

GLOUCESTERSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT

*2020 -
2021*

Working Together 2018 places a 'shared and equal duty' on Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group, Gloucestershire Constabulary and Gloucestershire County Council for the safeguarding of Gloucestershire's Children. This report sets out the activity of the statutory partners and wider partnership of agencies during the period.

Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership



Foreword

This is our second yearly report under Working Together 2018 and is intended to provide an overview of our progress over the 12-month period from April 2020 to March 2021. It has been subject to contribution and review by our independent scrutineer (IS) whose comments and observations are included throughout the report. In addition the Independent Scrutineer's yearly report is attached as appendix one. This reflects the GSCP's commitment to openness and transparency regards the scrutiny of its arrangements.

The emergence of Covid19 is perhaps the most significant challenge the United Kingdom has faced in living memory. The pandemic has created an unprecedented situation for those agencies tasked with a responsibility to keep children safe while continuing to deliver protection, care, education and health services to the wider community.

The GSCP would firstly like to praise the commitment and diligence of all frontline staff and managers in the county whose professionalism, adaptability, resilience and hard work made the difference in helping to safeguard children and young people in Gloucestershire during this time.

The GSCP partners responded quickly in implementing practical changes to its arrangements to ensure it was well placed to respond to the dynamic changes in demand and service provision necessary to respond to the virus.

These included a commitment to:

- Continue with the current Chairing arrangements for the next year across the GSCP and its Sub-Groups.
- Maintain the existing Independent Scrutineer role for a further 12 months.
- Monitor and report on the GSCP and its Relevant Agencies response to COVID19 and the following period.
- Increase the frequency of strategic safeguarding meetings to remain abreast of demand on the system
- Increase capacity in the Partnership through the use of independent chairs in Rapid Reviews, Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Multi-Agency Audit processes ensuring that these processes are undertaken in a timely manner and are informing the Partnership
- Multi-agency Training and practice development is adapted to meet the current and future restrictions placed on the Partnership
- Maintain and develop practices adopted through the period that proved to be effective and efficient in the carrying out of its duties

As the impact of COVID19 has become more visible and understood, it clearly has impacted disproportionately on the most vulnerable in our community. Through the period covered in this report we adjusted our safeguarding arrangements accordingly to ensure we had the right balance

between governance and a continuing grip, at the operational level, on key areas of child safeguarding practice. We will continue with that approach as we move from response to recovery ensuring that we build upon the learning and experiences of the period. What was very apparent when writing this report was that Gloucestershire's local challenges very much reflect the emerging national picture with concerns emerging for pre-birth and non-mobile babies and risks outside of the home for adolescents, areas that will remain a focus for the GSCP.

"This is a Partnership with a strong commitment to safeguarding that has performed well during the pandemic and is increasingly knowledgeable about what can be improved. 2021/2022 provides the opportunity for the GSCP to demonstrate it can evolve further as a Partnership to provide even better services to children and young people." (**Gloucestershire's Independent Scrutineer Kevin Crompton 2020**)



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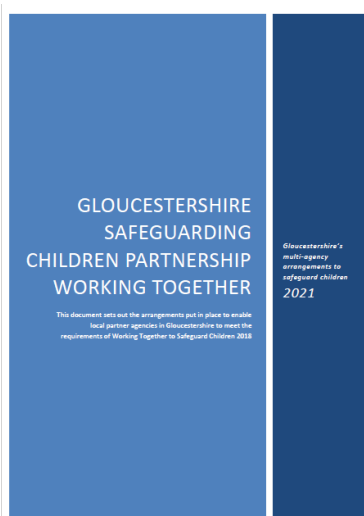
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Introduction



This is the second yearly report of the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (GSCP).

Early 2021 the Partnership reviewed its published arrangements reflecting the evolving Partnership and changes implemented through the year 2020, [re-publishing the arrangements in January 2021](#).

The revised arrangements included:

- A change from Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Executive to Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership, which comprises an Executive, Management Group and Thematic Sub-Groups. Reflecting and strengthening the 'shared and equal duty' emphasis.
- Revised Independent Scrutiny (I.S) Function focusing on measuring quality and impact of the GSCP arrangements.
- Structural changes to the Partnership and the creation of a GSCP Management Group to replace the existing Delivery Board.
- Adoption of a GSCP Resolution Group focusing on a small number of situations where improved outcomes for children and young people are not being achieved and risks are increasing.
- Improved 'Dispute Resolution' procedures reflecting the change in the I.S. Function and the adoption of the Resolution Group.
- The inclusion of a Districts Sub-Group and a Policies and Procedures Sub-Group
- Revised and modernised Section 11 process led by the I.S. and an independent Panel
- Approved Scheme of Delegation from the Executive to Sub-Groups streamlining the structure and processes of the Partnership
- Appointment of a Performance Improvement Officer within the GSCP Business Unit early 2021
- Revised and refreshed GSCP Website and South West Procedures Manual

"This is a revision of the first arrangements which operated in 2019/2020 and the result of a review in the light of experience during that year. A critical change was the replacement of the Delivery Board with a more action focussed Management Group. The partners have therefore recognised the need to improve the pace and effectiveness of identified improvements to safeguarding practice."
(Gloucestershire's Independent Scrutineer Kevin Crompton 2020)

Impact

- Improved and strengthened knowledge of the Partnership and the shared duty placed on partners
- Streamlined and efficient management of GSCP activity reducing duplication and delay in the system
- Improved escalation and resolution approaches meeting safeguarding review recommendations
- Understanding more clearly the picture in the county regards partners S11 duties
- Data reporting improvement journey started
- Accessibility of local arrangements and a refresh of south west procedures recommunicated to the Partnership

The GSCP is growing in its ability to understand front line practice its strengths and areas for improvement." **(Gloucestershire's Independent Scrutineer Kevin Crompton 2020)**

Context

“The period of this report has been dominated by the UK response to and impact of the Covid19 pandemic. It has had a significant impact on the working practices of all Gloucestershire agencies involved in safeguarding children. It has been a challenging year for all partners and it is important that we take this into account when scrutinising progress against the requirements of WT18”. (Gloucestershire’s Independent Scrutineer Kevin Crompton 2020)

Gloucestershire is a varied county comprising of both rural and urban areas. Gloucestershire has areas of great affluence and great deprivation, with pockets of high social and economic need, even within otherwise thriving localities.

Gloucestershire is a two-tier county for local government comprising of a county council and six districts with contrasting characteristics in terms of affluence, deprivation and concentration of population, we are a geographically large and demographically diverse county with differing needs.

However, for child safeguarding, having one Constabulary, one accountable Local Authority and one Clinical Commissioning Group strengthened the Partnerships ability to support and direct effective local arrangements through the year and the challenges that this year in particular brought. This co terminus position has resulted in quick progress in the partnerships funding arrangements ensuring minimum distraction from the work of the partnership.

Activity

“During the pandemic partners have maintained a commitment to Partnership working including participation in online meetings. Appropriate adjustments were made to meeting structures and membership to ensure that dialogue could continue” (Gloucestershire’s Independent Scrutineer Kevin Crompton 2020)

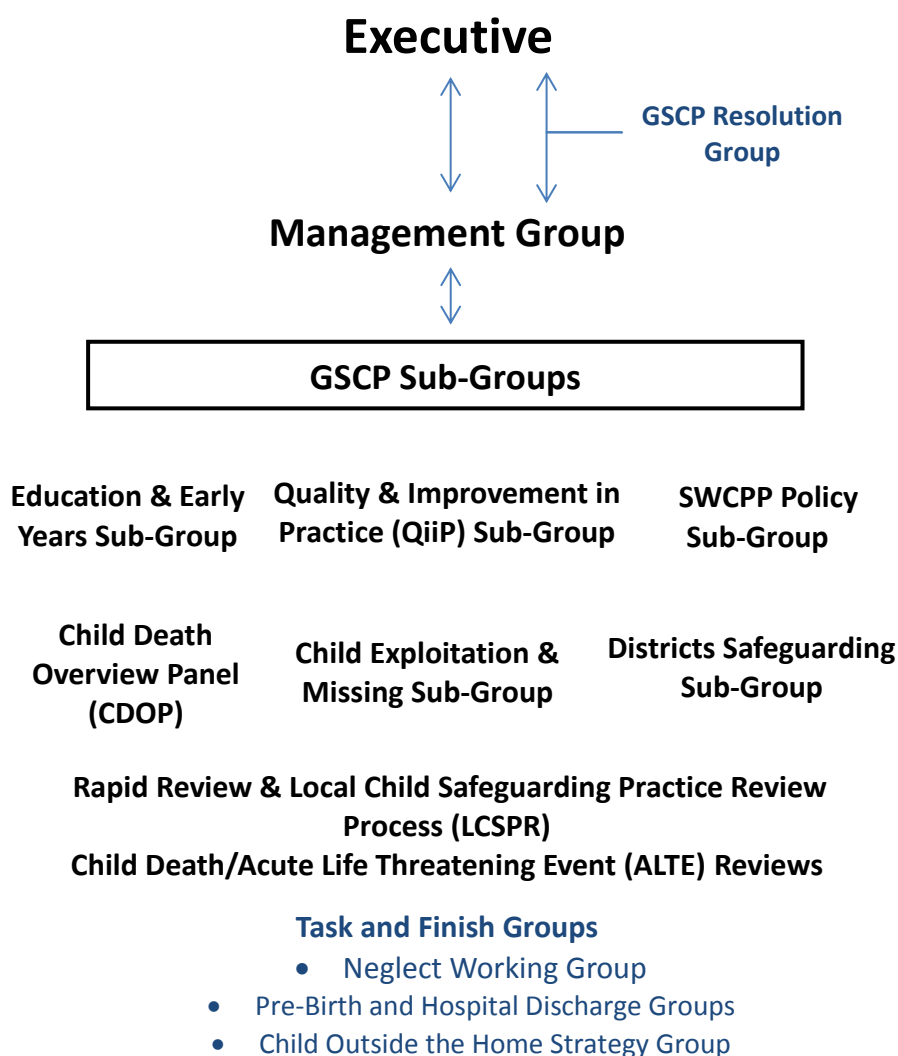
Gloucestershire’s child safeguarding arrangements put in place to deliver the requirements of Working Together 2018 comprise of the following elements:

- A Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive comprising of the three Safeguarding Partner Strategic Leads, their respective Lead Officers, an Independent Scrutineer, Chair of the GSCP Management Group, GSCP Safeguarding Business Manager supported by the Business units Performance Improvement Officer, and two Education reps from the Association of Secondary Heads
- A Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Management Group chaired by a senior officer from one of the statutory safeguarding partners. Mandated by the Executive, the Management Group provides the support and direction for the Sub-Groups to develop, assess and implement local child safeguarding arrangements. Its membership is drawn from the Chairs of the Sub-Groups ensuring senior officers from the three safeguarding partners are represented alongside a wider range of local partners that have continuing duties to collaborate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- [Independent Scrutiny](#) of the arrangements is provided by an experienced and qualified individual, commissioned by, but not employed by, the safeguarding partners. The Independent Scrutineer has provided an annual overview report on the effectiveness and impact of local arrangements for the period and this is included in this report ([Annex one](#))
- Safeguarding Sub-Groups are in place to support and inform the working of the GSCP as follows:

- Quality and Improvement In Practice Sub-Group
 - Education and Early Years Sub-Group
 - Child Death Overview Panel
 - Child Exploitation and Missing Sub-Group
 - Policies and Procedures Sub-Group
 - Districts Sub-Group
- On occasion an issue may arise which requires partner agencies to work together through a Task and Finish Group in order to complete a discrete, time banded piece of work on behalf of the GSCP. In the period there were three task and finish groups reporting to Sub-Group level
 - Neglect Working Group responsible for a Neglect multi-agency audit completed in 2020 – Reporting to the QiiP
 - Pre-Birth Assessment Working Group responsible for a Pre Birth Assessment multi-agency audit started in January 2021 and ongoing – Reporting to the QiiP
 - Child Outside the Home Working Group created in November to address the findings of the Partnerships Thematic Review of CSE Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review. – Reporting to the Child Exploitation and Missing Sub-Group

“...there has been good working practice between the GSCP and the Community Safety Partnership including a joint Domestic Homicide Review/ Serious Case Review which was finalised during the year.”(Gloucestershire’s Independent Scrutineer Kevin Crompton 2020)

Set out below is a graphic outlining how the various elements comprising the GSCP work together.



In response to the imposition of the first national lockdown in March 2020, the Executive and Delivery Boards merged and met on a more frequent basis with a reduced membership. This ensured that agencies could focus on their operational response whilst continuing with oversight from the merged group. This revised arrangement was in place until July when the structure was able to reform.

*“Gloucestershire’s overall response to Covid19 was good and this was assisted by the improved Partnership working developed post WT18. A good example of this is the sharing of single agency briefings with other partners an action that was very much welcomed by front line staff”.
(Gloucestershire’s Independent Scrutineer Kevin Crompton 2020)*

Below is a brief summary of key activity

Impact

- Continued with the agreed funding model for the Partnership reflecting the ‘shared and equal duty’ placed on the statutory safeguarding partners. This has ensured the Partnership has stable and sufficient funding to support key statutory and development activity.
- Recruitment of the Performance Improvement Officer was delayed due to Covid19 and recruitment issues during the period.
- Recruitment of administrative staff hampered and delayed due to Covid19
- Finalised and published a number of Safeguarding Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) transitioned to the GSCP
- Published the [findings and response](#) for three SCRs unable to publish in full due to ongoing criminal proceedings
- [Updated Section 11 audit process](#) fully rolled out in 2020 producing its first [S11 assurance report](#) to the Executive. The report concluded that as individual agencies compliance with s11 duties was good but that there was more work to do to ensure that the Partnership was driving forward improvements.
- Completed the S175 audit of educational establishments with 100% return rate indicating an overall good assessment of educational settings adherence to KCSIE arrangements and an understanding of the local published arrangements.
- [Published two SCRs](#) and the Partnerships response to the findings
- Between April 2020 and March 2021 the GSCP undertook nine Rapid Reviews testing the partnerships ability to respond to the [GSCP’s safeguarding practice review arrangements](#) fully
- Instigated two Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews’ -[publishing one in February 2021](#)
- Re-designed the multi-agency safeguarding training arrangements from face to face to a virtual platform, implementing a suite of eLearning, Virtual Classroom and Webinar blended learning approaches ensuring a continued focus in supporting the learning from practice reviews.
- Undertook a targeted multi-agency Audit on Neglect and the use of the Neglect Toolkit
- Undertook a Multi-Agency Audit on pre-birth assessment and hospital discharge
- Commenced a Multi-Agency Audit on Contact to MASH
- Undertook a follow up audit and reported on Non Accidental injuries to non-mobile babies through the Gloucestershire Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, following implementation of the Non Accidental Injuries to Non Mobile Babies Protocol and ICON delivery during 2019. Reporting a decline in NAI in Gloucestershire against a reported national increase for period
- Maintained oversight of Child Death Review Process ensuring links between serious safeguarding review processes and ensuring effective and responsive ALTE review arrangements
- Maintained scrutiny on the work relating to elected home educated children to ensure their safeguarding needs are addressed alongside the quality of their educational offer
- Maintained and grew DSL support structures for Designated Safeguarding Leads in Educational

Settings utilising newly implemented virtual platforms and revised GSCP Website.

“Throughout the year partners worked well together and there is evidence to show that had an impact on practice. Improved attendance of health at strategy discussions; speed of MASH decision making; attendance at initial child protection conferences; timely health checks for children looked after are a few examples where things have improved”. (Gloucestershire’s Independent Scrutineer Kevin Crompton 2020)



Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

The following chapter gives an overview on the partnerships activity in this area with links to detailed published reports.

During the period the Partnership published two Serious Case Reviews. The published reports detail the findings and the Partner's response to those findings.

- [Liam](#)
- [Lauren](#)

In addition the GSCP held three SCR's that could not be published due to ongoing criminal proceedings. In February 2021 the Partnership anonymously published the findings and collective Partnership response to those SCR's demonstrating a focus on the implementation of learning regardless of the Partnership's ability to publish the full reports.

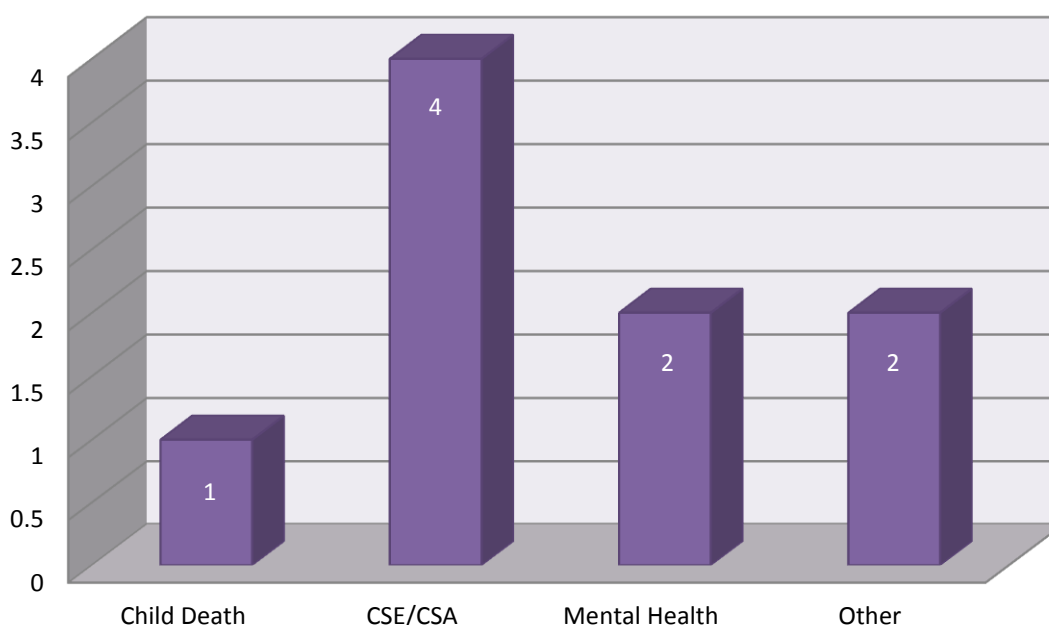
- SCRs 2020 – [A Partnership response to Recommendations](#)

A Joint Domestic Homicide Review/SCR commissioned in 2018 was submitted to the Home Office in March 2021 and will be available for publishing later in the year.

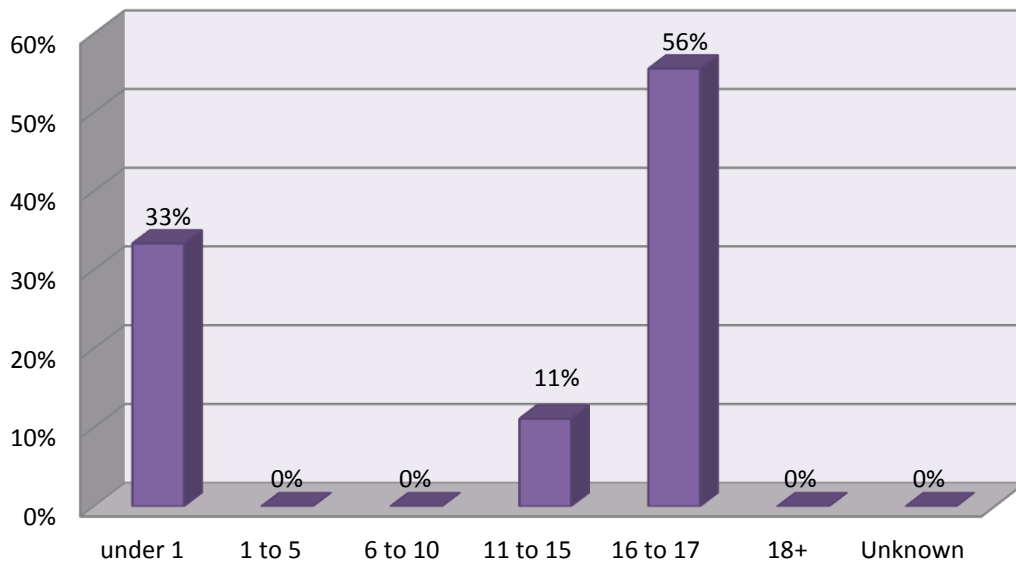
The Partnership undertook nine Rapid Reviews during the period covering a range of areas.

Of note, Gloucestershire did not see a rise in NAI during the period with one child death as a result of NAI. The Partnership reviewed all NAI cases in the county through a Hospitals Trust Audit during the same period of time offering assurances to the Executive that NAI was not increasing in line with the national picture.

Rapid Review by Theme



Rapid Review By Age



Of the nine Rapid Reviews three reviews relating to CSE went on to become our first LCSPR published in February 2021.

- [0120 LCSPR CSE Thematic Review](#) - Report, Recommendations and Partnership Response

With a Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) review commenced in March 2021 becoming the second LCSPR undertaken by the partnership and due to be published later in 2021.

Child Death and Acute Life Threatening Event (ALTE) Reviews: Whilst a function of the Child Death Review Partners (Gloucestershire County Council and Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group) the GSCP approved a joint Statutory Review Coordinator post, starting 1st April 2021, ensuring clear and effective links between the Child Death, ALTE and Safeguarding Review process.

All partners and relevant agencies have shown a significant commitment to ensure safeguarding and child death reviews are completed within timescales and that the need to identify the learning is pre-eminent in all thinking.

The reviews undertaken have identified some key areas for consideration and learning for the local safeguarding system as set out below:

- Information sharing and use of safeguarding toolkits to understand and manage risk.
- Mental Health and collectively understanding and responding to risk.
- Management of offenders who pose a risk to children.
- Timeliness of holding conferences and sharing of conference minutes.
- Strategy Discussions – Statutory requirement when a child discloses a criminal offence, even if later retracted, and where a child is at risk of significant harm from themselves or others.

Impact

The identified learning is being acted upon and fed back through multi-agency Partnership activity such as:

- Revised [Strategy Discussion Document](#) disseminated and in use in response
- Checking in and monitoring on the impact of the revised multi-agency guidance on responding to [non-accidental injuries in children](#)
- Multi-agency training courses, eLearning, Webinars and notifications through the [GSCP newsletter and Alert system](#) with the development of a broader curriculum of blended learning through a new learner management system
- Cross Partnership work on Trauma Informed practice across agencies – [0120LCSPR Finding](#)
- A major review and rewrite of policies and process around our Child Outside the Home Strategy to be delivered by December 2021– [0120LCSPR Finding](#)
- Levels of Intervention and Threshold review by GCC Ambassadors under the Language that Cares strategy started later in the year and transitioning into 2021/22 year
- [South West Child Protection Policy Manual](#) amended and updated to reflect national and local resource changes
- Assurances that SCR findings and recommendations have been addressed with agency responses being published. All published reports can be found [online here](#).

“During the pandemic the partners also sustained the Rapid Review (RR) and LCSPR system and they have identified key areas for improvement in important areas such as the disruption of perpetrators of CSE; services to children with complex needs and information sharing.” (Gloucestershire’s Independent Scrutineer Kevin Crompton 2020)



Statutory Functions

The GSCP was in a position to ratify activity in the following areas:

Child Death Review Process

Gloucestershire has a well-established Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) that facilitates comprehensive multi-agency reviews of child deaths, in order to better understand how and why children die. Gloucestershire was supported in its arrangements in 2020 by the University of Bristol.

The Gloucestershire Child Death Overview Panel has published its Annual Report and the GSCP is assured that its duties under Chapter 5 of Working Together 2018 are being fulfilled.

- Gloucestershire reviewed six cases for ALTE during the period all for children aged 15 to 17. None met the threshold for a Rapid Review and covered:
 - Drug abuse and overdose
 - Ligature incidents
 - Stabbing
 - Collapse due to a medical condition
- There were a total of 32 child deaths in Gloucestershire between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021. Of those deaths there were:
 - 11 Unexpected, including 1 death which was a non-accidental injury that was the only unexpected that went on to be a Rapid Review
 - 4 Expected
 - 17 Neonatal deaths.

People in positions of trust

Gloucestershire County Council has published the [Gloucestershire's LADO Annual Report](#) and the GSCP is assured that there are clear policies and processes for dealing with allegations against people who work with children. The arrangements make a clear distinction between an allegation, a concern about the quality of care or practice or a complaint.

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
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children (WT2018)
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.



Outcomes for Children in Care 2020/2021

WT2018 requires the GSCP to set out in its yearly report outcomes for children and in particular outcomes for looked-after children and care leavers. The following information forms part of the regular exceptions reporting to the GSCP subgroups, Management Group and Executive provided by the authority and health trusts during this period.

Contact

Children's Social Care maintained strong high performance through the year between 90-97% but with Statutory Children in Care (CiC) face to face visits seeing a decline in completion during the first and third lockdown. Contact however was considered to be good during impacted periods with visits undertaken by other methods. Children's Social Care maintained a high performance for reviews for CiC throughout 2020 100% was consistently met.

Health

Children in Care are required to have regular health and dental checks. The ability to provide this service has been impacted by Covid19. On average over the year 92% of CiC received a timely health assessment, the current target is 95%. 60% of CiC have had a recent dental checkup, with the current target of 85%. The ability for dentistry to operate effectively during the pandemic has been challenging, however there was firm assurance that CiC who required urgent dental treatment would be prioritised. Above target performance was maintained by Children's Social Care for CiC with a recent SDQ.

Placements

- 21% of CiC have been placed out of county more than 20 miles away from their home. There is increasing pressure to provide suitable stability in county.
- On average over the year 26.5% of CiC were accommodated under section 20, with 61% of CiC having long term placement stability.

Education

- On average 97% of CiC have a school place of which over 95% of these children or young adults are in mainstream schooling,
- 28% of children or young people are placed in a school out of county.
- 10% of CiC have been persistently absent in the year, a similar figure to the previous year, but concerning bearing in mind the status of CiC as priority attendees in school during the period.

Outcomes for Care Leavers 2020/2021

Contact

- Children's Social Care has a current target of 95% of care leavers being in touch with CSC within any previous 6 month period. In addition a proposed target of 90% for CSC to see older and younger care leavers was also in place. The data provided indicates that Care leavers did not have the contact that the Partners would like during the year, however regular monitoring and updates from CSC coupled with regular sharing of practice adaptations and prioritisation assured the GSCP that the most vulnerable were being seen and supported in a variety of methods. The rate of contact dipped slightly below 80% at the start of April 2020 but increased and maintained a 80% to 90%+ rate through the year as new methods were introduced.
- On average over the year Children's Social Care completed pathway planning for 82% of Care Leavers, whilst below target of 90% the challenges of COVID19 has undoubtedly played a part in missing the target but not as dramatically as feared.

Housing

- 85% of Care Leavers on average are in suitable accommodation. Taking into consideration the 'voice of the child and young person' Care Leaver participants in the "Your Life Beyond Care" (2020) suggested 65% of the sample were happy with their accommodation, with 7% stating they hardly ever/never felt safe in their home and 10% stating they hardly ever/never felt safe in their neighborhood.

Education

- On average 45% of Care Leavers were currently in education, employment or training, with an average of 4% of Care Leavers being in higher education. Education opportunities for young people during the year were unprecedentedly low due to the COVID19 situation.

'Your Life Beyond Care' (2020) highlighted what Care Leavers reported mattered to them:

- safety
- friendships
- security
- and financial stability.

One of the actions to come from the period is for the GSCP Districts Subgroup to understand what provision can be provided to Care Leavers to ensure their needs are met and that corporate parenting responsibility as set out in the [Homeless Reduction act 2018](#) for the six Districts is understood and implemented fully.

"During the year they (GCC Ambassadors) have raised the following as key issues:

- *That the new ways of working have suited some young people better than the pre COVID19 'face to face' methods. They would like these options to remain post COVID19.*
- *The ambassadors wish to promote their 'language that cares' campaign to more professionals to ensure that record keeping /safeguarding procedures recognise that the child /young person must be the focus and this should be reflected in how they and their situation is described / recorded.*
- *That they are concerned about the availability of and access to support for the mental health of children and young people. This is an area which concerned them prior to COVID19 and they feel the pandemic has meant more young people require support.*

The s11 review found evidence that all key partners are making efforts to ensure that they listen to the voice of children and young people and act on what they say" (Gloucestershire's Independent Scrutineer Kevin Crompton 2020)



Practice Development

Working together requires safeguarding partnerships to set out how inter-agency training will be commissioned, delivered and monitored for impact. Like all other services GSCP multi-agency training has had to adapt to changing circumstances to create a training platform that can continue to meet the learning needs of its multi-agency partners. A blended learning approach and on-line training platform has been a shift away from previous face to face training and at the start of April 2020 had many challenges to overcome. It required dedicated time to commission a Learner Management System (LMS), to deliver a virtual classroom platform, allow self-registration of courses, manage delegates, issue certification and successfully deliver quality multi-agency safeguarding training.

One benefit of this approach that became apparent early in the pandemic relates to the ease of engagement with practitioners across the Partnership. In addition the opportunity arose to develop new and exciting resources for the delivery of learning. Whilst a return to some form of face to face training delivery will be necessary post COVID19, we anticipate a blended approach continuing to be an established part of the way we deliver our key safeguarding messages and support our workforce. This will be consolidated within the GSCP's new safeguarding curriculum and training expectations for professionals.

The response to the impact of COVID19 on training was responded to with a clear plan. By the end of May 2020 a new web-based LMS had been commissioned and implemented with an integrated administrative infra-structure in place able to offer a blended learning approach to training whilst offering a completely new range of e-learning courses specifically chosen in line with learning from SCR, Rapid Reviews and audit.

2020-2021: Phased response

Phase 1: April to June 2020

- LMS researched, commissioned and built
- Business Unit administrative staff training underway
- Core e-learning courses commissioned, quality assurance underway

Phase 2: July 2020

- E-learning courses released and rolled out. Prioritising Education and Early Years sector.
- Access granted to local schools, colleges, education services and early year's settings
- Virtual Mandatory Child Protection Inter-Agency courses re-design commenced

Phase 3: Sept -Oct 2020

- Additional themed e-learning courses quality assured and rolled out
- Virtual Mandatory Child Protection Inter-Agency courses, piloted and established on the site

Phase 4: Nov 2020 – Jan 2021

- Statutory agencies open access to the site including; GCC Children and Adult Services, CCG, Health Trusts and Constabulary.

Phase 5 Feb to March

- access to other Relevant Agencies

Prior to COVID19 the GSCP would traditionally deliver its full training programme (face to face) to approximately 4,500 frontline practitioners a year.

Impact

By the end March 2021, there were 7,200 registered users on the training portal with an anticipated growth in usage through 2021 / 2022. By far the biggest number of courses enrolled unsurprisingly was eLearning courses, reflecting the ability to access at anytime and anywhere to meet the demands on practitioners of the pandemic.

The number of user completions i.e. number of times the e-learning courses/virtual courses have been accessed and completed has reached more than 12,000; our LMS system reporting that the completion rate (number of staff starting and fully completing the course) is 80% and rising.

E-Learning	
Organisation	Enrolments
Districts (Cheltenham Borough Council)	14
CCG / GP's	51
EY - under 5s	1677
Education / Schools	7464
GCC (all Services)	284
GHNHSFT	27
GHC	94
Prospects	14
Vol/Charity sector	33

In total 9658 eLearning courses were started during the period with a completion rate of 80%. Access by GCC and Constabulary colleagues remained very low or nonexistent during the period, reflecting the pressures on services during the time.

Child Protection Interagency Virtual Course	
Organisation	Individuals Enrolled
Districts	0
CCG / GP's	143
EY - under 5s	104
Education / Schools	439
GCC (all Services)	8
GHNHSFT	23
GHC	158
Prospects	26
Vol/Charity sector	8

909 practitioners attended the GSCP Virtual multi-agency safeguarding course with high attendance from the Education and Early Years sector at 544, followed by Health Trusts at 324 collectively. Access by GCC and Constabulary colleagues remained very low or nonexistent during the period, reflecting the pressures on services during the time.

The below table and narrative sets out attendance for the individual neglect virtual course as an example where blended learning can assist the partnership in delivering training to its workforce.

The virtual neglect course due to limited availability of specialist health and community social workers were only able to deliver to 56 practitioners during the period. However in order to fill the gap and with neglect as a priority for the GSCP the partnership was able to commission and roll out a neglect eLearning course much earlier in 2020. The eLearning course was started by 929 individual practitioners from a much wider cross section of the partnership with an 80% completion rate

Child Neglect Virtual Course	
Organisation	Individuals Enrolled
Districts	0
CCG / GP's	2
EY - under 5s	14
Education / Schools	27
GCC (all Services)	5
GHNHSFT	2
GHC	6
Prospects	0
Vol/Charity sector	0

".....I felt the on-line training worked really well and was in fact, much more interactive than face to face sessions. The encouragement to use the chat box for questions and queries worked brilliantly and I feel made people ask much more than they would have face to face - so keep up this type of training in the longer term, would be my suggestion! For a busy professional this was also far more time efficient and eco-friendly version of working which is much more sustainable in the longer term." (Local GP and Safeguarding school Governor March 2021)

Building on the huge success of the period and the ability to rapidly transition from face to face to a virtual platform, seeing a significant increase in access to safeguarding training particularly from Education, Early Years and GP's, there is still poor representation from GCC Children Social Care and Constabulary practitioners. Something the S11 panel will want to test with partners through the S11 process in 2021.

Priorities for the GSCP Multi Agency Training for 2021/2022

1. Developing and expand the blended learning curriculum approach designed during the pandemic
2. Measure and understand the impact on the lives of children, young people and families of Multi Agency Training across the Partnership
3. Develop and set up a multi-agency 'Quality Assurance' group to oversee the review of multi and single agency training and look to improve access to training across partners and relevant agencies

"The s11 audit identified a need for the GSCP to review the approach to multi agency training and this has resulted in the introduction of the 'safeguarding curriculum' in 2021. This is a new development and has incorporated the changes to training required as a result of the pandemic. In particular there is now a greater range of training offered and delivered 'online'. The effectiveness of this new curriculum in promoting good multi agency practice has yet to be evaluated. The s11 audit also identified a need for the GSCP to review the balance between single agency training which is aligned to GSCP practice and multi-agency training involving individuals from different agencies." (Gloucestershire's Independent Scrutineer Kevin Crompton 2020)

Safeguarding in Education

The GSCP recognise that when children are accessing good quality education provision this increases their ability to be protected and have access to good quality support to protect them from harm. The table below sets out the picture of education settings in Gloucestershire during the period.

	Total Number of schools by type	Number of LA Maintained	Number of Academies (Inc. Free Schools)
Primary Schools	245	183	62
Secondary Schools	40	5	36
Independent Schools	26	N/A	N/A
Special Schools	10	4	6
Alternative provision	5	4	1
Total	326	196	104

Gloucestershire also has a wide range of further education colleges and two universities.

Gloucestershire schools have access to Safeguarding Support through Safeguarding in Education Team as a Traded Service, managed by the GSCP Business Unit. During 2020 85% of Gloucestershire Schools bought into this service. Its remit is to support all settings in ensuring they are compliant with Keeping Children Safe in Education Legislation.

In April 2020, the Safeguarding in Education Team wrote a COVID19 Annex A for schools safeguarding policies and throughout lockdown this has been updated and disseminated to all schools in line with Government guidance.

Since April 2020 the Safeguarding in Education Team have been delivering Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) Support Hubs to all schools regardless of the Traded Service Safeguarding offer. Short 30 minute sessions provided updates from the Safeguarding in Education Team, Early Help Team, Community Social Workers, Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning (GHLL), MASH Researchers and Police Schoolbeat Officers. Initially from April 2020 to June 2020 these were delivered in three sessions weekly. As more children returned to school they became fortnightly. These proved to be hugely successful and will continue post pandemic.

Since the beginning of the pandemic all training has been offered virtually through the use of eLearning and the Business Units virtual platform, from October 2020 to March 2021, single agency child protection training was delivered to 27 Traded Service member settings virtually.

During the period a series of webinars were held for Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) in education settings providing updates on:

1. Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020)
2. New to the role of DSL
3. What is a good MARF
4. On-line Vulnerabilities for Children
5. A two-part webinar on Domestic Abuse
6. Operation Encompass
7. Completing the Section 175/157 audit
8. Findings from Local Safeguarding Practice Reviews".

The Safeguarding in Education course for Administrators and School Business Managers, designed to

define how their roles compliment the Head teacher and Designated Safeguarding Leads function, was adapted to be run virtually and has delivered to an audience of over 50 education colleagues in both September 2020 and February 2021.

In December 2020, Gloucestershire Police, Gloucestershire County Council and Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership launched Gloucestershire Encompass to all Early Years Day Care Provision. Two bespoke training sessions were delivered for designated staff from these settings. Part of each training session was led by the Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS).

As part of a wider response to the LCSPR CSE Thematic Review the Partnership offered to all Gloucestershire schools a virtual **Streamed to be Seen** version of Chelsea's Story. The play was made available all Year 8 students across all Gloucestershire Schools, with a suitable support and follow up package in place. During the pandemic, Chelsea's Story was seen by over 1,300 students in the county through February to March 2021.

In December 2020, the annual Section 175 (Education Act 2002) Safeguarding Audit was sent out to all educational settings including Independent schools, Academies, maintained, free schools, alternative provisions, childminder and nurseries (933 settings in total).

Impact

Designated Safeguarding Leads, Head Teachers and other educational professionals reported improved confidence through the period as a result of the support and offer from the Safeguarding in Education Traded Service team, Education Department, GHLL and other colleagues.

During the period of this report, no Local Authority schools have graded as inadequate with safeguarding as the identified factor with only one Traded Service Academy graded as inadequate for other non-safeguarding related factors.

Multi Agency Contacts to MASH Audit commissioned February 2021 shows early indications that the education sector is the most proficient in application of threshold and quality of MARF submission.



“In terms of good outcomes for children the GSCP will need to continue to monitor the education outcomes for children in care; access to mental health and emotional well-being support; multi-agency working around all aspects of child exploitation; multi-agency working with ‘children of concern’; and, the use of multi-agency tools designed to improve safeguarding and the identification of risk.” *(Gloucestershire's Independent Scrutineer Kevin Crompton 2020)*

Priorities for 2021 / 2022

During 2020/21, the GSCP acknowledges the need for a sustained focus on practice and front-line service delivery, addressing the findings and recommendations from serious case review Rapid Reviews, LCSPR's and Multi Agency Audit.

The partnership is committed to the following priorities in their business plan for 2021 – 2022, which will be subject to scrutiny and monitoring via the Independent Scrutineer.

001. Ongoing commitment for the GSCP Resolution Group to manage and oversee Escalation and complex cases for a small number of situations where improved outcomes for children and young people are not being achieved and risks are increasing.
002. Expand the safeguarding structure to include a MASH Subgroup to oversee activity through the MASH reporting to the Executive on Exceptions.
003. Maintain a continued focus on measuring the partnerships application of thresholds and addressing the findings of the Contacts To MASH Audit Commenced March 2021
004. Develop further data reporting and analysis process through Sub-Group Level Scorecards with a focused exceptions reporting to the Executive via the Management Group.
005. Land the recommendations from the CSE Thematic Review embedding and delivering on implementing the 'Child Outside the Home Strategy'.
006. Monitor and measure improved cross agency practitioner access to multi agency training across the partnership and the impact of Multi Agency training on safeguarding outcomes for children

The priorities as set out above have been incorporated into a quick reference GSCP Business Plan for 2021/2022, which can be found [online here](#)



Funding

“Ensuring that local arrangements are appropriately funded is one of the key tasks of the three safeguarding partners. Central government should reaffirm advice to statutory partners that funding has to be agreed by them and not be left in limbo with their delegates and then commit the funding agreed”. **Alan Wood May 2021**

The GSCP Executive maintained the previously agreed funding model for 2020. The Local Authority, who have historically been the largest contributor, have retained that position but with increased contributions from both the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Constabulary providing growth in the Partnerships ability to meet its statutory duties. This has allowed the GSCP Executive to focus on their statutory duties confident that funding is available and at the appropriate level.



If you have any questions about this report please contact [GSCP Safeguarding Support Unit](#), for more information about the GSCP [visit our website](#)

Statement of Effectiveness 2020 / 2021

Independent Scrutineer for Children's Safeguarding in Gloucestershire.

April 2020 to March 2021.

Introduction

This is the second report of the independent scrutineer for children's safeguarding arrangements in Gloucestershire (IS) and it covers the period 1st April 2020 until March 31st 2021.

This report has been commissioned by the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Executive (GSCE) which is comprised of the three 'safeguarding partners' (SP) as defined by 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE 2018)' (WT18).

This report is based on the evidence gathered by the IS during the year including:

- All reports provided to the Children's Services Improvement Board of which the IS has been a member.
- All reports provided to the GSCE and associated Delivery Board and Sub-Groups especially the Quality and Improvement in Practice Sub-Group (QiiP).
- Attendance of the I.S. at both GSCE and QiiP.
- Papers provided to the MASH board.
- Regular formal and informal discussion with the key representatives of the Partners and other agencies involved in the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- An audit of compliance with 4 key elements of S11 duties by Partners and other agencies.
- Discussion with the Gloucestershire Ambassadors to ensure the voice of children and young people is reflected in this report.
- Any feedback from regulators during the year.
- All reports arising from Rapid Reviews (RR) and Local Safeguarding of Children Practice Reviews (LCSPR).
- All published reports regarding children's safeguarding and the work of agencies in Gloucestershire e.g. Annual reports.

In December 2019 the GSCE received a report from the I.S. setting out the process for evaluating the effectiveness of the safeguarding Partnership. It proposed using a framework based on 7 domains and associated characteristics that have been identified by Ofsted as contributing to successful Partnership working (see Yvette Stanley Social care commentary Ofsted website July 2018). The I.S. has used these domains alongside the 4 key standards identified by the GSCE for the 2020 s11 audit to make judgements about the effectiveness of the WT18 arrangements in 20/21.

The 7 domains are:

1. Effective, ambitious child-focused leadership within and across partners
2. Wide and active engagement in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements with the right shared priorities
3. Agencies understanding their respective roles and thresholds
4. Good systems for information sharing which professionals are confident and knowledgeable about
5. Strong support and challenge within the multi-agency system
6. An environment in which multi-agency practice can flourish
7. Creating a culture of continuous improvement and learning

The four s11 standards assessed for the S11 audit are:

1. Leadership and accountability
2. Staff safe recruitment, induction, training and development
3. Safeguarding policies and procedures
4. Listening to children and young people

The focus of this report is less on the individual agencies that make up the Safeguarding Partnership and more on the impact of the collective actions of partners in implementing WT18. The [2020 s11 audit report](#) provides more detail on individual agencies. That report concluded that individual agencies compliance with s11 duties was good but that there was more work to do to ensure that the Partnership was driving forward improvements identified through for example serious case reviews (SCRs).

Impact of COVID19

The period of this report has been dominated by the UK response to and impact of the Covid19 pandemic. It has had a significant impact on the working practices of all Gloucestershire agencies involved in safeguarding children. It has been a challenging year for all partners and it is important that we take this into account when scrutinising progress against the requirements of WT18.

During the pandemic partners have maintained a commitment to Partnership working including participation in online meetings. Appropriate adjustments were made to meeting structures and membership to ensure that dialogue could continue.

All partners provided update reports on their response to Covid19 including reassurance to the GSCE that safeguarding capacity would be protected. GSCE and the delivery board worked well with the vulnerable children's cell to track how partners were monitoring support for vulnerable children during full lockdown.

Gloucestershire's overall response to Covid19 was good and this was assisted by the improved Partnership working developed post WT18. A good example of this is the sharing of single agency briefings with other partners an action that was very much welcomed by front line staff. Throughout the year partners worked well together and there is evidence to show that had an impact on practice. Improved attendance of health at strategy discussions; speed of MASH decision making; attendance at initial child protection conferences; timely health checks for children looked after are a few examples where things have improved. Agencies particularly in health increased capacity to ensure better discharge of their duty to appoint named and designated professionals.

During the pandemic the partners also sustained the Rapid Review (RR) and LCSPR system and they have identified key areas for improvement in important areas such as the disruption of perpetrators of CSE; services to children with complex needs and information sharing.

Unfortunately though the demands on capacity have meant that some key areas of work being managed through the GSCP have been delayed and therefore the momentum which characterised the first few months of 2020 has been slightly lost. In particular key work on the Section 10 vision; the further development of Partnership performance data; the S11 audit; implementation of SCR recommendations; and the programme of multi-agency audits were all delayed.

In this respect some of the issues identified in the December 19 IS report remain to be resolved as would have been the expectation prior to the pandemic. Any IS judgement concerning 20/21 must therefore take the pandemic into account. In Gloucestershire the overall response to Covid19 has been well managed and has focussed on keeping vulnerable children safe. It remains to be seen what sort of safeguarding legacy will be left as lockdown eases but this is a national issue and not specific

to Gloucestershire. The GSCP will no doubt track and respond to any legacy that emerges in the future.

The Seven Domains

Effective, ambitious child-focused leadership within and across partners (Green)

In 2019 a strategic decision was taken to focus WT 18 arrangements on Section 11 responsibilities of partners (welfare and safeguarding). Separate work was established to focus on the Section 10 responsibility of the Local Authority to ensure that all partners work together to promote the 'well-being' of all children and young people in the area. These two responsibilities are integrally linked and in Ofsted rated good and outstanding authorities there is clear evidence of how a focus on 'well-being' for all is a prerequisite for strong safeguarding.

The GSCP has set out its local arrangements for Working Together 2018 in 'Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Working Together 2021'. This is a revision of the first arrangements which operated in 2019/2020 and the result of a review in the light of experience during that year. A critical change was the replacement of the Delivery Board with a more action focussed Management Group. The Partners have therefore recognised the need to improve the pace and effectiveness of identified improvements to safeguarding practice.

The GSCP published its first Annual Report in autumn 2020 which provided a review of the first year of the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (GSCP) detailing the progress made in implementing WT18 and setting clear priorities for the GSCP during 20/21. There were 4 key priorities– Responding as a Partnership to 'children of concern'; improving the response to all forms of child exploitation; continuing the focus on non-accidental injuries to non-mobile infants; and, a continued focus on neglect with an emphasis on pre-birth working. Whilst work on all four areas has been undertaken the first two named in particular would be described as 'work in progress' and will carry forward to 21/22.

In December 2020 the work on 'well-being' was re-launched through Gloucestershire's Health and Well-being Board (HWB) as 'Child Friendly Gloucestershire' (CFG) -a campaign also promoted by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. A steering group has been formed chaired by Dame Janet Trotter with senior representation from the Partners and other key partners. The HWB agreed the following key priorities for CFG:

- All children and young people are safe from harm.
- All children and young people are supported to choose healthy lifestyles.
- All children and young people have access to safe affordable transport.
- All children and young people do well at all stages of learning and are equipped with the skills for life in the 21st Century.
- All children and young people are happy and able to have fun growing up.
- All children and young people enjoy the economic and social benefits of growth
- All children and young people are able to contribute to making Gloucestershire a sustainable county

The steering group is engaged in an extensive programme of engagement to talk to children and young people and others on how to make the ambition a reality. The work is evidence of both the commitment of partners to the well-being of all children and the alignment of the governance for safeguarding with that of the HWB. In respect of youth justice and other community safety issues (e.g. domestic abuse) there has been good working practice between the GSCP and the Community Safety Partnership including a joint Domestic Homicide Review/ Serious Case Review which was finalised during the year.

The HWB has also been promoting work on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and all GSCP partners have been engaged in this work.

There is probably a need to review the working relationship between the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board (GSAB) and the GSCP particularly in the light of the findings of SCRs regarding the transition from children's to adult services and the fact that exploited children potentially become exploited adults. Nevertheless several members of the GSCP are also members of the GSAB so informal links do exist.

All partners are members of the Children's Services Improvement Board (IB) which provides the opportunity of partners to debate and take action on the basis of the high quality performance data and other reports provided to the IB. This has been invaluable given that work on the GSCP data card has not progressed as fast as desired, in part down to the time it took to appoint to the analyst post funded by the partners. Through the IB work has been identified as needed on the application of the levels of intervention (thresholds) prior to contacting the MASH; procedure in respect of strategy meetings; multi-agency working in respect of 'children of concern'. The GSCP is therefore growing in its ability to understand front line practice its strengths and areas for improvement. Going forward this would be more visible if the GSCP were to publish an annual improvement plan setting out clear priorities and timelines for improving Partnership working.

The GSCP has therefore set out an ambitious agenda for the well-being, safeguarding and welfare of children. The visibility of this overall vision would be greatly improved if more links were made between the various websites promoting CFG and GSCP e.g. a link from the GSCP website to CFG and vice versa.

The work of both CFG and the GSCP has been informed by the use of good data including the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and a specific needs assessment on children and young people.

The GSCP is promoting the message that child protection is everyone's responsibility and has set out clear processes through the Partnership website. Key documents include the Levels of Intervention guidance and updated Early Help guidance. That guidance sets out a graduated pathway which encourages agencies to intervene with the right support as early as possible to prevent the journey into statutory social care interventions.

The s11 audit raises the issue of whether all single agency policies and procedures are aligned with the GSCP policies and procedures. The GSCP will be reviewing this during 21/22.

The Partners and other safeguarding partners are making significant efforts to engage with children and young people. The Ambassadors (children in care employed by Gloucestershire County Council) have provided regular feedback to the IB based on their discussions with other children in the care system and are regularly involved in the quality audits conducted within Children's Social care. They have been involved in commissioning as well. In addition the Local Authority shares the outcome of the annual Bright spots survey and CFG is predicated on extensive engagement of children and young people. The IS held some meetings with the Ambassadors to discuss their view of the impact of Covid19 on children and young people. During the year they have raised the following as key issues:

- That the new ways of working have suited some young people better than the pre Covid19 'face to face' methods. They would like these options to remain post Covid19.
- The ambassadors wish to promote their 'language that cares' campaign to more professionals to ensure that record keeping /safeguarding procedures recognise that the child /young

person must be the focus and this should be reflected in how they and their situation is described / recorded.

- That they are concerned about the availability of and access to support for the mental health of children and young people. This is an area which concerned them prior to Covid19 and they feel the pandemic has meant more young people require support.

The IB and the GSCP has responded positively and will be for example conducting a review of the effectiveness and sufficiency of mental health services for children and young people.

The s11 review found evidence that all key partners are making efforts to ensure that they listen to the voice of children and young people and act on what they say.

Wide and active engagement in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements with the right shared priorities

GSCE took the opportunity taken to streamline and rationalise all Sub-Groups with a view to maximise the engagement and contribution of partners. Of note is the development of the Quality and Improvement in practice Sub-Group (QIIP) which holds a key role in monitoring performance and overseeing changes in practice required by recommendations for serious case reviews and the new system of rapid reviews and local child safeguarding practice reviews.

Regular meetings are held with appropriate agenda's and these meetings have been well attended and purposeful with evidence of a renewed commitment across the Partners and relevant agencies (as specified in WT18 for example the District councils and schools) to ensuring services for children , young people, families and carers are properly focussed on safeguarding and welfare.

Agencies understanding their respective roles and thresholds (amber)

Partners have shown a clear commitment to working with each other to solve safeguarding issues. All three Partners have made resource commitments to ensure the operation of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which has also been a platform for reflection on current and future practice for Partnership working in respect key areas such as strategy discussions, S47 enquiries, contacts and referrals. All the evidence available on the MASH indicates it is an effective 'front door' capable of channelling concerns to an appropriate pathway ranging from advice through early help and safeguarding response. The timeliness of partner's responses to the most serious of concerns has improved consistently during the year.

Nevertheless performance data indicates that a significant number of contacts to the MASH do not result in conversion to social care referrals giving rise to questions about the current understanding of thresholds amongst partner agencies. Given a large number of these come from the health sector and the constabulary work is needed to improve the partnership's ability to route children, young people, families and carers to the right pathway within the graduated approach. This has been acknowledged by the GSCP and work is planned to consider how best to improve the position. It is important that this work is completed in a timely way as the Partnership could be using capacity investigating contacts which do not require a MASH intervention and by default reducing the capacity to consider those contacts that do meet threshold. This was identified as a potential issue for the GSCP in the December 2019 I.S. report and again progress was affected by Covid19.

Good systems for information sharing which professionals are confident and knowledgeable about (amber)

During 20/21 information sharing through the MASH was re visited and a new protocol agreed. The GSCP has an appropriate policy framework for information sharing as do all key partners. Children's

Social Care introduced the use of privacy notices during the year to ensure compliance with GDPR.

Despite this issues about information sharing were still identified in some SCR and RR. This is not unusual within safeguarding Partnerships as organisational culture and staff understanding both have to emphasise the need to share if there are any safeguarding concerns.

Information sharing through the MASH is however good and this represents a significant improvement in this domain since the implementation of WT18.

Strong support and challenge within the multi-agency system (amber)

The GSCP agreed the framework used within this report through which the IS would evaluate the effectiveness of the Partnership.

A revised section 11 audit process was agreed by partners through which judgements could be made on the effectiveness of individual agencies in discharging their S11 duties. The IS chaired this process and produced a report which is available on the GSCP website. It concluded that there was a high level of s11 compliance for agencies and that the GSCP was strong 'vertically' in that Partners and key agencies had performance regimes in place; some had good quality performance data; and most had a safeguarding plan which included responding to SCR /RR and LCSPR recommendations. It was less obvious how the Partnership operated horizontally in respect of multi-agency working. The report recommends that the GSCP consider developing a Partnership Improvement Plan based on an analysis of the effectiveness of current practice and associated areas for improvement.

A separate process (S175 audit) remains in place for schools and has a 100% return record. The results of the audit will be reported by the GSCP in due course.

A programme of multi-agency case file audits was planned to give QIIP a greater 'line of sight' on front line multi-agency practice. Work was completed on auditing sample of children's cases involving neglect include a review the use of the neglect tool kit by partners. This found that the neglect tool kit was not being used despite it being adopted by the former GSCB as a key response to a previous SCR. Work continued also on the application of the pre-birth protocol However due to Covid19 not as much multi-agency auditing took place as was originally planned.

There has been greater use of the escalation process by partners. Whilst there have been instances where use of the procedure has been challenging both in process and content all partners have demonstrated their willingness to engage in difficult conversations and seek solutions. During the year use of the formal escalation process has been replaced by better dialogue between key partners either as part of the early stages of the formal escalation policy or as an alternative to avoid the need to apply the formal policy.

An environment in which multi-agency practice can flourish (amber)

The GSCP has a number of multi-agency tools including a neglect tool kit; CSE risk assessment and a pre-birth protocol. SCR, RR and the LCSPR has identified that the use of these tools across the Partnership is not as intended. The GSCP is committed to improving this in two key areas in 2021/2022 – the neglect tool kit and the early identification of children and young people at risk from all forms of child exploitation.

The s11 audit identified a need for the GSCP to review the approach to multi-agency training and this has resulted in the introduction of the 'safeguarding curriculum' in 2021. This is a new development and has incorporated the changes to training required as a result of the pandemic. In particular there is now a greater range of training offered and delivered 'online'. The effectiveness

of this new curriculum in promoting good multi-agency practice has yet to be evaluated. The s11 audit also identified a need for the GSCP to review the balance between single agency training which is aligned to GSCP practice and multi-agency training involving individuals from different agencies.

Agencies provided assurance during the s11 audit that they understood the importance of supervision and management oversight to good safeguarding practice. There is evidence particularly from the IB that in respect of children's social case this is improving and there was evidence from other partners that this was the case in their organisation as well.

Creating a culture of continuous improvement and learning (amber)

A new system of rapid reviews was introduced with the first being held in March 2020. Initially chaired by partners they are now independently chaired which has further strengthened the methodology. The involvement of front-line practitioners has proved to be a good evolution of the RR approach. During the period there have been 9 such reviews with two leading to the next level of review – a local children's safeguarding practice review (LCSPR) one of which is a thematic review of three cases involving child sexual exploitation. The GSCP approach to RRs and LCSPR's has been acknowledged by the national panel as being best practice.

Under the transitional guidance arrangements had to be made for the completion of the 9 serious case reviews commissioned by the outgoing Gloucestershire Children's Safeguarding Board (GSCB). All 9 were completed, and as a minimum the learning from them published alongside the GSCP response.

Learning has been derived from RRs and the LCSPR with potential impact on practice. Partners have focussed specifically for example on the implementation and effectiveness of the multi-agency pre-birth protocol which is monitored via a task and finish group. Similarly, case audit and RRs have shown that some multi-agency toolkits such as the neglect toolkit are not used by all partners leading to critical review of how to rectify this in the future.

A 'tracker' has been developed to enable QiiP to monitor the implementation of the recommendations from SCRs, RRs and LCSPRs. Significant work was undertaken to ensure actions are SMART, deliverable and will have a tangible impact on practice. The s11 established that progress against the actions on this tracker had not progressed as quickly as intended and in some cases had not produced the intended impact on safeguarding practice.

The pace and effectiveness of the response to the recommendations contained in the 'tracker' is a major challenge for the GSCP in the forthcoming year.

The GSCP remains committed to the development of a Partnership data score card to inform its view on the effectiveness of Partnership working. This has been the case for some time but the appointment of the GSCP analyst should give this work more momentum in 2021/2022. Despite being 'work in progress' the scorecard and associated data report has improved during the year.

As mentioned above the performance data and other reports provided to the IB have given greater visibility to areas in which Partnership working can be further improved.

Link with Inspectorates / Regulators

There was one Ofsted focused visit during the year the outcome of which was published on their site on 20th November 2020. Whilst the overall conclusion was that: 'Children's services in Gloucestershire are still on the road to recovery, with continued weaknesses in some areas.' The letter contains many encouraging observations reflecting the slow but positive trajectory of the

improvement journey. The letter also states: 'the local authority's response to Covid19 has been positive, pro-active and well managed. Of relevance to Partnership working Ofsted noted that: 'Despite the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) having to operate virtually, there has been no significant drop off in its performance.'

Ofsted letter has other sections of relevance to the GSCP:

- 'The comparatively high rate of referrals to children's social care suggests a degree of risk aversion and/or failure on the part of partner agencies to fully understand or consistently apply thresholds.'
- 'Strategy meetings ...are... Well managed and well attended... '
- 'In most cases, section 47 enquiries ... are completed with minimal delay.'
- 'However when it is decided not to proceed by way of an initial child protection conference, the rationale for doing so is not always clearly or explicitly recorded.'
- 'Most children have up to date health assessments ... access to dental checks for children in care during Covid19 has been more problematic, partly because relevant national guidance does not prioritise their needs.'
- 'Covid19 has put a strain on sources of help and support for children in care and care leavers who are experiencing difficulties with their emotional well-being and mental health, particularly in terms of access to CAMHS.'
- Concerns about the quality of personal education plans and education outcomes for children in care.

Conclusion

Through the GSCP and the work on CFG the Partners are promoting their ambition for children and young people including keeping them safe from harm and the risk of harm.

Governance and leadership is good but in 2021/2022 the GSCP needs to demonstrate that this governance can identify key priorities for improvement and ensure that agreed changes are implemented at pace and with clear impact on the experience of children, young people families and carers provided with services through the whole graduated pathway.

One key test of this will be the speed at which the GSCP resolves the situation regarding contacts /thresholds and the delivery of RR recommendations and those of the LCSPR in particular.

The evidence from the IB suggests that Children's Social Care is improving albeit at a pace below that which the service leadership would like. It is however clear that there are areas of improvement that require other partners – principally the Constabulary and some health agencies – to improve their contribution to safeguarding e.g. application of thresholds.

In terms of good outcomes for children the GSCP will need to continue to monitor the education outcomes for children care; access to mental health and emotional well-being support ; multi-agency working around all aspects of child exploitation; multi-agency working with 'children of concern'; and, the use of multi-agency tools designed to improve safeguarding and the identification of risk.

This is however a Partnership with a strong commitment to safeguarding that has performed well during the pandemic and is increasingly knowledgeable about what can be improved. 21/22 provides the opportunity for the GSCP to demonstrate it can evolve further as Partnership to provide even better services to children and young people.

Kevin Crompton - GSCP Independent Scrutineer (April 2020 – March 2021)



Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership



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