



DRAFT



Foreword

We are pleased to present this report of the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership that covers the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The early part of the year was dominated by the emergency response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the pandemic and changing circumstances of this heavily influenced the ongoing work of all partners, and the partnership as a whole through the year.

Despite the unprecedented challenges facing the many organisations that make up the partnership, overall the partnership has been able to progress its work to review and improve the approach to safeguard Children in Leicestershire & Rutland. We have adapted our methods, training approaches and continued to communicate important messages to the community and to all who work with children and families across the area.

During this period we have seen partnership working strengthened as working together becomes all the more important when facing uncertainty and challenges on many fronts. And as we have had to adapt how we work the involvement of every member of our communities in helping to protect children and respond to abuse and neglect has become even more important.

Workers and managers in organisations across Leicestershire & Rutland have worked hard in difficult circumstances to support the welfare and safety of children, and their wellbeing has been a key concern alongside those they serve.

Our thanks go to you all.

The Safeguarding Partners for Leicestershire & Rutland

Signatures and pictures ?????



The Partnership

The Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership brings together organisations across the counties of Leicestershire and Rutland with the vision:

“For children and young people in Leicester to be safe, well and achieve their full potential”

The Partnership commenced in September 2019 as the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements required by Working Together.

Its members include the statutory safeguarding partners: Police, Local Authorities, and Clinical Commissioning Groups, as well as other relevant agencies including schools, health agencies, Probation and other organisations working with children.

During 2020/21 the Partnership was Chaired by its Independent Advisor. This role was held by Simon Westwood until September 2020, and then taken on by Kay Whyte-Bell.

This is the statutory report of the SCP outlining the work it has carried out from April 2020 to the end of March 2021.

In Line with Working Together 2018 government guidance this report outlines:

- **What has been done by the Partnership and the partners, to safeguard children and young people during the previous year and how effective the partnership arrangements have been.**
- **This report includes information about:**
 - Agreed priorities
 - Analysis of progress against priorities
 - Decisions and actions taken by partners
 - Feedback from children and young people and how this has been utilised to inform work and influence service provision
 - Information on the delivery and impact of multi-agency safeguarding training
 - Information on the learning and impact of any Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
 - Any changes to the safeguarding arrangements and reasons for those changes

For more information on how the Partnership works please visit <https://lrsb.org.uk/lrscp>

The work of the Partnership

The Priorities of the Partnership

The SCP identified the following priorities and outcomes for 2020/21:

Statutory responsibilities

- The Partnership has carried out the statutory requirements of the Safeguarding Partners and assured itself they are meeting these.
- Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Partnership assurance work result in timely learning and changes in systems and practice to improve safeguarding/outcomes for children.
- The impact of COVID-19 on safeguarding and welfare of children is understood, emerging issues are identified, and partnership approaches to address this and mitigate future risk are in place.

Voice of the Child

- The priorities and work of the partnership has been influenced by the voice and experience of children who have received safeguarding support.
- Partners evidence that work with children to safeguard them is directed by their voice and lived experience and this is having a positive impact on their safety and wellbeing.
- The partnership is assured that messages and measures online safety are reaching children and young people and supporting them to be safe online.

Mental Health

- The emotional and mental health needs of children with learning disabilities and/or autism are understood in the context of safeguarding and support for this group of children is in place as required to reduce risk.
- Safeguarding and mental health support for children is joined up and partners work together and with young people to reduce risk of harm.

Communications

- People who work or live in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland report child abuse and neglect and concerns they are aware of.

Domestic Abuse

- The partnership is assured that there are appropriate support and interventions for children living with domestic abuse.

The work on these priorities was embedded within the assurance, training, procedure and review work of the partnership outlined further in this report.

“Just let me talk” (YPAG)

Response to COVID-19

The coronavirus pandemic had a significant impact on the work of partners and the partnership to safeguard children.

At the end of March 2020 the partnership had to react quickly to the emerging global pandemic and response to this. Within four days of lockdown, the four safeguarding partners had reviewed their arrangements and written out to the partnership identifying which SCP work would be prioritised in the changing circumstances.

The LRSCP and Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board also agreed a joint statement in relation to COVID-19 to encourage people to continue to report concerns regarding safeguarding.

The Partnership saw a significant reduction in the number of contacts coming into individual agencies' safeguarding teams and children's social care at the end of March and beginning of April and was concerned that children at risk of abuse would be seen by fewer professionals. In response to this, led by Rutland County Council, the SCP developed a safeguarding campaign #ourdoorisopen to encourage everyone to look out for the safety of children in their community during lockdown and act. This was promoted across the partnerships, through social media and in local communities linked to the pandemic response. Following the campaign reports and referrals to local authorities and police regarding safeguarding children increased and the campaign was recognised as good practice by the Local Government Association in June 2020.

Led by the local Clinical Commissioning Group, safeguarding partners across the locality were swift to adapt to the impact of COVID-19 by setting up a regular (weekly with flexibility to change) meeting of safeguarding leads with a view to achieve a collective understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on safeguarding children at an operational level, to share information about the impact of COVID-19 on services, and to address any emerging issues.

This Safeguarding 'Sub-Cell' allowed timely and flexible sharing of information, issues, and solutions for safeguarding children across the partnership in response to COVID-19. It also fed into a number of different strategic bodies, avoiding duplication, which was particularly important at a time of crisis.



This group identified and responded to the following areas as follows:

Area of concern identified	Action taken
Increase in pregnant women known to substance abuse services	Hospital and Substance misuse treatment service data was reviewed and the positive management, engagement & regular caseload meetings between Safeguarding Lead of the substance misuse service and Hospital trust Substance Abuse Midwife was noted.
Increase in Concealed/ Denied Pregnancy	A deep-dive into midwifery records followed by multi-agency communication planning including a piece in our Safeguarding Matters newsletter to raise public and professional awareness alongside an update to procedures. The local Hospital Trust's work on this also helped influence a national public campaign.
Concern that changes in services resulted in risks to new-born babies being unseen	The partnership gained assurance that GPs had been requested to ensure that the SW was informed about any vulnerable babies (on Child Protection Plans) who were not brought for a face to face 6-8 week baby check with their GP.
A reduction in Community Child Protection Medicals	Medicals data explored for 3-months for all child protection medicals, identified overall figures in line with local authority data and no further reduction noted.
Concerns regarding the impact of the pandemic on workforce capacity and welfare	Assurance gained from all agencies that workforce capacity met demand and safeguarding was being prioritised.

The positive impact of this on children, young people, and their families is difficult to measure, however the group's ability to identify, analyse and respond to concerns raised meant that none of these areas became an ongoing or escalating safeguarding concern. The partnership has overall recognised a stronger approach to working together, and the approach of this group will be retained as part of the partnership's assurance process.

The impact of COVID-19 and the response of partners and the partnership was regularly reviewed to support effective safeguarding and use of partners resources.

Seeking Assurance

The partnership has developed and implemented a Quality Assurance Framework shared with the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board. This can be found here <https://lrsb.org.uk/aboutlrsb>.

Performance data

It has proved difficult to identify data from across partners that evidences the effectiveness of multi-agency working.

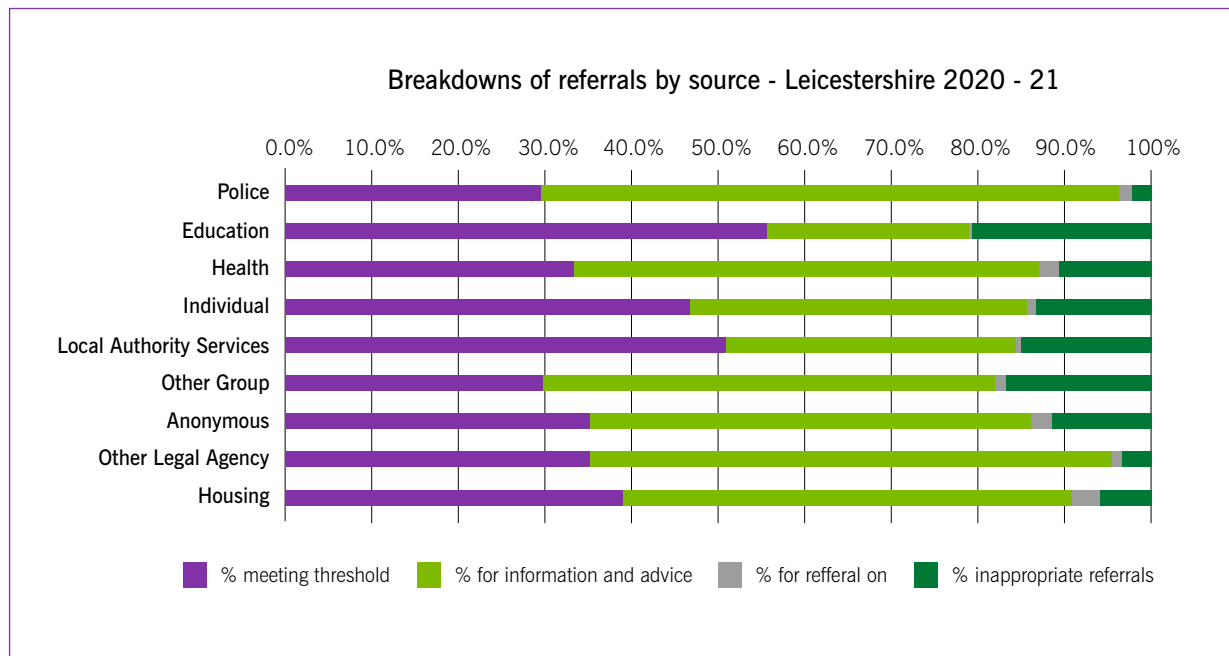
The partnership reviewed data regarding referrals to Children Social Care from different sources and partners involvement in multi-agency safeguarding.

To help understand impact of partnership working the partnership also reviewed data regarding 're-referrals' (children referred back to social care following safeguarding intervention) and 'repeat plans' (children needing a follow up child protection plans after initial plans had ended).

Leicestershire

As previously outlined partners and the partnership saw an initial reduction in referrals at the start of the year linked to the response to the pandemic, which was followed by an increase up to expected levels.

Of all contacts to the local authority around 40% met the thresholds for Children's Social Care or Children and Family Welfare Services for early help. 48% were for information and advice only, 1% were referred on to other services and 11% were deemed to be inappropriate referrals. Education sources had the highest proportion meeting thresholds (56%), but also the highest proportion of inappropriate referrals (21%).

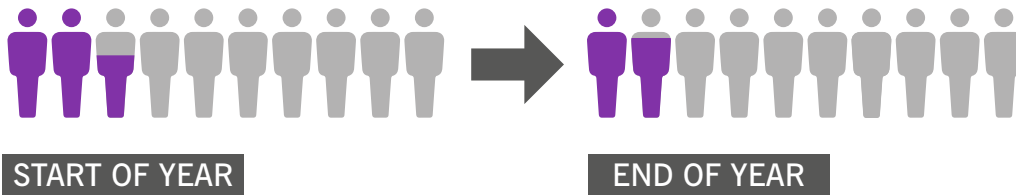


This highlights some areas to work on with regard to awareness of safeguarding and thresholds. During the year we reviewed the thresholds and engaged schools in this work, this was a really valuable two-way process which led to further engagement work between social care and schools including a virtual meet and greet for school staff with First Contact managers to support the referral process.

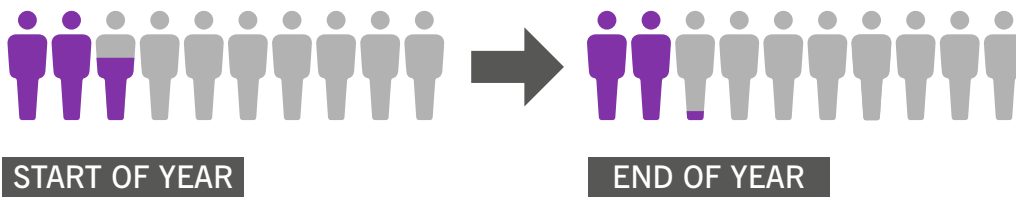
In Leicestershire there were a high proportion of repeat child protection plans (26.3%) and re-referrals (26.2%) at the start of the year. Domestic Abuse became a more significant factor in cases during the pandemic and many repeat plans were related to domestic abuse. Audit work identified strengthening safety planning as a key area for improvement for both areas. Leicestershire County Council has carried out focussed work to improve safety planning, and have been working to develop an improved approach to domestic abuse as part of their programme of defining services for the future. In the final quarter of the year re-referrals were down to 18.4% and Repeat plans 22.1%.

The partnership is following up assurance regarding domestic abuse in tis priority plans for 2021/22.

Re-referrals



Repeat child protection plans

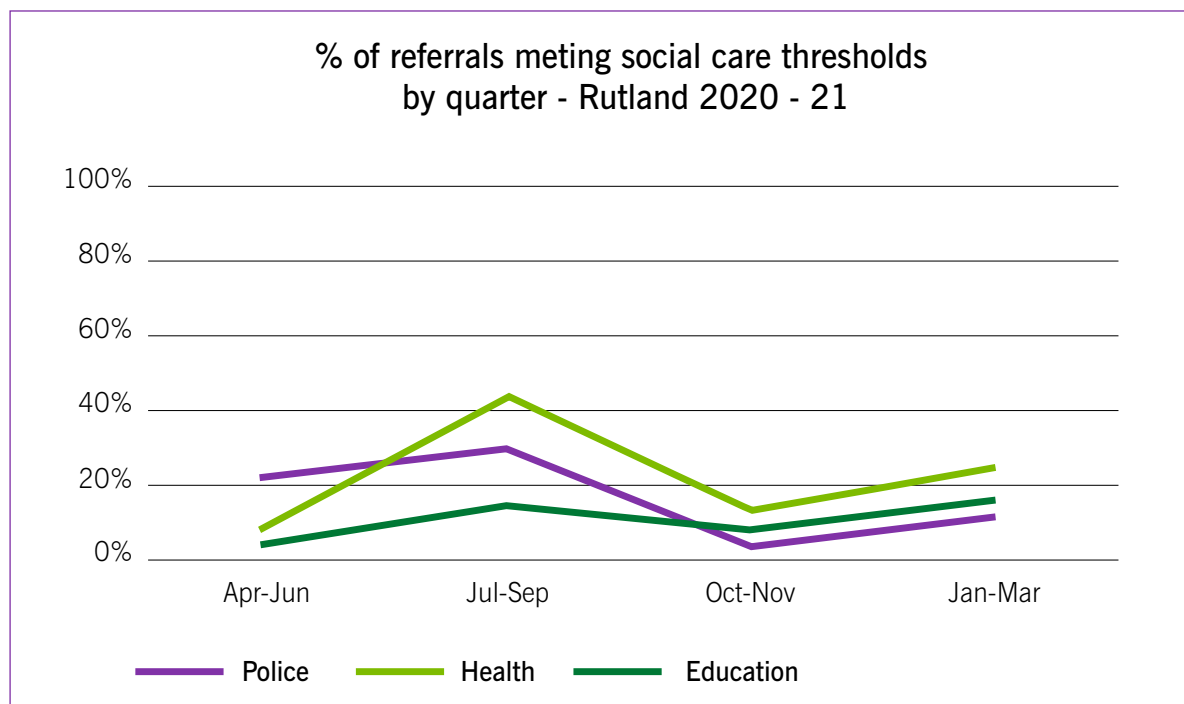


The introduction of online meetings due to the pandemic has resulted in better attendance at multiagency child protection and review meetings, for example by GPs and Mental Health Services. Feedback from families, children and young people has been positive and some have identified that they have felt less anxious and more engaged in the meeting.

Rutland

As previously outlined partners and the partnership saw an initial reduction in referrals at the start of the year linked to the response to the pandemic, which was followed by an increase up to expected levels.

As the first lockdown ended in the summer of 2020 referrals increased and the proportion of these that met thresholds for social care increased across the main referring agencies. As with numbers of referrals, the proportion meeting thresholds was in line with previous years by the end of the year.

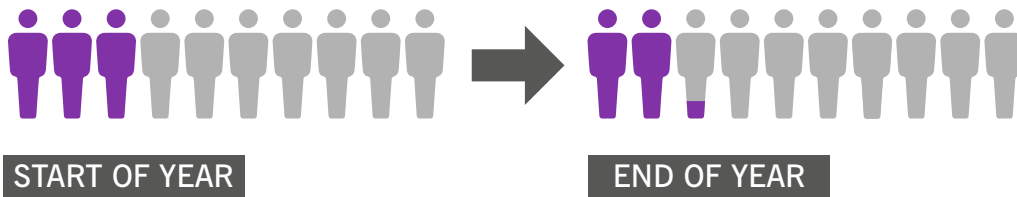


While the numbers of contacts not meeting threshold for social care are high further analysis during the year identified that the referrals were appropriate in early identification of need and most have accessed early intervention through Early Help in Rutland. Further work will be done with partners regarding awareness for thresholds and appropriate referrals, linked to the refresh of the Partnership thresholds document in summer of 2021.

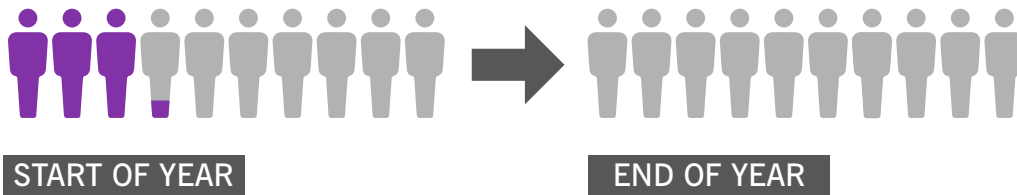
In Rutland there were a high proportion of repeat child protection plans (33%) and re-referrals (30%) at the start of the year. Proportions of repeat child protection plans and re-referrals can fluctuate significantly in Rutland due to the small number of referrals and young people on child protection plans. Rutland County Council carried out work to improve quality and family ownership of Signs of Safety plans. This supported families to sustain changes, which has led to a reduction in re-referral rates. At the end of the year re-referral rates had reduced (22%) and there were no children on a second (or more) child protection plan.

In response to low number of CP plans Rutland County Council audited CIN and strategy meeting decision making and put in place development plan regarding step down plans as part of 'back to basics' practice work. This included responsive plans that don't lose sight of original concerns. Rutland County Council also worked with partners regarding making appropriate referrals and supporting challenge.

Re-referrals



Repeat child protection plans



Self-assessment

During 2020 partners carried out a self-assessment of their safeguarding effectiveness. The partnership focussed this assessment on specific areas of priority in the pandemic, including domestic abuse, safeguarding in service change and staff welfare and support.

All agencies provided some evidence that they were effective in their:

- Governance of safeguarding,
- Consideration of safeguarding in commissioning
- Consideration of safeguarding in service change, including the response to Covid-19
- Supporting workforce capacity and resilience in order to effectively safeguard children

Some agencies identified there was further work to improve effectiveness regarding:

- Engaging with children to hear and respond to their voice, and
- The response to children affected by domestic abuse

Those agencies identified plans in place within their organisations to increase effectiveness.

The assessment did not directly identify any areas for significant work across partners or on a multi-agency basis. However on the basis of the information provided the SCP identified that it could be challenging partners to be more ambitious in hearing and responding to the voice of children in safeguarding. The partnership will follow this up through its work in 2021/22.

Audits

The SCP followed up its assurance work in 2019-20 regarding Mental health with a multi-agency audit focussed on safeguarding of children on the waiting list for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

The audit highlighted that work takes place with children on the waiting list, but organisations are not always communicating well regarding the work taking place, young people's education and parental mental health. Understanding and joint working around mental health and safeguarding had improved following the findings and action from the SCP audit in the previous year, however there was still further improvement required. Further key findings were:

- CAMHS were not always invited to Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs)
- There is a need for greater consistency and quality in how Voice of the Child is heard and recorded
- In Leicestershire County it was identified that the local domestic violence support service had involvement in each case, but were not always invited to multi-agency meetings.

Approaches to multi-agency meetings are being reviewed to address these findings and in line with the finding from the self-assessment the partnership is seeking further information from agencies as to how they are improving how they hear and respond to the voice of children.

A multi-agency audit regarding domestic abuse and safeguarding was planned, but could not take place due to agencies capacity relating to the coronavirus pandemic. This will be carried out in 2021.

“Don't pressure anyone into saying anything but make a more open and comforting environment for students to talk.” (Covid survey)



Multi-Agency Safeguarding Procedures

The partnership has ensured procedures are in place for multi-agency safeguarding in line with Working Together 2018 and has specifically revised the following procedures in response to learning from local and national reviews and assurance processes:

- Concealed/denied pregnancies
- Child Criminal Exploitation
- Allegations against people who work with children
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Neglect Toolkit updated to include adolescent neglect, SUDI (Sudden Unexplained Death in Infants) and pre-birth neglect

In addition work was underway at the end of the year to complete:

- Guidance regarding children with mental health needs/self-harm and suicide
- A procedure for Children on child protection plans who leave the UK,
- A review of the Pre-birth procedure for safeguarding
- A review of the Multi-agency Thresholds document
- A review of the Fabricated and Induced Illness procedures

Training

The SCPs training co-ordination and delivery function is shared with the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board to support consistent and effective partnership working.

In the immediate response to the pandemic the training function of the SCP was suspended, apart from the ongoing offer to train multi-agency COVID-19 related volunteers.

The training programme re-commenced in September 2020 with a diversified approach delivering training in a more blended way, offering film clips, recorded webinars, live pdfs, and self-directed learning/reading alongside virtual-only delivery.

Along with a core safeguarding offer we have also linked with the local Violence Reduction Network (VRN) to support a programme of delivery on 'The impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Trauma on Children and Young People'.

In addition Leicestershire & Rutland County Councils ran training and development sessions for Safeguarding leads in schools and early years establishments in the area, incorporating learning from the SCPs.

“Encouraging students to talk about how they are feeling and not overloading them” (Covid survey)

From September 2020 to March 2021 the SCP programme delivered training to 988 people over 58 training events. This number of attendees is almost equivalent to the face to face training of the previous year, which totalled just over 1000. This shows the ongoing need for learning and highlighted some potential benefits of a more diversified approach. A further 640 people attended 3 larger events, 2 webinars and a conference which brings this total to 1,628 across 2020/21.

Our training evaluation shows an increase of 80 to 90 points (on a scale from -100 to +100) across evaluated training in all areas of knowledge, confidence, and skills.

A particular session that had excellent feedback was 'Understanding Neglect and its impact in adolescence'. This was commissioned and delivered in response to learning from one of the Serious Case Reviews published this year. All attendees reported a significant increase in knowledge and skills following the training.

An end of year survey of training attendees found that 80% of respondents identify they have changed their practice at work as a result of SCP training.

The SCP intends to continue this diversified approach, with the addition of some face to face delivery when it is possible and beneficial.

“Absolutely fantastic learning experience. Incredibly in-depth, knowledgeable and informative” (Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner - Leicestershire CC, attending Understanding Neglect and its impact in adolescence).

“I found the safeguard core awareness course very informative. Being a newly qualified practitioner I was not confident in procedures of identifying and reporting safeguarding concerns. I now feel confident and skilled in this” (Pre- School Assistant, attending Core Awareness in Safeguarding CYP).

“This training gave more confidence when talking about mental capacity and awareness of law” and “My assessments now have a more informed consideration when looking at capacity with client cases. Trainer was superb.” (Mental Capacity Act training)

Voluntary and Community Sector

The SCP engages with the voluntary and community sector through a VCS reference group that brings together agencies across Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland. This allows the partnership to understand needs and emerging issues and influence good safeguarding practice in the sector. During the year the SCP was asked to present our approach on this to support another regional SCP in developing their engagement with the sector.

The reference group has contributed to the development of the partnership priorities and has developed its own briefings relating to the SCP's priorities and emerging learning. The briefings are disseminated widely through the sector and written specifically to meet the needs of voluntary and community agencies.

Engagement with the VCS sector led to the development and delivery of training for safeguarding leads in voluntary and community agencies during the pandemic and the partnership setting up specific pages for the sector on its website.

Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

The partnership assesses Serious Safeguarding Incidents as defined by Working Together 2018 and decides whether a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR), in order to identify how to improve safeguarding responses in future, is required.

The Partnership carried out 4 Rapid Reviews following a Serious Incident Notification or referral in the period of this report. One of these was revisited later in the year when more information became available. From these the partnership commenced two Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. Both of these were in progress at the end of March 2021 to be completed later in 2021.

Local health agencies worked well to continue to contribute to these reviews whilst facing significant resource challenges during the pandemic.

The former Safeguarding Children Board published four Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) in 2020. The Partnership completed six other learning reviews that had not met the criteria for an SCR or CSPR.

These reviews identified the following key areas for further work:

- Identifying and responding to adolescent neglect
- Improved understanding and collaborative working regarding safeguarding and child mental health support
- Consistently hearing and responding to the voice and lived experience of children and evidencing this
- Effective engagement and involvement of all agencies in child protection conferences
- Improved confidence in recognising and responding to potential Fabricated and Induced Illness.

Action plans are in place to respond to these and learning has been shared with practitioners across organisations through the Safeguarding Partnerships' [Safeguarding Matters newsletter](#), through articles and '7-minute briefings' designed to convey key messages from reviews and encourage managers and workers to reflect on their practice.

“I want space to talk, but don't want to be pressured by anyone to say anything” (YPAG)

Action taken during the year can be seen in the work previously outlined on procedures, training and audit relating to adolescent neglect, mental health the voice of the child and concealed and denied pregnancy but also included:

- Production of standards and guidance to support effective child protection conferences with all agencies well engaged.
- Ongoing messages regarding hearing the voice of children and promoting the partnership's 'Was not heard' video.
- Additional clarification regarding the areas for further learning in the review of the Thresholds document.

“When I cry I’m talking to you, when I fall silent I’m talking to you...”

(Was Not Heard)

During the period covered in this report the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published one national safeguarding practice review. [‘Out of routine: A review of sudden unexpected death in infancy \(SUDI\) in families where the children are considered at risk of significant harm’](#) was published in July 2020.

The report identifies that *‘Situational risks and out-of-routine circumstances act together to increase the risk of SUDI and may mean that families find it difficult or impossible to engage with standard safer sleep messages.’* (page 8). Within the published report, our local multi-agency [Strategy to Support Healthy Pregnancy, Birth and Babies](#) is referenced as an example of a strategy which brings together ‘action to reduce poverty and health inequalities with systematic arrangements for prevention and early intervention to support vulnerable families’ (p.25).

Whilst the recommendations from the report are aimed at national bodies, locally we have embedded the learning about SUDI, situational risks, and out-of-routine circumstances into our multi-agency safeguarding children training programme and will continue to do so.

As part of our [2021/22 Business Plan](#), our Multi-Agency Learning and Development Group has been tasked with considering the impact of our work to date and to review SUDI awareness-raising and multi-agency training across the partnership as required.

It was notable that the majority of Rapid Reviews and referrals in the year related to children under 1 year old, whereas in previous years the majority of referrals related to teenagers. This has led to the partnership adopting a priority on safeguarding babies for the coming year incorporating a communications campaign across the partnership, raising awareness to support the safety of babies linked to local implementation of the Icon project regarding crying babies.



How feedback from children and families has informed our work and influenced service provision.

“a lot of groups don’t realise how young people can be overwhelmed by being asked too often ‘are you ok?’ blah, blah, blah...” (YPAG)

The Partnership has a Young Peoples Advisory Group, which includes young people from across Leicestershire and Rutland with a variety of backgrounds relating to safeguarding. The young people play a part in the priority setting and scrutiny of the partnership.

The pandemic initially limited the engagement work the SCP could carry out with young people, however the partnership adapted its approaches to ensure children and young people’s voices continued to influence the partnership approach.

In June 2020 the partnership supported a local extension of a national survey regarding young people’s emotional health and wellbeing in light of the pandemic. The survey had 221 responses from Leicestershire & Rutland.

This particularly highlighted that loneliness, stress and lack of sleep had increased for a large minority of young people (39%) and lack of contact with friends was having a large impact on the majority of young people’s wellbeing (70%).

“I really want to return to college. I’m looking forward to seeing my friends and teachers, but I am worried about being exposed to the virus” (Covid survey)

The partnership considered this in its requests for assurance and in setting its forward priorities. The findings of the survey were also fed into local work to develop responses to support children and young people’s emotional health and wellbeing.

Young people were involved in the recruitment panel for the Partnership’s new Independent Advisor.

Whilst the disruption to normal working made it difficult to set up planned scrutiny by young people the SCP was able to seek the views of young people to inform the Partnerships priorities for 2021/22. Young people helped to lead the Partnership’s priority setting meeting in March 2021 and shaped the priorities and actions beneath these. Young people continued to highlight mental health and domestic abuse as their biggest concerns.

“Young people prefer to talk to friends because professionals ‘rat you out’” (YPAG)

Partners commissioned some work to hear from children and young people whose parents have been considered at Domestic Abuse MARAC to understand their experience. This will report later in 2021 and be considered alongside the findings of a multi-agency audit focussed on domestic abuse to be completed in 2021.

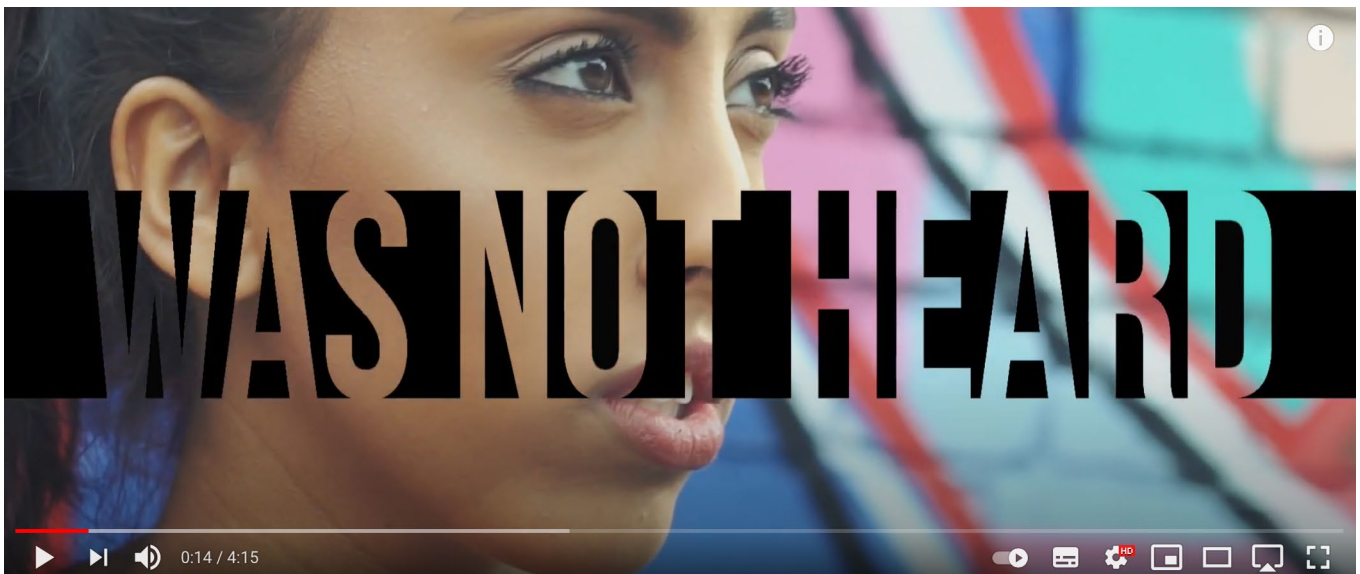
The Partnership held an online launch of its 'Was not heard' film. The film was written and produced by young people locally with involvement from members of the Young Peoples Advisory Group. It encourages those who work with children to understand how children communicate with them and highlights the importance and legal duty to hear and respond to them.

This was nominated for a number of independent film awards and was included in national training on Psychological first aid as part of the response to the pandemic.

This took the message of the film to thousands of people across Britain, with feedback identifying it as one of the most powerful and important parts of the training.

In February 2021 LLR Safeguarding Children Partnerships' Multi-Agency Learning and Development Subgroup posted the film on their [YouTube channel](#) and it has since received over 35,000 views.

"It's my life you're talking about. I might not understand everything yet but I'm living it." (Was Not Heard)



Changes to the arrangements

The partnership is committed to developing and improving. Following a number of changes during its first 6 months of operation there were no formal changes to the arrangements during 2020/21, however as outlined the partnership significantly adapted its working in response to the pandemic.

During the year the Partnership established stronger joint working with Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board (LSCPB). A single Independent Advisor was appointed across both partnerships and the two SCPs held joint main partnership meetings throughout the year to more closely align approaches and make best use of partner agencies time.

Members of the partnership noted that during the year partnership working became stronger, as increased communication and planning together in response to the pandemic enhanced relationships. More organisations were more regularly involved in partnership safeguarding meetings and in the multi-agency safeguarding meetings working directly with children and families.

The Partnership's quarterly 'Safeguarding Matters' newsletter was also extended to cover the Leicester SCPB. This is a joint publication with the Safeguarding Adults Boards for Leicester and Leicestershire & Rutland, highly regarded locally and used to communicate learning and developments with regard to multi-agency safeguarding with those working with Children and Young people.

From 2021 the Safeguarding Partners have decided that the Partnership will be chaired by the Safeguarding Partners in rotation. This will support the Independent Advisor to focus on leading Independent Scrutiny of the arrangements and providing independent advice. In addition to this the partnership will continue to review the arrangements learning from working during the pandemic.



Independent Scrutiny -

Report of the Independent Advisor - Kay Whyte-Bell

Kay was appointed late September 2020 as the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland (LLR) Safeguarding Children Partnerships (SCPs) Independent Adviser following the completion of the transitional arrangements from Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs) to SCPs and the departure of the previous Chair, Simon Westwood. Leicester & Rutland SCP would like to thank Simon for his leadership and support as Chair in overseeing the transitional arrangements.

Kay is a social worker by profession and brings a range of experience through senior leadership and management roles in local and regional Government, as well as within voluntary and charitable organisations. Additionally, Kay has also worked in Children's Social Care Inspection, previously chaired an LSCB and authored Serious Case Reviews as well as currently Lead Consultant with a number of organisations on behalf of Elia, the umbrella organisation for Signs of Safety, the practice approach utilised across Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Children's Services.

What is the Role of Independent Adviser/Independent Scrutineer?

'The role of independent scrutiny is to provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of multiagency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area, including arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases' and, "The independent scrutineer should consider how effectively the arrangements are working for children and families as well as for practitioners, and how well the safeguarding partners are providing strong leadership and agree with the safeguarding partners how this will be reported." – Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

Being mindful of each's individual and unique footprint, Leicester SCP and Leicestershire & Rutland SCP decided to appoint one Independent Adviser given that much of the planning, commissioning and delivery of child safeguarding is jointly undertaken across the three local areas.

The Independent Advisor therefore has reviewed the work of the Leicester & Rutland SCP together with this annual report and provided the following assessment and recommendations.

Summary

Given the operational challenges that were as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, overall, the Leicester & Rutland SCP 2020-21 Annual Report offers a good range of evidence, together with analyses, providing assurance of the local safeguarding children arrangements. The report, furthermore, identifies specific areas for development through new or enhanced priorities.

What are the strengths?

- The statutory partner agencies, Clinical Commissioning Group, Police and Local Authorities, demonstrate a strong partnership, strengthened through the transition from LSCB to SCP
- Priorities have been agreed in an open and transparent process, involving the wider partnership
- Though self-assessment identifies more progress to be made, there is a strong Young People's Advisory Group that demonstrates influence and SCP engagement on local decision making and priorities

- The nationally acclaimed “Was Not Heard” short film advocating the right of children to be heard and the duty of those working with them to act has been viewed over 36,000 times
- There is evidence of LLRSCPs developing working together with the Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs) on cross cutting themes and shared issues
- The Covid 19 pandemic impact planning has been helped by regular and effective meetings between the partners’ Safeguarding Sub-Cell as well as leading to deep dive audit activity such as increase in concealed or denied pregnancy
- Successful Covid 19 communications strategy to the wider public “Our Door is Open” also adopted by Leicester SCP and recognised as good practice by the LGA
- Rapid Reviews are timely, appropriately attended and outcome-focused with key learning identified as well as decisions on next steps clearly evidenced
- Good evidence of impact of training and development through follow up surveys

What could be more evident?

- A robust multi-agency data set linked to the overarching priorities, that can be tracked, scrutinised and evidenced of impact on service delivery and improvements
- Scrutiny and assurance activity in which the engagement of children and young people show impact on service commission and/or delivery
- Families views in relation to engagement and intervention
- Influence of learning from Rapid Reviews, Local Safeguarding Children Practice Reviews and Serious Case Reviews
- Impact of partnership with voluntary agencies
- Transitional safeguarding*
- Safeguarding children from diverse communities*

*Identified as priorities for 2021-22

Developments in Independent Scrutiny

The Independent Adviser, together with the LLR Statutory Partners, has begun work on further developing the scrutiny function, based on growing practice across English SCP's, the National Safeguarding Children Panel Reports (2018, 2020), and the Wood Review of Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (May 2021). The following developments are either already happening or scheduled to begin from September 2021:

- Agree with Statutory Partners a Scrutiny Programme against agreed priorities
- Transition chairing arrangements from September 2021 – LLRSCPs will now be chaired on a rotational basis by Statutory Partners
- Established regular 'keep in touch' scrutiny and assurance meetings between Independent Adviser and Safeguarding partners
- Quarterly meetings between the Independent Adviser and the Independent Chair of the local SABs
- Agreed joint priority with local SABs - 'Think Family' approach
- Joint meetings between the SABs and SCPs
- Engagement with Children and Young People – for example joint chairing of LLR SCPs Priority Setting meeting; involvement in SCP Scrutiny programme
- Independent scrutiny of SCP subgroups
- Providing Independent advice to the Case Review Group and Rapid Review Meetings
- Explore further opportunities for external review such as with peer SCP's or through the Local Government Association

Kay Whyte Bell, Independent Adviser

Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships

30th August 2021

Finance

The work of the SCP is supported by the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Partnership Business Office that also supports the Safeguarding Adults Boards and carries out Domestic Homicide Reviews for Community Safety Partnerships in Leicestershire & Rutland. The SCP is funded by contributions from its partners.

A single funding arrangement for the Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Safeguarding Adults Boards for 2020 onwards has been agreed between the statutory partners for the Safeguarding Adults Boards and the children's Safeguarding Partners for Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland.

The contributions from partners for the Leicestershire & Rutland SCP and SAB as a whole for 2020/21 were as follows:

	£
Leicestershire County Council	112,633
Rutland County Council	50,367
Leicestershire Police	89,000
West Leicestershire CCG and East Leicestershire & Rutland CCG	106,500
National Probation Services	1,348
Total income for SAB and SCP	359,848

Overall expenditure across the SCP and SAB was £334,104. The balance will go into reserves. From 2021 onwards the reserves of the SCP and SAB will be used to reduce partner contributions to the partnership whilst leaving a contingency to cover the cost of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews going forwards.

Expenditure for the SCP is apportioned as follows:

	£
Staffing	110,676
Independent Chairing	14,113
Support Services	3,250
Operating Costs	9,128
Training	41,200
Case Reviews	3,760
Total SAB Expenditure	182,127

With the joint funding arrangement across the SCP and SAB and a more even balance of work 50% of the overall business office staffing cost and support services costs have been allocated to the SCP rather than 63% in previous years. Planned changes to ways of working, as well as changes enforced by the pandemic have reduced support services and operating costs compared to previous years. Expenditure on safeguarding case reviews reduced as the majority of work by independent reviewers had been completed before the start of the year or commenced towards the end of the year.

Priorities 2021/22 onwards

The partnership has reviewed learning from local and national reviews, and from local assurance and engagement work, as well as speaking to children and young people and considering the current context of the pandemic in determining its priorities going forward. The Partnership has identified the following forward priorities shared with Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board:

SAFEGUARDING BABIES

Improve how we work together with families before and after births to safeguard babies

CHILD MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Seek assurance that partners are working to support good mental health for children and that mental health and safeguarding are effectively addressed together

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND CHILD SAFEGUARDING

Seek assurance that partners are responding appropriately to safeguard and support children living with domestic abuse

HARM OUTSIDE OF THE HOME

Seek assurance that the local approach to safeguarding children from extra-familial threat is effective.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

Understand and improve how well partners work together with children and families from diverse backgrounds

COVID-19 (SHARED WITH LEICESTER SAB AND LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND SAB)

Reflect on and respond to the ongoing impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on safeguarding children and adults.

“I feel like I was listened to” (YPAG)

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