



NSSCP

NORTH SOMERSET

Safeguarding Children Partnership



OCT 2019- DEC 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Working together to keep children safe and provide an environment in which they can thrive.

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Introduction

Like many multi-agency safeguarding partnerships, 2019-20 was a transition year for arrangements in North Somerset. [Working Together 2018](#) sets out guidance on the way agencies are required to work together to safeguard children and young people and arrangements on the new Safeguarding Children Partnership were published on 26 June 2019. The full detailed report is available [here](#).

This report covers the period from October 2019 up until the end of December 2020 when the police representative of the Partnership's Executive completed her tenure as Chair of both the Executive and the Partnership Leads Group.

This annual report will be shared with:

- The Chief Executive, North Somerset Council
- The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- The Safer and Stronger Communities Strategic Partnership
- The North Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board
- The National Safeguarding Panel

The report was approved by the Executive of the North Somerset Safeguarding Partnership in October 2021.

Should you require the report in any other format to support accessibility please contact tracey.farthing@n-somerset.gov.uk.

Foreword from the North Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership

Executive:

This is the first Annual Report from the North Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership. The report covers the period November 2019 to December 2020, which of course covers the period where we have all been experiencing and coping with Covid-19.

We want to recognise the extraordinary efforts made by the communities within North Somerset as well as all voluntary and statutory partners; the efforts which have been made to continue to keep people as safe as possible during this pandemic have been remarkable and leaves us feeling very proud to live and/or work within North Somerset.

In March 2020, all partners had to change the way that many of its services were delivered almost overnight and were grappling with many significant questions: how do we engage effectively with vulnerable children, young people and families when we aren't able to see them face to face? How do we keep schools open and safe for teachers and pupils who are vulnerable, or children of key workers? How do we keep services open when many of our colleagues are working from home? How do we ensure that adequate PPE is sourced and delivered to those who need it the most in an efficient way? It has been a huge task, which has affected how we deliver our services now, and in the future. It has left indelible marks on wellbeing and mental health, with many more requests for support already starting to emerge, and we know that this is likely to increase in the future. But it has left safer, stronger communities – neighbours supporting each other, looking out for each other and that has also transferred to our workforce – we have developed strong professional networks who are all dedicated to the safeguarding of children, young people and their families within North Somerset.

This report reflects some of those challenges, and the environment in which we have worked within; but also highlights some of the excellent practice that has occurred despite Covid-19. As this is the inaugural year of this partnership, we know that there are several key transitions and initiatives that we will start to develop in 2021/2022, and we look forward to working with you to achieve them.

Victoria Caple (Chair 2019/2020), Safeguarding Partnerships Manager, Avon & Somerset Police

Rosi Shepherd (Chair 2021/2022), Director of Nursing & Quality, BNSSG Clinical Commissioning Group

Sheila Smith, Director of People and Communities, North Somerset Council

Establishing the Partnership

The final Safeguarding Children's Board was held on 9th September 2019 where the Board's annual report was signed-off. The Board's Business Plan and action plans from the two recent Serious Case Reviews were also reviewed, finalised and signed-off.

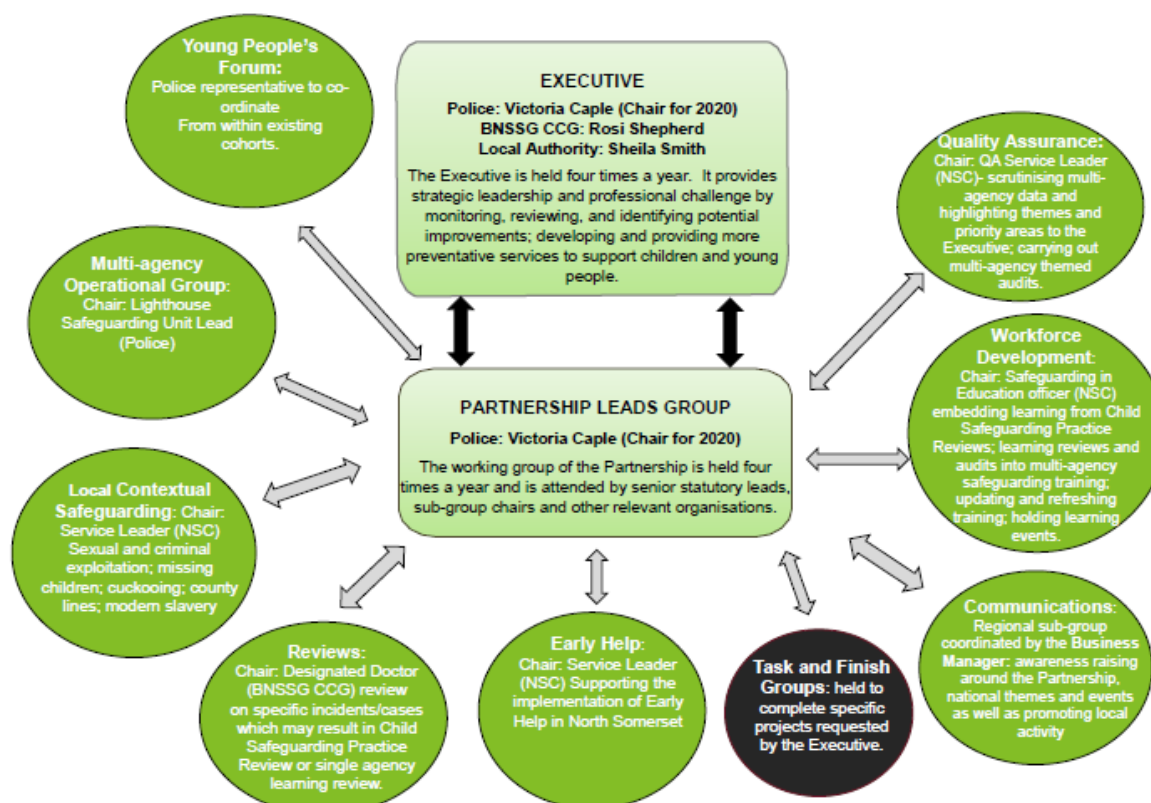


The Partnership Structure

An operational group was held in October 2019 to devise and agree new structures within the North Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership. A workshop involving all relevant services and organisations across North Somerset was held in November 2019 to implement the working structure of the Partnership as detailed in the published report. This is available to download [here](#).

The structure of the North Somerset Children's Safeguarding Partnership was agreed as follows:

North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership Structure Chart:



The Executive of the North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership provides strategic leadership and professional challenge to the partnership and consists of senior representatives from all three statutory organisations: the North Somerset Local Authority, Avon & Somerset Police and the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group.

Chairing arrangements for this group were agreed to be on a rotational basis and for a period of one year. For the transitional year, it was decided that the Executive would meet frequently with bi-monthly meetings being held. Terms of Reference for the Executive are available [here](#).

The Partnership Leads Group consists of senior statutory leads and the Chairs of the sub-groups. It was formed as the link to the Executive and each of its sub-groups. The group meets quarterly.

Sub-groups and task and finish groups: The following sub-groups and their chairs were agreed at the Development Day held in November, and are as follows:

1. Local Contextual Safeguarding sub-group
2. Workforce Development
3. Reviews
4. Multi-agency operational Group
5. Early Help
6. Quality Assurance
7. Young Person's Forum

The Work of the Partnership

2020 was a year that will be remembered due to Covid-19, and the significant impact that this has had on us all, both personally and professionally. In relation to the North Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership, it did affect our ability to strengthen and prioritise the work of the partnership. This, along with the absence and/or change of key post holders and an Ofsted ILACS review meant that not all of the sub-groups were able to focus on developing plans for each of their groups as much as was originally intended.

In response to the pandemic, the Chair of the Executive introduced a Task and Finish Group: **Covid-19 Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children Forum**.

These meetings were held fortnightly in order to support the constituent and relevant partners of the North Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership. Key priorities of this group were to:

- Improve the availability and understanding of data in order to assess the quality of the safeguarding system;

- Learn from innovative practice which has been created out of necessity due to Covid-19, and maximise opportunities for further developments;
- Understand and collaboratively resolve blockers and challenges within the partnership, which have been caused by Covid-19.

From these meetings, a fortnightly newsletter was produced and published on the North Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership website detailing key discussion areas with links to up to date resources – such as the Barnardo's See, Hear and Respond service which offers rapid support for children and young people affected by the coronavirus crisis. Areas of good practice were also identified. Support for professional's wellbeing was also identified and sessions were held on how we could support each other through this crisis.

Key areas of risk were highlighted and raised at both the Partnership Leads Group and the Executive. Examples of areas identified were:

- Recognising signs of neglect and hidden harm;
- The increase in domestic abuse referrals and each agency's ability to meet demand;
- Young people's mental health, with links to resources for support;
- The impact of not being able to have face to face visits with families and children;
- Increases in elective home education and what this might mean for children and families;
- Children going missing;
- Highlighting best practice in relation to keeping schools open.

This Task and Finish group ended in December 2020 - it was felt that services and organisations were able to deliver "business as usual" within the constraints of the pandemic and the forthcoming third lockdown. Strong networks had been established, and it was felt that these meetings may duplicate discussions or pieces of work that were already in place.

Continuous Improvement of Services for Children, Young People and Families 2020 – 2022

Following the Ofsted inspection in March 2020, the North Somerset Improvement Board has been created in order to provide multi-agency support and oversight to the Local Authority. The Chair of the Executive sits on the Improvement Board, and holds the Partnership Strategic Response to Contextual Safeguarding work-stream, which supports the join-up of approach between this Board and the Contextual Safeguarding Sub-Group of the North Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

Tackling Child Exploitation, working with Research in Practice

In 2019, a multi-agency bid was submitted to Research in Practice in order to secure their support to work alongside the partnership. One of the areas that the partnership needs support with is the use and development of a multi-agency data set – this will enable a far greater understanding of the local context in order to be able to embed a contextual approach to child exploitation. We are working closely with all key partners, such as schools, youth groups and statutory services in order to gain a better picture of local intelligence.

This work is ongoing with workshops and practice groups being held throughout 2020-2021.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Training

The sub-group has established its membership and terms of reference and agreed a multi-agency offer for 2020-21. This offer has been affected by the Pandemic with all multi and single agency training being moved to on-line.

Basic, refresher and advanced inter-agency child protection courses continued online, as did Mental Health First Aid.

Members of the sub-group are currently working on standardised learning objectives for Inter-agency Introduction and Advanced safeguarding courses to improve portability for delegates across county borders.

Early Help

Our Early Help teams within the Local Authority are going through a realignment which will involve bringing together the various strands of early help services into a Family Wellbeing Service which will span all ages of children and young people.

Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

The CSP Review sub-group was initially set up to meet on an ad-hoc basis, as and when required, but by the middle of 2020, it became clear that regular fortnightly meetings were needed to keep abreast of the number of referrals it was receiving. Between June 2020 and the end of December 2020, the sub-group has reviewed seven cases and undertaken five rapid reviews which have been submitted to the National Review Panel for their consideration. Two cases have proceeded to a full local Child Safeguarding Practice Review and independent reviewers have been commissioned to undertake this work and are on track to meet their deadlines.

Initial learning themes and review of procedures identified during the rapid review process have been shared across the relevant organisations. An action plan developed on behalf of one case is regularly reviewed by the CSPR sub-group and is due to be signed-off early in 2021.

As a result of the two current CSPRs, learning from two previous serious case reviews is also being reviewed.

Across Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire, a regional thematic review on knife crime is being undertaken with updates being given to this sub-group by the interim chair of the Quality Assurance sub-group.

CSPR multi-agency guidance was developed and published in October. This is available [here](#).

Section 11 Audit 2019-2020

Section 11 was issued under the Children Act (2004) and has been reinforced in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. Section 11 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

For this audit, the Section 11 self-assessment audit tool was circulated to all partners across B&NES, Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset, in January 2020, via Survey Monkey. The audit tool was devised to assess, monitor and evidence progress and achievements in relation to meeting safeguarding requirements. The Section 11 audit for 2019/2020 has taken place in the year that each region has transitioned from the old LSCB-style arrangements, to the new partnership arrangements, following the changes to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. The full report is available [here](#).

DATA SNAPSHOT FROM NOVEMBER 2019 TO DECEMBER 2020

From
November
2019 to
December
2020...



906 referrals



192 re-referrals



425 strategy discussions



237 children under a child protection plan at some point during the period



258 care leavers receiving services at some point during the period



307 children in care at some point during the period



136 initial child protection conferences



930 children in need at some point during the period



1755 domestic abuse notifications

45,671 children and young people in North Somerset



1308 Education, Health and Care Plans open at the end of the year



18 LADO referrals



2231 children with an early help episode at some point during the period



58 LADO advice enquiries



146 children reported missing at least once



452 children electively home educated at some point during the period

Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) annual report

This sets out the key findings from North Somerset's Local Area Designated Officer for Allegations (LADO), and activity using both data analysis and commentary between April 2019 – March 2020. The full report is available [here](#).

CDOP annual report North Somerset



North Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership remains a member of the West of England CDOP as it did as an LSCB. The annual report for CDOP is available [here](#).

Review of the Partnership

North Somerset has been approached on several occasions to participate in evaluating the effectiveness of the new safeguarding arrangements. The Executive agreed for the partnership to engage with Kantar Research Company commissioned by the Department for Education. Interviews across a broad selection of senior and front line colleagues across the three statutory partners took place in October and early November 2020. A summary of findings from this research are due to be shared with the Partnership's Executive in 2021.

We were also asked to participate in Sir Alan Wood's review of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements where we completed a survey prepared for all relevant parties. Following this, members of the Executive also met remotely with Sir Alan Wood in December 2020, in preparation for his Report into Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements, which is due to be published shortly. Discussions centred around six key areas:

- Authority and Accountability – what does this look like in reality?
- Guidance from Central Government and cross-party support
- Independent Scrutiny
- Engagement with relevant agencies
- Inspection and Assurance – the impact of single and joint agency inspection regimes
- Reorganisation and Boundary Changes – how does this impact on effectiveness?

This was an interesting discussion and was a good opportunity to showcase the work that has occurred across North Somerset. Sir Alan Wood was keen to ensure that all safeguarding partnerships are making the most of the opportunity to develop and change practice positively – not just ‘old wine in new bottles’, to coin one of Sir Alan’s phrases.

NSSCP Development Day:

In December 2020, the Executive hosted a development session with the chairs and members of all sub-groups in order to review the previous 12 months and to think about its priorities for the forthcoming year. Priorities for the partnership were identified as:

- Vulnerable adolescents – in terms of mental health, exploitation and young carers
- Neglect – the hidden harm, especially when it’s compounded by lack of face to face visits from professionals
- Early Help – aligned to the North Somerset Local Authority restructure, but thinking about what this looks like amongst all our agencies.
- Improving health, education and emotional development outcomes for our vulnerable children and young people.

Independent Scrutiny

A post has been jointly funded across the Avon & Somerset geographical footprint to support the provision of independent scrutiny across the area, via the Avon & Somerset Strategic Safeguarding Partnership. An early piece of activity was a peer review workshop which was held in October 2019. The following key priorities for the partnership were identified:

- Contextualised Safeguarding
- Early Help and Relationship Building
- Transition into Young Adulthood
- Response to Domestic Abuse
- Effective Partnership Arrangements
- Placing Children out of Hours
- Missing Children
- Children Missing from Education

Within each theme, a bespoke piece of activity will be developed, in order to provide a detailed understanding of the issues facing each partnership. This will be consistent activity across all five Local Authority areas, allowing for benchmarking exercises to be completed, but still allowing for local nuances in order to be reflective of local practice. Victoria Caple holds this post and has provided a report to the partnership. The report is available [here](#).

This method of independent scrutiny is distinctive in its approach, and as a result, has attracted national attention with other safeguarding partnerships keen to see how this work progresses, and whether it could be replicated in similar multi-agency partnerships across the Country.

We have also been approached to work with Professor Jenny Pearce, from The International Centre: Researching Child Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking, University of Bedfordshire. She has developed a pilot – Six Steps of Independent Scrutiny, which is being benchmarked in work across the Avon & Somerset geographical area.

Avon and Somerset Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (ASSSP):

The ASSSP meets quarterly to discuss safeguarding themes for children, across the Avon & Somerset geographical area. It is made up of senior leaders across all the statutory organisations, and provides a forum for discussing best practice, opportunities for innovation and regional issues. The ASSSP first formed in order to discuss the implications of the Wood Review and changes to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. One of the early discussions was in relation to efficiency across the partnership, particularly amongst Health and Police partners who operate across differing boundaries, with limited resource. It was agreed that there were seven areas in which we could collaborate together and form a regional response:

- Contextual and Complex Safeguarding
- Training and Workforce Development
- Resources
- Data and Performance
- Independent Scrutiny
- Policy and Procedures (South West Child Protection Procedures)
- Communications

The three members of the Executive attend the ASSSP and each member either leads or participates in the work-streams.

What to Do if you are Worried about a Child

If you are worried about a child contact our safeguarding team:

Monday – Friday 9am-5pm 01275 888808

Out of hours and at weekends 01454 615165

If you are deaf or hard of hearing text 'EDT' followed by your name and message to 60066

Visit the Safeguarding Children Partnership [website](#) for more information

