

**Meeting date:** 10 March 2021  
**Report to:** Children's Services, Education and Skills  
Scrutiny Board



**Subject/report title:** Update on Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

**Report from:** David Peplow, Independent Scrutineer  
Solihull Local Safeguarding Children Partnership

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**Wards affected:**

- All Wards |  Bickenhill |  Blythe |  Castle Bromwich |  Chelmsley Wood |  
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath |  Elmdon |  Kingshurst/Fordbridge |  Knowle |  
 Lyndon |  Meriden |  Olton |  Shirley East |  Shirley South |  
 Shirley West |  Silhill |  Smith's Wood |  St Alphege

**Public/private report:** Public

**Exempt by virtue of paragraph:** N/A

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**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide an update on the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership in Solihull

**2. Decision(s) recommended**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the CSESSB:  
(i) Notes the update on progress since the last report received in March 2020

**3. Matters for Consideration**

- 3.1 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 removed the statutory requirement for areas to have Local Safeguarding Children Boards and replaced them with a requirement for the three Safeguarding Partners (local authority, chief officer for police and the local clinical commissioning group for the area) to make arrangements to safeguard children and promote their welfare within their local area. They were to fulfil this function by working with other named 'relevant' agencies, all of whom would have a duty to co-operate. Solihull was one of a small number of areas across England who worked with the Department for Education as an 'early adopter'. Solihull published and started to implement its new arrangements on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019, well ahead of the

date set by the DfE, and these are located at:

[https://solihullscp.co.uk/media/upload/fck/file/1\\_Solihull - New Arrangements.PDF](https://solihullscp.co.uk/media/upload/fck/file/1_Solihull_-_New_Arrangements.PDF)

- 3.2 As the country went into lockdown in March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic it became necessary for the LSCP to revise its ways of working. There were some initial challenges during the first few months in the absence of a virtual platform to hold multi-agency meetings, but this was resolved by June and since then the majority of scheduled meetings have taken place as planned using Webex or MSTeams platforms. This period coincided with the need for partner agencies to urgently review their operational priorities and delivery models in response to the pandemic and for some agencies their priorities had to shift understandably for a short time to ensuring that services continued to be delivered on the frontline.
- 3.3 Members will be aware of reports from bodies such as the Children's Commissioner, Ofsted, the Children's Society and others that, sadly, the number of children killed or seriously injured during the first six months of the pandemic increased by more than 25% on the previous year. Since June 2020 there have been a number of notifiable serious incidents where children have been seriously harmed or have died in Solihull. The three Safeguarding Partners have a statutory responsibility to give consideration in each case to whether the commissioning of a local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) is the appropriate response to identify learning and improve multi-agency safeguarding practice.

In order to make this decision the LSCP co-ordinates a Rapid Review in accordance with statutory guidance to gather information very quickly from partner agencies and to consider whether a CSPR is required. In Solihull a CSPR Panel has now been established to fulfil this function, chaired by the LSCP representative for Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group, and it reports directly into the LSCP Executive Group. The decision has been taken to commission one local Child Safeguarding Practice Review from the six Rapid Reviews completed between June 2020 – January 2021 and this is due to be completed in June 2021. The decision in each case is endorsed by the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel following review of the information provided by the LSCP. This statutory function has needed to be prioritised and requires significant resource from both the partner agencies involved in each incident and the LSCP Business Support.

- 3.4 During the last year the Executive Group has received assurance from key partner agencies that frontline services have continued to operate and that the most vulnerable children are identified and have been monitored throughout the lockdowns with evidence of strong joint working between schools and children's social work services where children have been identified as at risk. Not unsurprisingly, it has been reported that overall referral rates to children's social work services are down this year, but the number of child protection referrals which have required investigation have significantly increased mirroring the national picture. The Rapid Reviews undertaken in Solihull have highlighted the impact for some children (not previously identified as being at risk of significant harm) of the reduction in face to face contact with professionals due to changes in home visiting policies and school closures which, along with other pressures for individual families, has increased their vulnerability to serious harm. The National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel is currently undertaking a review of serious incidents which have involved babies under one year having identified this as a theme from its collation of national data during the early part of the pandemic.

- 3.5 Some aspects of LSCP core business have been impacted upon during this business cycle due to the competing demands which have come with the pandemic. The Peer Review recommendations from 2019 referred to in the last report to this Board have continued to be progressed and will be completed by end March 2021. Work is currently being undertaken to finalise the LSCP performance framework ahead of the start of the 2021/22 business cycle. The performance framework will contain the following elements:
- High level performance data from a range of partner agencies
  - Audit findings
  - Assurance reports from partner agencies
  - Findings from inspections or peer reviews
  - Feedback from children and families
  - Learning from Rapid Reviews, local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and other learning lessons reviews which do not meet the statutory threshold
- 3.6 The LSCP's evaluation of the multi-agency safeguarding children arrangements in Solihull for the last year will be published in the Safeguarding Partners' annual report 2020/21.
- 3.7 The LSCP priorities for 2020/21 are Exploitation; supporting implementation of the All-Age Exploitation Reduction Strategy, and Neglect; improving outcomes for children and young people. It is anticipated that these priorities will roll over into 2021/22.
- 3.8 The All-Age Exploitation Reduction Strategy 2020-2022 was formally signed off in September 2020 by the Exploitation Reduction Board and the Strategy and Delivery Plan have been endorsed across the Partnership Boards. The Delivery Plan continues to be implemented through the Exploitation Reduction Delivery Group and is monitored on a monthly basis, with significant progress being made.
- 3.9 Following circulation of the All-Age Exploitation Reduction Strategy and Delivery Plan to the strategic leads within partner organisations Exploitation Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) were identified in each agency during January 2021. This concluded the partnership endorsement and engagement phase of the communications plan and was actively supported by the LSCP. The next phase will be to work with SPOCs to embed the new Exploitation Reduction Procedures and Toolkit which will include a launch event on national exploitation awareness day in March 2021 targeting operational staff in working in statutory agencies. Statutory partner agencies will also be invited to complete a newly developed Exploitation Reduction Self-Assessment Tool which will support them in identifying what action they need to take to implement the requirements of the strategy within their organisations, and will also provide some evidence of impact of the strategy over time.
- 3.10 The target audiences for future communications will include local organisations, including businesses, in localities where staff come into direct contact with the public to ensure that awareness is raised and people feel confident about how to report exploitation concerns. In addition, further targeted communications will be rolled out for children, young people, parents/carers, adults and the general public.
- 3.11 Other aspects of the All-Age Exploitation Reduction Strategy relate to:

- commissioning of services, needs analysis and mapping of local services for children at risk of or experiencing exploitation
- development of a Vulnerability Tracker to capture data which will inform the local needs analysis and will assist in understanding demographics, locations and will inform resource provision and disruption tactics
- development of a an Exploitation Capability Framework (2020) which sets out and identifies the core capabilities of knowledge, skills and understanding for four key groups of the workforce. This will support partner organisations to consider the learning and development needs of their workforce.
- creation of a new Adult Exploitation Social Worker post to work alongside the Children’s Missing and Exploitation Team to support young adults at risk of exploitation and support transitions
- review of multi-agency operational processes to respond to exploitation concerns

3.12 The LSCP is working with partners to develop a new Neglect Strategy which is yet to be finalised and signed off, the pace of work having been impacted by Covid-19 pressures. It is anticipated that the strategy will be implemented during 2021/22. Neglect continues to account for more than half of all child protection plans in Solihull and recent audit findings have continued to raise questions about the extent to which the Graded Care Profile tool, Solihull’s endorsed tool for assessment of neglect, is utilised in frontline practice to support direct work with families.

**4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?**

- 4.1 There is still much work to be delivered in implementation of the Exploitation Reduction Strategy and the LSCP will continue to work closely with partner agencies during 2021/22 to ensure this is supported on a multi-agency basis.
- 4.2 The implementation of a new Neglect Strategy remains a priority for the partnership supported by the findings of this year’s audit of neglect cases, concerns about the impact of Covid-19 on families and the prevalence of child protection plans due to neglect in Solihull.

**5. Reasons for recommending preferred option**

5.1 As noted above in this report.

**6. Implications and Considerations**

6.1 How the proposals in this report contribute to the delivery of Council Plan priorities:

Priority:	Contribution:
Securing inclusive economic growth.	N/A

Planning & delivery for Solihull's low carbon future (to include biodiversity implications).	N/A
Managing demand and expectation for public services.	The LSCP will be seeking assurance that thresholds for services are understood across the Partnership, and that the right children are receiving the right services at the right time.
Developing our approach to services for adults and children with complex needs.	The LSCP will be seeking assurance that the needs of children and young people with complex needs are considered and appropriately responded to when there are safeguarding concerns.
Making the best use of our people and physical assets.	The LSCP will be seeking assurance that the multi-agency workforce has the necessary skills and knowledge to respond to children at risk of Neglect and Exploitation.

## 6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.2.1 The Independent Scrutineer role provides ongoing challenge to the Safeguarding Partners about process and outcomes.

6.2.2 The Cabinet Portfolio Holder - Children, Education & Skills is a standing member of the LSCP Executive Group

## 6.3 Financial implications:

6.3.1 Funding for the Partnership is referenced in s11 of the proposed arrangements, which are available on the LSCP website (link provided in paragraph 3.1 above). SMBC's contribution is budgeted for within the Children's Services and Skills portfolio.

## 6.4 Legal implications:

6.4.1 The new multi-agency safeguarding children arrangements in Solihull are fully compliant with the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children – July 2018'.

## 6.5 Risk implications:

6.5.1 Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility, and effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements rely upon the active involvement of all agencies in those arrangements. The implications of these arrangements not being effective are that the efficiency and effectiveness of children's safeguarding in Solihull will be undermined. It is therefore important that partner agencies fully understand the multi-agency arrangements and the part they play in delivering a robust response to children and families.

6.6 Equality implications:

6.6.1 The new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements allow the flexibility to respond to emerging risks to particular groups and communities should the need be identified.

6.6.2 Within the arrangements, all partner agencies retain their own responsibility to discharge their duties in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

6.6.3

## **7. List of appendices referred to**

[https://solihullscp.co.uk/media/upload/fck/file/1\\_Solihull - New Arrangements.PDF](https://solihullscp.co.uk/media/upload/fck/file/1_Solihull_-_New_Arrangements.PDF)

## **8. Background papers used to compile this report**

8.1 None

## **9. List of other relevant documents**

9.1 Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018