



Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report

April 2022 - March 2023



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Introduction from the Chair

Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board is determined to ensure that people, rather than policies or processes remain at the heart of our work to safeguard and protect vulnerable children and adults.

In July 2022, the Independent Inquiry into Telford Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) was published which made 47 recommendations to improve the way in which those at risk, and victims, of CSE are safeguarded, supported and heard. The board and its partners have unanimously adopted these recommendations and the implementation of them is a major focus of work for each of them. Most importantly, at the heart of this work are the voices of three people with lived experience of CSE who are being consulted on how each of the recommendations are implemented. It is our aim that the 47 recommendations will be implemented by December 2023.

Child neglect is one of the most common reasons as to why families receive statutory safeguarding service intervention. The board this year has chosen to undertake a fundamental review of how services respond to the issue of neglect. In doing so, the voices of children and their families who have lived experience of statutory social services are informing this work. Their experiences will ensure that the support that is provided to them is focussed on supporting them to address the challenges in their lives and improve the outcomes for their children and family.

Together we hold each other to account and build learning through identifying best practice and areas which need improvement to improve the quality of life for residents within Telford and Wrekin and to ensure they remain free from harm.

In writing this year's annual report, we have continued to develop a more succinct and meaningful report that is better focused on the impact of the work of the board has on residents and agencies.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the huge number of professionals who continue to work tirelessly in Telford and Wrekin to make it a safer place for our children and young people.



Andrew Mason
Independent Chair of Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board

Who is the Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board and what does it do?

Telford & Wrekin Council, West Mercia Police and Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin ICS have a statutory duty to put in place multi-agency safeguarding arrangements to protect and safeguarding vulnerable children. This responsibility is driven by the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board which is funded, equally, by the three partners.

Membership of the board is drawn from:

- Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust
- CAFCASS
- Shrewsbury and Telford NHS Hospital Trust
- West Mercia Youth Justice Team
- Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- West Mercia National Probation Service
- Education and Skills
- West Midlands Ambulance Service
- GP

The board has agreed its core focus as:

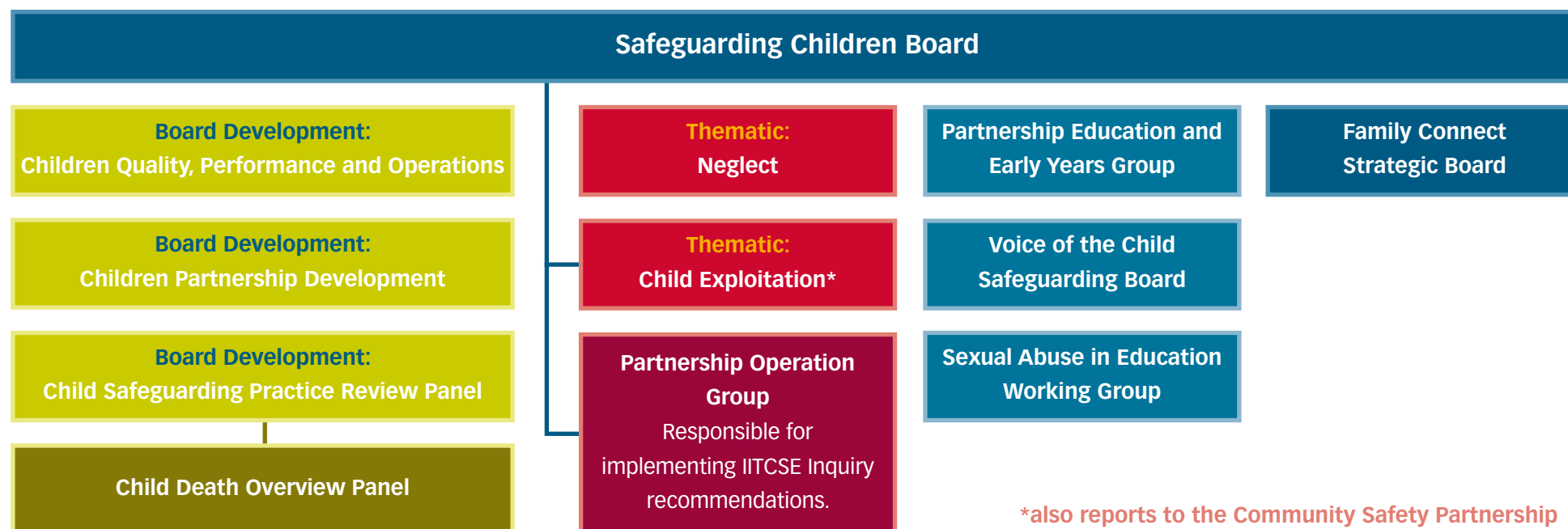
- Put the person who has been harmed or at risk at the centre of everything that we do and listen to their views about what we can do to improve the safety of people;
- Hold members to account – are we/they doing enough to keep people safe;
- Collect and share information about how well we are keeping people safe and what more we could do;
- Make sure our workers and volunteers get the training they need to provide safe services and share concerns if they think a person is being hurt or abused;
- Review our policies and guidance to make sure we are constantly improving; and
- Raise awareness of safeguarding issues and what to do.



How the board does things is as important as what it does. To shape how it delivers its role, the board has adopted the following principles and values:

- **Empowerment** – presumption of person led decisions and informed consent;
- **Prevention** – it’s better to take action before harm occurs;
- **Proportionality** – proportionate and least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented;
- **Protection** – support and representation for those in greatest need;
- **Partnership** – local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting abuse and neglect; and
- **Accountability** – accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

The board is chaired by an Independent Chair appointed by the three statutory partners with the objective of providing independent challenge and scrutiny. As part of our arrangements for external challenge, the Chair presents the board’s annual report to the Council’s Scrutiny Board for Children and Families and the Council’s Health & Wellbeing Board. To drive delivery of its objectives, the board has a series of sub-groups as set out below:



Telford and Wrekin – the place

The borough which the board serves is a place of contrasts. Central to the borough is the New Town of Telford which was commissioned in 1968 and grew rapidly around existing communities including Wellington, Oakengates, Dawley and Madeley. Along the banks of the River Severn is Ironbridge, the birthplace of the industrial revolution and now a World Heritage site. Surrounding Telford is a rural hinterland – accounting for more than two thirds of the borough’s area.

The 2021 Census estimated the population of the borough to be 185,842 people. A quarter (45,504 people) are aged 0 to 19. From the 2011 to 2021 Census, the borough’s overall population increased by 19,000 people – an increase of 11% - making it the fastest growing area in the West Midlands. Many people who have come to live in the borough have been attracted by the value for money housing offer, our schools, outstanding natural environment, growing economy and our connectivity via road and rail into the West Midlands conurbation and beyond.



Whilst at face value the borough is prosperous and thriving, the Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that there are 18 neighbour areas in the Borough which are ranked amongst the 10% most deprived in England. This impacts on the life experience of these residents in terms of poorer outcomes with regards to health, education employment and housing. Just over 1 in 5 children (21.4%) aged 0 to 15 live in a household that is affected by income deprivation – the England average is 18.5%. Such challenges have undoubtedly increased because of the current cost of living crisis.

“The Social Gradient in English Child Welfare Services”, a study by Kingston University academics and Ofsted analysts, said that children from the poorest neighbourhoods in England were almost fourteen times more likely to be referred to social care services than those from the richest areas. This impact can be seen on the demand for support from children social care across the borough:

- 257 children on a child protection plan with a rate of per 10,000 population of 50.4 (March 2022) compared to the England rate of 42.1.
- 449 looked after children with a rate of per 10,000 population of 102 (March 2022) compared to the England rate of 70.
- Over a thousand contacts for support each month.

What have we achieved in the last 12 months?

An essential objective of this report is to demonstrate the impact of the board and the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements that it has put in place. The following part of the report takes a month by month look at the activity of the board and the safeguarding impact that this has had.



Rapid Reviews and Childrens Safeguarding Practice Reviews which had been carried out during the previous year identified that non-accidental injuries in babies and children under the age of two was a key area of learning for professionals across Telford and Wrekin. In response, the Partnership organised a **Non-Accidental Injury Learning Event** which was attended by over 100 professionals from across all partners to focus on key issues including process, findings from the National Panel, emerging local themes and to reinforce consistent professional curiosity.

Safeguarding impact: Professionals are better equipped to identify those children at greater risk and intervene at a much earlier stage to safeguard against non-accidental injuries.



May saw the first **thematic review**, as a joint CSPR, undertaken into cases of neglect that had been referred to the Partnership. An independent reviewer was tasked with examining two separate cases involving child neglect to identify learning and enhance practice. This Review was completed and signed off by the board in June 2023.

Safeguarding impact: Reviews of this type are vital to ensure that safeguarding practice within Telford and Wrekin is continually evolving to enhance protections in place for children alongside support for their parents/carers. The review recommendations are informing the work of the Neglect sub-group into its review of policies and procedures to support relevant families.



The Partnership Development sub group (who meet quarterly to consider matters relating to multi-agency learning, policy development and the communication of key information across the partnership) had their first meeting of the new financial year which focussed on developing a robust multi-agency training offer which trialled a pilot of offering a selection of 19 courses related to safeguarding and associated topics, for up to 300 people from across the partner agencies. Topics included:

- Non accidental Injury Conference
- The importance of robust recording within casework (and top tips!)
- Threshold of Need Conference and monthly workshops
- Child Protection - An Introduction
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Awareness
- Cyber Security
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Neglect
- Physical Abuse (Children)
- Domestic Abuse Awareness
- E-Safety Awareness

Feedback from these learning and development opportunities are monitored and to ensure that the training programme is of an appropriate quality and meeting need.

"I wanted to say a big thank you for running this training session. I found it invaluable. I've shared your email [containing resources from the session and future dates] and encouraged attendance at your next training session. I really look forward to future sessions"

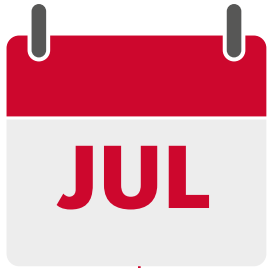
"I really enjoyed the sessions and will certainly be using some of the statistics in updating our training packages over the Summer."

"I found the session really informative and useful"

"I really enjoyed the couple of hours of learning... I also think that the recording of the event to allow sharing is a great idea for those that were unable to attend..."

The group also developed and published a [Best Practice Guidance for Professional Curiosity](#) which was shared with partners in February 2023.

Safeguarding Impact: the work of the Partnership Development group ensures that learning is disseminated across the partnership and reaches into all organisations to provide a consistent approach and knowledge base when undertaking their safeguarding duties.



The **Independent Inquiry – Telford Child Sexual Exploitation** (IITCSE) published its report making 47 Recommendations for the board and the three statutory partners together with the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner to implement. Partners unconditionally accepted all 47 of the recommendations. Later in the month, statutory partners met to agree governance arrangements for implementing the Inquiry recommendations which included an Independent Chair to oversee implementation. Most importantly, it was agreed that three Independent Lived Experience Consultants would inform the development of the response to the recommendations by the statutory partners to ensure that real change was embedded in the work of the board. A clear goal was adopted to implement the Recommendations by December 2023. Throughout the year, partners continued to work to implement the report recommendations through the Partner Operations Group – a task and finish group specifically established for this task.

Safeguarding impact: implementation of the IITCSE recommendations will enhance the way in which cases of CSE within the borough are addressed and how victims, survivors and their families are supported.



Work took place within the Quality, Performance and Operations sub-group to run a mock **Joint Targeted Area Inspection** (JTAI). This allowed partners to evaluate their services provided to vulnerable children and young people and address any areas requiring action.

Safeguarding impact: A proactive approach to undertaking our own JTAI ahead of any inspection by Ofsted, Care Quality Commission (CQC), Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) has allowed for early learning around how the local authority, police, health, probation and youth offending services are working together to identify, support and protect vulnerable children and young people.



Although the work of the **Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel** (who meet monthly) takes place throughout the year September saw a peak in referrals being made to the Partnership requiring a Rapid Review. During April 2022 to March 2023 the Panel reviewed four cases that had been referred to the Partnership, one of which progressed to a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR). In addition to this, the Panel continued to progress six open CSPR cases, of which four were completed in year.

The following themes have been highlighted in the reviews undertaken this year and have resulted in some targeted work:



Neglect

Neglect has been a theme for a number of years and, as mentioned above, work has been commissioned to explore how we can better support families in making lasting change and break the cycle of repeated generational patterns of behaviour.

Geographical relocation of the family

Multiple reviews have highlighted difficulties for agencies when families move between different local authority areas, in response the CSPR Panel has written to the National Panel requesting that this issue be considered within their work plan for a national review to address this concern.

Professional Curiosity, Record Keeping and Information Sharing

These themes have been addressed through the monthly 'Threshold of Need' workshop sessions which have been open to all professionals from across all agencies. They focus on how partners work together, share information and ensure that children and their families remain our main focus and provide effective support at the earliest opportunity. Taking a partnership approach from the earliest opportunity should mean that fewer children in Telford and Wrekin experience serious harm or neglect.

Safeguarding impact: All identified recommendations from reviews are implemented through changes to processes, focussed assurances and evidence being gathered from across the partnership and a variety of learning offers made to include the use of short '7 minute learning briefings', online seminars or wider conferences (like the Non accidental Learning event described earlier) all with the aim of aiding practitioner awareness, understanding and confidence across a variety of safeguarding topics.



The **Voice of the Child** is crucial to the focus of the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board and as such work was started to explore how it can become more integrated into board meetings over and above the representative attending. New [training resources](#) have been incorporated into the training offer from the partnership and are primarily focussed at school aged children addressing areas they have raised as worrying them.

Safeguarding impact: Closer links between agencies and the children, young people and families they work with embraces true partnership working to fully understand and respond to issues as they arise within the borough. This creates a safeguarding culture which strives for improvement through cooperation rather than enforcement. Constantly evolving training ensures professionals are equipped to respond to an ever changing society and new risks.



The Quality, Performance and Operations sub group met and organised a **Multi-Agency Case File Audit (MACFA)** to be carried out which would review three cases where young people had multiple presentations to A&E in mental health crisis and Section 136s¹ were issued, prior to being admitted to adult mental health wards. The MACFA was completed and reported to board in March 2023 making a series of recommendations to improve the support provided to children and young people.

The group was also instrumental in leading work to develop a **multi-agency Performance Framework**, and data collection activity undertaken against performance indicators to enable agencies to make intelligence led decisions and focus resources in areas that are emerging as potential issues.

In preparation for the spring 2023 biennial Section 11 audit, implemented a new online platform which will operate across multi-regional areas to improve the quality of the audit process and the tracking of actions to improve outcomes.

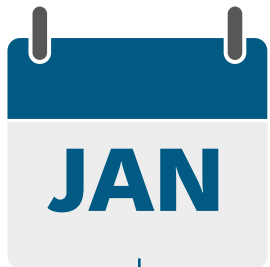
Safeguarding impact: The proactive use of MACFA's allows partners to jointly assess performance, highlight areas of good practice alongside identifying areas which need more robust work to be undertaken. This assessment of services allows room for professional challenge across partners to ensure the residents of Telford and Wrekin remain the focus of safeguarding work.

¹ Section 136 is part of the Mental Health Act that gives police emergency powers. Police can use these powers if they think you have a mental disorder, you're in a public place and need immediate help.



Discussions started to take place with partners around the production of a refreshed **Child Exploitation Strategy** to further address the recommendations in the **IITCSE** report. This work has been led by the Child Exploitation sub group and continues into the new financial year. All statutory partners, young people and families (both of lived experience of exploitation and from the wider society) are involved in developing and shaping the strategy.

Safeguarding impact: The final strategy will formalise a borough wide offer to tackle and support all known forms of child exploitation, underpinned by formal contextual safeguarding² principles. It will focus on four key areas, 'Understand and Identify', 'Prevention, Intervene and Support' and 'Disrupt and Bring to Justice'. It is anticipated that the strategy will be formally launched in the later part of 2023.



The start of the new year saw the start of work focussing on **neglect** within Telford and Wrekin following emerging learning from the thematic review started in May. An independent reviewer has now been tasked with reviewing how we work with families from the point of referral all the way through to Child Protection conferences. The reviewer will be engaging across all partners and at all levels to include front line practitioners for example, Independent Review Officers, Social Workers, Health colleagues. There will also be key participation from families with lived experience through the Dandelion Group to offer crucial insight into how the words we use and changes to documents would have aided the safeguarding process from their perspective.

Safeguarding impact: This all-encompassing piece of work is hoped to result in a change in approach and practice across all partners to move to a place where we see parents as partners in working toward a solution to improve outcomes for children. We aim to support, educate and motivate families towards lasting positive changes rather than demoralising and blaming them.

² 'Contextual safeguarding' is a theory developed by Dr Carlene Firmin of the University of Bedfordshire, which supports an approach to understanding and responding to children's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It is recognised that the different relationships children form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse.



February saw the launch of the [new Domestic Abuse Strategy](#) following extensive consultation with partners and survivor groups who actively shaped the strategy and commissioning process for the new service. Telford & Wrekin Council were also the first local authority in the UK to sign the Child to Parent Abuse Covenant, which has been developed by a social enterprise known as Parental Education Growth Support. Recognising Child to Parent Abuse has also been incorporated into the new Domestic Abuse Strategy. The NSPCC Harmful Sexual Behaviour audit was also commenced in this month with findings due in autumn 2023. The audit considers the multi-agency partnership response to harmful sexual behaviour within Telford and Wrekin.

Safeguarding impact: The new strategy commits to hearing and taking on board the voices and expertise of people who have experienced domestic abuse through the forum to ensure services meet the needs of those experiencing domestic abuse, whether young or old, parent or child.



Work to continue to raise awareness of the warning signs and impact of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), took place within the Partnership. A **CSE Awareness Day** event was organised with the Holly Project – a free, independent support service for the survivors of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and their families, run by those with lived experience of CSE which saw attendance by over 60 professionals across all partners.

March also saw the launch of a revised [Threshold of Need guidance](#), developed by the Family Connect Strategic Board, which provided professionals with an increased awareness, confidence and skills in using the Partnership Threshold of Need. Professionals were reminded of the support available to children, young people and families within Telford and Wrekin with an emphasis being placed on contextual safeguarding and considering risks outside of the home.

Safeguarding impact: Greater clarity around the threshold of need among practitioners means that the partnership is able provide the right help, at the right time.

Partnership review

As part of the process of ongoing review to ensure that local multiagency safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective, a review of safeguarding arrangements was commissioned in January 2023 – this work was driven by the IITCSE Recommendations and ongoing policy development by Government. The review was to report in May 2023.

A heartfelt thank you to...

All the individuals and families who have taken the brave step to share their experiences and worked with us in pushing for change. The 100's of professionals up and down the borough who have continued to support the partnership, their colleagues and the residents of Telford and Wrekin.



To find out more about the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership and access resources please visit www.telfordsafeguardingpartnership.org.uk