and Health. The aim of the Youth Justice system is to prevent offending by children and young people.
44. The service achieves this by carrying out an in-depth assessment of all young people referred, this assessment seeks to identify the propensity of the young person to offend, the risk that the young person may pose to others, to themselves, or the risk others may pose to them.
45. The assessment also indicates the circumstance in which a young person may be unable to engage appropriately in the community as a consequence of:
 - Substance misuse
 - Mental Health
 - Unemployment
 - Homelessness
 - Lack of education
46. The very nature of the service being multi-disciplinary seeks to address these issues.
47. Whilst the 2019 inspection highlighted good evidence of work being undertaken by the service to remove some of these barriers, greater focus needed to be given to the assessment of risk and protection of and/or the young person and victims. This factor has now been addressed.



Catherine Driscoll
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Scott Jones, Head of Family Solutions
Telephone: 01384 813725
Email: scott.x.jones@dudley.gov.uk



Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - 17th March 2021

Report of the Director of Children Services

Unregulated Provision in Dudley

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide a summary and background to children's unregulated provision in Dudley. The report will provide some national context as well as information at a local level, highlighting measures taken to raise standards for young people in Dudley.

Recommendations

2. To seek assurance from the Committee that children's services are making progress within the area of unregulated placements and supported accommodation and that they continue to support our most vulnerable children and young people.

Background

Definitions

3. 'Unregulated provision' is allowed in law. This is when children (usually over the age of 16) need support to live independently rather than needing full-time care.
4. The Children's Commissioner England, drew attention to the matter after learning that some young people live in unsuitable accommodation, including caravans, boats, hotels, shared accommodation and rooms, where their health, welfare and attainment suffered.
5. Ofsted does not regulate independent living provisions for young people and it falls to the Local Authority to ensure that these placements, for example semi-independent placements like the YMCA, meet young people's needs and are safe.
6. Semi-independent provisions should be used as a steppingstone to independence, and only ever when it's in a young person's best interests. For many children, it's the right choice. Some young people do not want to live with foster parents or live in a children's home. For some unaccompanied asylum-seeking children this can be the right option too, but not for all (Ofsted, December 2019).

7. Unregulated provision can often be confused with unregistered provision, the definition of which is below.

Unregistered provision is when a child who is being provided with some form of 'care' is living somewhere that is not registered with Ofsted. This is illegal. Once a provider delivers a care element as well as accommodation, they must register as a children's home. It's an offence not to.

8. 'Care' is not defined in law. It is about a child's vulnerability and the level of help that they need. If a child does need care, then the service they're getting is very likely to need registration as a children's home. Certainly, if children are under constant supervision then this is likely to be 'care'. It does not matter how long the child lives there for. There is a myth that if you only provide care for 28 days you do not need to register, which is not true (Ofsted, July 2019)

National Picture

9. The number of children coming into care is rising year on year. According to the Fostering Network, in May 2019, there were at least 6,800 fostering placements needed to meet local authority needs. This number has since increased.
10. In the spring/summer 2020, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council contributed to a consultation with the Department for Education (DfE).
11. The Martin Narey 'Foster Care in England Report' 2018 identified two main reasons for shortages:
 - a. Geography
 - b. Level of need that children are presenting means that carers do not have the skills to meet the needs and more than one child cannot be successfully matched to a placement. Children's Homes too struggle to meet the complex needs and many providers are also being more selective about which children they take.
12. Unregulated supported accommodation provision often makes up for the shortfall in placements. A recent BBC report highlighted that 5,000 children in care in England are living in accommodation that is unregulated, this is up 70 percent from ten years ago. Some young people are moving to unregulated provision, as Local Authorities are being left with no alternative options. a wide Ofsted and Parliament documented and publicised a wide range of issues focusing on the quality of providers for supported accommodation and providers operating illegally as unregistered children's homes.
13. The landmark Southwark Judgement further increased the number of young people aged 16 to 17 requesting supported accommodation or care.
14. Due to the lack of suitable and available/affordable placements for children, supported accommodation providers are stepping into this void by effectively providing unregistered placements. Setting up a registered children's home can cost in excess of £1M due to the regulations of what is required by

Ofsted. Unregistered provision, whilst risking closure, are operating without having to meet the same robust requirements and standards that an Ofsted regulated provision would expect.

Local Picture

15. Table 1 shows the number of Children Looked After accommodated within Semi-supported placements on 10th January 2021. The number of young people in supported accommodation is 19. There is one young person over the age of 18, which is not reflected in the table below.

Table 1: Dudley Children and Young People in Supported Accommodation

Placement Type	Age	Female	Male	Total
Semi-Independent	16.6	1	0	1
Semi-Independent	17+	9	8	17
Total				18

16. Dudley currently have 638 looked after children (data as at 10th January 2021). The percentage of young people accommodated into semi-supported accommodation is 2.82%.
17. Dudley does not have any children under the age of 16 in semi-independent accommodation. This is a more positive picture for Dudley than many other Local Authorities regionally and nationally, where there is wider use of placing children under the age of 16 or children not of school leaving age in Supported Accommodation.
18. There are currently 12 Independent providers operating in the Borough in addition to YMCA, CHADD and Registered Social Landlords. They are difficult to track, but local authorities share information as much as possible

Safety and Leadership Oversight in Dudley

Additional Resource Panel (ARP)

19. Each week ARP monitors and tracks any child under 16 placed in supported accommodation. Currently there are no children in this cohort.
20. The Placements Team are working hard to find suitable placement options for all of our children and young people to avoid any inappropriate use of supported accommodation for this purpose.
21. Young people in high cost placements are also monitored and tracked to check progress and step down and move-on plans. Children in supported accommodation are discussed at the monthly Accommodation Panel, which looks at all children in supported accommodation or who require this type of provision.

22. Any emergency request for supported accommodation required outside of ARP is signed off by Head of Service for Children in Care and Placement Resources.

Supported Accommodation Framework

23. The West Midlands Supported Accommodation Framework is in the process of being retendered with the expectation that a new framework will be in place by July 2021. The framework covers all 14 West Midlands Local Authorities and is led by Staffordshire County Council. Reflecting the significant growth that has taken place in the market since the framework was last renewed, significant resource has been dedicated to the framework development to enable maximum assurance around the quality of providers appointed. This has included partnership working with multi-agency partners including West Midlands and West Mercia Police.

Dudley Commissioning– Supported Accommodation

24. In addition to the Regional Framework providers, Dudley Borough has provision for accommodation - from CHADD Foyer, YMCA Supported Lodgings, and YMCA Highland Road. Since 2017, along with a small number of floating support providers (voluntary sector and Registered Social Landlords), CHADD and YMCA have formed part of a “Virtual Alliance”. Co-ordinated by a Children’s Commissioning Officer the partnership approach has encompassed significant joint working with commissioned providers, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council’s (DMBC) Housing and Care Leavers teams. Initial input was also provided by Dudley CVS. Most importantly the model also encompasses co-production with young people via a range of mechanism including Dudley Youth Council, Dudley Young Commissioners, Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum.
25. The Alliance has a formal Terms of Reference which were implemented in January 2019 and has formal chairing arrangements (Chair currently held by Chief Executive of Churches Housing Association Dudley and District - CHADD) provider. Funding was also secured via DMBC’s Voluntary Sector Innovation Fund to pilot an Alliance Co-ordinator post to assist the process of providers working seamlessly as part of an integrated model.
26. The development of the Virtual Alliance has helped to establish a number of improvements including:
- Better oversight, understanding and coordination of provision.
 - Improved partnership working between both providers and DMBC directorates – young people receiving support from the most appropriate organisation.
 - Young people have support which is better planned around their individual needs, is flexible and allows them to engage with a number of agencies, but without having to tell their story several times. There is a single support plan owned by the young person.
 - Improved understanding of the complexities that a young person may experience once they turn 18, and a mechanism for effective dialogue around how these needs can be met through and post transition.

- Significant reduction in the number of young people being evicted through establishing an Intervention Panel process, that involves collaborative discussions with multi-agency partners and the young person to address concerns at an early stage.
 - Providers now working more flexibly delivering support during evenings and weekends.
 - Establishing a more flexible operating model in terms of applications to/for DMBC Housing, and changes in housing procedures that support more timely access and security of tenure.
 - Floating support hours being used to provide wrap-around to supported accommodation placements commissioned via the West Midlands framework and/or spot purchasing, thereby reducing costs incurred on Children's Services placements budget.
 - Enhanced co-operation between members of the Virtual Alliance has reduced competition for funding and enhanced opportunities to access external funding.
27. There is an aspiration and strong commitment from all partners to continue to build the Virtual Alliance, which has already received national recognition as a finalist in the Children and Young People Awards, (outcome still pending due to postponement as a result of Covid 19). In addition to the Virtual Alliance, YMCA as part of their developmental work in the borough have established more accommodation through Dudley Housing as part of their Affordable Housing project, and works with the authority to look at developing and enhancing the accommodation for young people.
28. CHADD are exploring opportunities to develop and enhance their offer of accommodation within the Borough. The Chief Executive of CHADD has close working relationships with Housing and Commissioning in terms of exploring and seeking opportunities for development.
29. Gaps in provision and areas for development have been identified through existing work streams, this will include the exploration of external funding opportunities with Home England's in relation to developing the accommodation portfolio going forward based on needs identified, below:
- Young parents' provision.
 - Shared accommodation for young people that are not quite ready for independent living.
 - Affordable accommodation (single accommodation) for young people.
 - Supported Accommodation.
30. We currently have a mixed provision. Almost 50% of our provision is with a commissioned provider that is part of our supported accommodation alliance, which provides good support to our young people and is cost effective in comparison to other supported accommodation providers.
31. Accommodation can be sourced through Dudley's own Housing department for young people aged 16 and 17. This gives Dudley more control in relation to both the cost and quality of provision. It also means more consistency for our young people as they can take on the tenancy for that property in their own right once they reach 18 and are eligible to access housing benefit

(where required). For any young person placed in DMBC Housing, additional support can be provided through the floating support contracts that form part of the Virtual Alliance model.

Commissioning and the Role of the Quality and Safety Officer

32. The Children's Quality and Safety Officer provides a crucial link with various professionals and agencies to gather regular intelligence through a range of forums. This includes Safer Places and Rogue Landlords Meetings. These forums have been particularly effective in building intelligence on new providers that have established themselves in Borough without notifying Children's Services or Commissioning, and are hosting young people placed by other local authorities. Through these forums joint working with police and colleagues in Planning and Housing (e.g. Anti-social behaviour Officer) has been particularly evident, with numerous recent examples of effective partnership meetings with unregulated providers to raise and address concerns.
33. The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) shares information placements made by other Local Authorities within Dudley. All placing authorities also have a responsibility to inform other local authorities when placing a child in their area.
34. The Children's Quality and Safety Officer based within the Integrated Commissioning Hub regularly visits, monitors and quality assures supported accommodation provision, both in and out of the Borough. This provides a crucial link for both the Placements Service and Social workers when making decisions about safe accommodation for young people. Where areas of concern or areas for improvement are identified, the provider is issued with a detailed action plan and is supported to respond to and evidence compliance with plan as soon as possible. During the Covid 19 pandemic when physical visits have been more challenging, processes have been adapted to ensure rigorous 'virtual' quality assurance continues.
35. Social workers are required to undertake statutory visits to children, see their accommodation and see their bedrooms. Independent Reviewing Officers also have a pivotal role in reviewing and monitoring arrangements of young people in supported accommodation.
36. The Quality and Safety Officer attends the West Midlands Quality Assurance Group, which covers the 14 local authorities, intelligence is shared within this forum about the quality of different providers. Each local authority has responsibility for ensuring poor providers are not used and that concerns are flagged on the Placements Portal with warnings.
37. Dudley receives daily notifications of provisions and providers where a warning has been placed on the Placement Portal and Ofsted by a local authority. Dudley's Placements Team and Commissioning will match any offer against the Portal to ensure that placements are safe.

Placements Business Case

38. The Placements Service business case to develop the team has been agreed by Children's services. Approximately £20 m of spend goes through the team each year and currently supported accommodation is projected at £1.8M. The team have been under resourced and underperforming. However, since November 2020, the team has gained an experienced and permanent full-time senior and two experienced and permanent full-time placement officers. The business case also secured for the team its own business support officer. A further business case was made in November 2020 for a permanent Team Manager for the Placements Team, which was agreed, and interviews took place in early January 2021.
39. The new permanent establishment will offer stability and will ensure the team is fit for purpose and is more able to find and source local provision that meets the needs of our children. This should reduce the reliance on supported accommodation, where it isn't needed, as well as make sure it is of good quality and value for money when it is required.

Finance

40. There is a great deal of variance between the cheapest supported accommodation and the most expensive at £4,320.00 per week (as at November 2020). This highlights the range of support levels, where a young person can live more independently with floating support, through to a placement, where a young person may require more intensive support and staffing. Our most expensive placements are usually for young people who are involved in gangs and/or county lines and are open to the Youth Offending Service. Costs are high as young people can often pose a risk to themselves and others and staffing can sometimes be on a 2:1 basis. Many children's homes will not accommodate young people who present these risks due to the safety of other children living there.

Table 2: Supported Accommodation Costs

Cost Type	Spend
Average Weekly Cost	£1,351.00
Current Annual Cost	£1,823,100

Children's social care are reviewing with both finance and the placements team all children's supported accommodation placements, and identifying any potential reduction against the existing overspend and for the future. In the period between October and November 2020, projections have reduced by £70k due to this work.

Law

41. The Law does currently allow for unregulated provision.

Equality Impact

42. Care Experienced Young People face discrimination and marginalisation by virtue of having grown up in care. Young People do not always have the option for cultural matches to available placements, thus links to their identity, ethnicity, race and culture can get lost. 22% of Dudley's care leavers are from black, Asian and other ethnic minority groups. 9 young people are Asylum seeking and were unaccompanied minors.
43. Social workers and Young Person Advisors assess disability, sex, gender, gender identity, race, religion and belief systems, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity as part of Pathway Needs assessments that are updated every six months. The aim is to develop independence and signpost to services and support as required.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

44. There are no Human Resources or Organisational Development implications arising from the report

Commercial/Procurement

45. There are no commercial or procurement implications to be considered

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

46. The use of unregulated provision does have links to the health and safety of children and young people. As highlighted in the report the council is working hard to ensure a range of effective commissioning and monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure our children in Dudley have good standards of accommodation in which to live. Regular reviews and the desire to strive for improvements in Dudley, show the Council's aspirations and evidence good practice both locally and nationally



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Catherine Driscoll
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Wendi Grizzle
Telephone: 01384 813277
Email: wendi.grizzle@dudley.gov.uk

List of Background Papers

Foster Care in England Report (2018) Sir Martin Neary and Mark Owers (2018)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/679320/Foster_Care_in_England_Review.pdf

State of the Nation's Foster Care Report, Kate Lawson and Robert Cann (2019)
<https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/policy-practice/research/state-nations-foster-care-2019>

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – Wednesday 17th March 2021

Report of the Lead for Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report 2020/21

Purpose

1. To consider the annual overview and scrutiny report for 2020/21.

Recommendations

2. That the Committee receive and comment on the attached draft annual report.
3. That the Lead for Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer), following consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, be authorised to make any necessary amendments to update the annual report prior to its submission to the Council.
4. That the Committee identify any items that need to be rolled-forward for inclusion in the draft Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2021/22.

Background

5. The Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules, as set out in the Council's [Constitution](#), require that an annual overview and scrutiny report is submitted to the Council.
6. The Committee's draft annual report for 2020/21 is attached as an Appendix. Minutes and outcomes of all Scrutiny Committee meetings can be accessed online via the [Committee Management Information System](#). Subject to any amendments, the Annual Report will be presented to the Council on 19th April 2021.
7. The Council has recognised the importance of retaining an annual review and report process. This is to ensure that the arrangements continue to align themselves to the needs of the Council and that the scrutiny arrangements remain adaptable and flexible to changes in circumstances.

Draft Annual Scrutiny Programme 2021/22

8. Work to develop the Annual Scrutiny Programme at this stage needs to allow for flexibility given any potential changes arising from the annual meeting of the Council. All Scrutiny Committee Chairs/Vice-Chairs, Officers and others will be invited to contribute to the development of the Annual Scrutiny Programme.
9. Arising from the annual report, the views of the Committee are invited on any items that need to be 'rolled forward' to the next municipal year or any items they would like to suggest at this stage for inclusion in the draft Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2021/22.
10. Members will be aware that it is being proposed that the following Scrutiny Committees be constituted by the Council for the 2021/22 municipal year:
 - Future Council Scrutiny Committee
 - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
 - Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee
 - Housing and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee
11. A meeting of the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs is being provisionally scheduled for 27th May 2021 to discuss the Annual Scrutiny Programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.

Finance

12. The costs of operating the Council's scrutiny arrangements are being contained within existing budgetary allocations.

Law

13. Scrutiny Committees are established in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 and the requirements of the Council's Constitution, which was adopted under the Local Government Act 2000, subsequent legislation and associated Regulations and Guidance.
14. Scrutiny powers relating to health are included in the Health and Social Care Acts 2001 and 2012, and associated Regulations and statutory guidance. The Police and Justice Act 2006 gives the Council powers to scrutinise the work of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enables local authorities to scrutinise other partners. Much of this legislation is consolidated in the Localism Act 2011.

Equality Impact

15. Provision exists within the scrutiny arrangements for overview and scrutiny to be undertaken of the Council's policies on equality and diversity.



Human Resources/Organisational Development

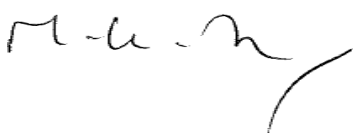
16. Overview and Scrutiny work is primarily administered within the resources available to the Democratic Services Team with support from Directorates and other Officers as required. Any proposals to develop the Council's overview and scrutiny functions have to be set in the context of the resources available and the organisational capacity to support scrutiny work.

Commercial/Procurement

17. This report has no impact on the Council's potential to commercially trade. Individual items included in the Annual Scrutiny Programme may have commercial implications, which will be reported to the relevant Scrutiny Committee.

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

18. Reports to Scrutiny Committees will consider the impact on the health, wellbeing and safety of the Borough's citizens. This is consistent with building stronger, safer and more resilient communities in line with the Dudley Vision and to protect our residents' physical, and emotional health for the future.



Mohammed Farooq
Lead for Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Contact Officer: Kim Buckle
Telephone: 01384 815238
Email: kim.buckle@dudley.gov.uk

Appendix

Draft Annual Report 2020/21

List of Background Documents

[The Council's Constitution](#) – Article 6 and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules

Scrutiny Reports and Minutes available on the [Committee Management Information System](#)



**Chair -
Councillor
Anne Millward**

Annual report of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

2020/21 Municipal Year



**Vice-Chair -
Councillor
Parmjit Sahota**

Our role involves the scrutiny of matters relating to Children's Services in the Directorate of Children's Services and the Cabinet portfolios of appropriate Cabinet Member(s).

Children's Services COVID-19 Updates

Throughout this Municipal Year Members have considered the impact on and responses to COVID-19 within Children's Services. These verbal updates have provided detailed information on critical services being maintained during the pandemic, including the monitored visits undertaken to determine which children needed to remain in school following the first lockdown.

There had been the provision of devices and ICT equipment to children in care in order that they could maintain learning during lockdown, and the summer school provision that was available to children in care was presented to Members.

Following the ease in restrictions Children's Services had supported children and young people to return to school.

An Improvement Plan was endorsed in relation to Children's Social Care and improvement work is continuing.

An Ofsted focused visit took place in December 2020 when Ofsted evaluated the experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account the Covid-19 context, and how well children and young people were helped and protected.

Outcomes:

- The Committee continued to scrutinise and monitor the services provided by Children's Services, critical and otherwise together with improvements within Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and the Youth Offending Services.
- Members requested the Interim Director of Children's Services to provide the analysis of the types of referrals into the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.

Children's Services Complaints, Comments and Compliments Annual Report 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.

The Committee considered this report which made particular reference to statutory and corporate complaints and noted that the data also now included SEND Services.

Members raised concerns in relation to response times to complaints and requested that these be addressed together with the reasons for the late responses.

Outcome:

- The Interim Director of Children's Services was requested to devise an Action Plan regarding the concerns raised by Members in relation to the report submitted, with that Action Plan to be shared with Members.

Children's Services Complaints: Response Times Action Plan

The actions taken, and processes that had been put into place to improve complaint response times within Children's Services was presented to Members, together with a referral and follow up Action Plan.

Outcomes:

- The revised processes and actions put in place to improve complaint response times was endorsed by the Committee.
- The Acting Director of Children's Services was requested to submit regular updates in relation to complaint response times to future meetings.

Early Years Transformation Academy in Dudley

Members considered a report on the partnership progress through the Early Years Transformation Academy, and the 'critical first 1001 days vision' and Dudley's Implementation Plan, to support transformation of the maternity and early years system, and contribution to maternity and early years outcomes.

Outcomes:

- That the issue of vaping and the effect on unborn children be scrutinised once data becomes available.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

A report providing Members with a position statement around EHE in the Authority area up to July 2020 was considered by the Committee, when it was confirmed that the Authority had a statutory responsibility to ensure that all children of school age received an education.

It was accepted that EHE had increased due to the pandemic, with some parents feeling anxious in relation to their children returning to school, however this had become a national problem.

Outcomes:

- Members acknowledged that the full review of EHE services was being carried out to ensure that support was provided appropriately, including a review of the existing EHE staffing levels, and the relationship between

EHE support and other Education, SEND, Public Health, Connexions, Children Missing Education and Social Care Services.

- The Acting Director of Children's Services agreed to prepare a letter for the signature of the Chair, to the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson MP, highlighting the grave concerns of the Committee in relation to the increasing numbers of those applying to home educate their children, and that the area of EHE was largely unregulated.

Summer Provision and September school update

Members considered the overview of the summer provision in Dudley; an analysis of secondary and college provision; an analysis of Virtual School events and of the Dudley Performing Arts (DPA) events, together with a summary of the Local Authority's support for schools in September 2020.

Outcome:

- That Special Schools and their provisions be carried forward as an item for Scrutiny with respect to the support for schools in September 2020.

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020

A report that provided assurances of the effective functioning of the Safeguarding and Review Service, that had operational line management of Independent Reviewing Officers for children subject to Child Protection Plans, and effective care planning for Children in Care was considered by Members.

Outcome:

- Members requested that as part of the children and young people's reviews, the IRO's be requested, by the Service Director of Children's Social Care, to consult with children and young people in order to capture the voice of the child and improve and develop services.

Fostering and Permanence Service Update

Members considered a report in relation to Dudley's Fostering and Permanence Service, and it was noted that adoption for children was located within a Regional Adoption Agency, Adoption@Heart and details of the different placement settings for 635 children in care in Dudley were provided to Members.

Outcomes:

- Further updates in relation to Dudley's Fostering and Permanence Services would be submitted to future meetings.
- The Acting Director of Children's Services was requested to provide clarification in relation to the number of children who were in fostering to adopt settings, for fostering purposes only or were to be adopted.

Children in Care and Care Leaver Service – Care Leavers Update Report

The scope and detail in relation to Dudley Care Leavers, together with the Care Leavers Strategy and the means of keeping in contact with Care Leavers during the pandemic was considered by Members.

Outcomes:

- Members requested that the report be submitted to a meeting of the Children's Corporate Parenting Board.
- The Acting Director of Children's Services was requested to: -
 - Refer the suggestion to encourage those who were awarded contracts with the Local Authority, to offer apprenticeships to care leavers, and the possibility of consulting with Housing colleagues in order to achieve that to the Children's Corporate Parenting Board.
 - Provide Members with data in terms of percentages of care leavers attending further education or obtaining employment, and the outcomes for those young people.
 - Provide Members with details of Young People's Advisors
 - Consider the possibility of utilising the Council's former Children's Home in Brierley Hill for a base for young people to meet their Young People's Advisors.
 - Provide Members with a breakdown of the number of females and males not in education, employment or training.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

A joint report of the Chief Executive, Chief Officer Finance and Legal Services and Acting Director of Children's Services was considered with the emphasis on proposals relevant to the Committee's Terms of Reference, specifically Children's Services.

Outcome:

- The Acting Director of Children's Services was requested to provide further information to Members relating to the home to school transport pressures, and how the budget savings in relation to the review of the home to school transport for SEND children, the managed step down from external residential placements and the movement of external placements into internal residential placements were to be achieved.

Education Report

Members considered a report on the Education Strategy, Interim Ofsted Visits, Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), the Alternative Provision Strategy, Illegal off-rolling and the Dudley Virtual School.

Outcomes:

- The Head of Education Outcomes and Inclusion was requested to provide Members with the data in relation to the number of children attending

mainstream school with SEND.

- The Acting Director of Children's Services was requested to raise the issue of completing the Equality Impact Assessments within reports accurately in the future.

Other Items Considered by the Scrutiny Committee in the 2020/21 Municipal Year

Scrutiny Development Working Group

- Early Years Transformation Academy

Items to be Considered by the Scrutiny Committee at the meeting on 17th March 2021

- Dudley Safeguarding Children Partnership Group Annual Report 2019/2021
- Children's Services Improvement Plan
- Update on the Youth Offending Service Inspection Plan
- Unregulated Provision in Dudley

Items for inclusion in the Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2020/21 are listed below: -

Items suggested for inclusion in the work programme for 2021/22: -

- Early Years Transformation Academy
- School Readiness
- Children's Services Verbal Updates
- Children's Services Complaints, Comments and Compliments Annual Report 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.
- The Effect of Vaping on Unborn Children
- Elective Home Education
- Special Schools and their Provision with respect to Support for Schools
- Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021
- Fostering and Permanency Services
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Education Report