

Title of report: Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: Tuesday 23 January 2024

**Report by: Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership,
Independent Chair and Scrutineer**

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

For the Children's and Young People Scrutiny Committee to consider the 2022/23 annual report of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (HSCP).

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) The annual report and effectiveness of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (HSCP) be considered;**
 - **noting the progress of the multi-agency safeguarding partnership arrangements in Herefordshire during this period.**
- b) The committee determine any recommendations it wishes to make to relevant bodies to secure further improvement in safeguarding children and young people in Herefordshire.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternative recommendations.

Key considerations

2. The vision of Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership remains to work together to create a place where all children and young people in Herefordshire are safe, free from abuse and neglect and supported to live happy and healthy lives.
3. The activity of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership is a critical element of the ongoing multi-agency approach to keep children and young people safe from harm.
4. The purpose of the safeguarding arrangements, as set out in Chapter 2: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 is to support and enable local organisation and agencies to work together in a system where:
 - a) Children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted,
 - b) Partner organisations and agencies collaborate, share and co-own the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children,
 - c) Organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively,
 - d) There is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats,
 - e) Learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice,
 - f) Information is shared effectively to facilitate more accurate and timely decision making for children and families.
5. The annual report presents the work that the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership and the organisations that make up the HSCP have undertaken to keep children and young people safe. The report covers the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.
6. The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership is made up of the three statutory safeguarding partner organisations - West Mercia Police, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board and Herefordshire Council and continues to be supported by a range of relevant agencies, which include:
 - a) Wye Valley NHS Trust
 - b) Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust
 - c) Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Service
 - d) West Mercia Youth Justice Service
7. The statutory partner members have joint and equal responsibility for the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA). The partnership understand the absolute dependence on each other and on relevant agencies to make a difference to the work with children, young people and families in Herefordshire.
8. During the course of this reporting year, the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership underwent a review of its multiagency safeguarding arrangements. The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership substructure changed to reflect the new arrangements and ambition to strengthen strategic and operational activity and improve safeguarding for the children and young people of Herefordshire. A revised safeguarding arrangements document was published on the 1 December 2023 and is available on the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership website [Herefordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements 2023 - Herefordshire Safeguarding Boards and Partnerships](#).
9. The 2022/23 annual report details what Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership has achieved as a result of the safeguarding arrangements in place over the past year, and how effective these arrangements have been in practice, with particular focus on agreed priorities.
10. The report provides an overview of the effectiveness of the partnership including:
 - a) Partnership arrangements

- b) Communication and Engagement
- c) Safeguarding Effectiveness and Scrutiny
- d) Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- e) Learning and Improvement
- f) Neglect

11. The annual report aims to illustrate how the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership continues to develop an integrated approach to safeguarding children and young people with equal accountability between the three statutory partners, together with our wider agencies and in co-operation with children, their families, significant others and residents.
12. 2022 to 2023 has been an opportunity to reinvigorate the ambitions of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership and to explore smarter ways of working to improve engagement, and incorporate learning from reviews to develop our working practices with children and their families.

Independent Scrutiny (IS)

13. The partnership appoints a suitably qualified and experienced individual to review the effectiveness of the partnership arrangements in keeping children and young people safe.
14. The Annual report contains a statement by the IS which concludes for 22/23:
15. 'Overall I have to conclude that in 22/23 that the HSCP was not fully effective but that there has been improvement in some key aspects of the partnership work. Much planning has been completed to improve matters in 23/24, which indicates that more progress will be made next year.'
16. Given however that it is ten months since the period covered by the Annual Report 22/23 it is appropriate to report that in that time more progress has been made which gives greater assurance that HSCP is developing as an improved partnership.
17. A Section 11 audit has been completed which is a self-assessment of each agencies compliance with their safeguarding responsibilities. These have been subject to a 'challenge' session with partners holding each other to account. This provides also an opportunity for partners to identify what is working well and what needs to be improved. Agencies taking part in the challenge session included, Herefordshire Council, West Mercia Police, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board, Wye Valley NHS Trust and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust. The overall conclusion of this audit is that as individual agencies the key partners are compliant with the requirements of Working Together (2018) and other legislation. A further "challenge" session will be held with the following agencies; including the Fire and Rescue Service, Probation, Sexual Health services, Turning Point and West Midlands Ambulance Service.
18. A self-assessment 'health check' exercise is underway with the Department for Education to benchmark readiness for implementing Working Together 2023 (published in December 2023).
19. The working relationship between the HSCP and the Children's Services Improvement Board is clearly set out in a HSCP delivery plan. Progress is regularly monitored and challenged at the Improvement Board and key impact measures have also been agreed. The partnership is working at increasing the pace at which some of this work is delivered but progress had been made over recent months.
20. Performance data remains a challenge though HSCP now has an improved data set, however police data needs to be provided.

21. Multi-agency audits are now underway and the partnership continues to comply with its requirement to hold Rapid Reviews and Local Child Protection Safeguarding Reviews (LSCPR). The National Panel has approved all Rapid Reviews and the Local Safeguarding Child Practice Review completed in 2023 which will be published on the HSCP website shortly.
22. The HSCP Business Plan and the delivery plans for each of the HSCP sub groups are more focussed and are used by the Strategic Partnership Board to monitor progress in delivering the functions of the partnership.
23. Much of the above will be reflected in the Annual Report for 23/24 which will be published in September 2024 as required by Working Together 2023. The partnership acknowledges that there is much more that needs to be done for the partnership to meet the aspiration set out in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements.
24. In the view of the Independent Scrutineer there is greater knowledge and understanding of what needs to be progressed and greater self-awareness of strengths and areas that require development as a result of activity of the ten months since the period covered by the Annual report 22/23.
25. The further challenge for the Partnership will be in maintaining progress through a time of policy change arising out of the recently published Working Together 2023

Community impact

26. The activity of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership has both a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Herefordshire.

Environmental Impact

27. There is no direct environmental impact arising out of this report.

Equality duty

28. The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership policies and function has been developed to be inclusive. We will embrace diversity, equity and inclusion so that our strategies and the work we do recognises and relates to every individual fairly.
29. The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership monitors protected characteristics within our rapid review and child safeguarding practice review processes which take place when a child dies or is seriously harmed, and abuse or neglect is known or suspected.
30. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Resource implications

31. There are no resource implications for consideration with this report. The work of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership is supported by the three statutory partners and other relevant agencies as highlighted in the report.

Legal implications

32. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Risk management

33. The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership maintains its own risk register and takes action as required to mitigate any identified risk.

Consultees

34. There has been no public consultation on this report.

Appendices

35. HSCP-Annual Report 2022-23

Background papers

None identified

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published		
Governance	John Coleman	Date 12/01/2024
Finance	Karen Morris	Date 15/01/2024
Legal	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date
Communications	Michala Lee	Date 12/01/2024
Equality Duty	Harriet Yellin	Date 15/01/2024
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 12/01/2024
Risk	Elizabeth Freedland	Date 10/01/2024
Approved by	Victoria Gibbs	Date 15/01/2024