



SOMERSET SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

Twelve Monthly Report
2020-21

Foreword

Welcome to the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership's **Twelve-Monthly Report 2020 to 2021**.

The **Somerset Youth Forum** is proud to be part of the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership. We meet termly via Zoom to discuss the important issues for all children and young people across Somerset.

Our role is to influence and challenge the Partnership to think about what children and young people are telling them about their experiences – whether it's at school, at home, in our communities or while we are out and about being kids and having fun.

We do this by producing resources, making films, meeting people who will champion our voice whilst also having fun and developing skills and confidence.

[GP Safeguarding Film](#)

[LADO Film](#)

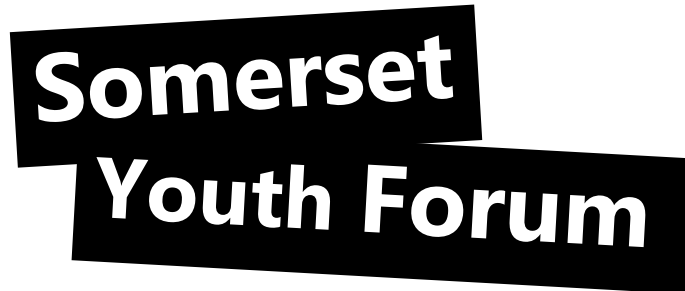
One of our biggest tasks this year has been to support the consultation for the next Children & Young People's Plan – over 2,500 children and young people in Somerset have contributed – which wasn't easy during the pandemic.



In this report you will see some of the topics we have covered over the past twelve months, and we hope you think they are as important as we think they are. We met the Executive Partners – Val, Dickon and Julian - recently to show them all our achievements and we made this Word Cloud (see right) for them to see what it means to be a member of the Somerset Youth Forum.

There's loads more really good information about the development of the Partnership and the difference its making – so we hope you really enjoy reading it!

Best wishes from the young people of the



Things I am proud to have contributed to Youth Forum this year:



Introduction

Welcome to the second report of the **Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP)** which sets out the key areas of work undertaken in 2020-2021, the first full year of new safeguarding arrangements in Somerset.

The safeguarding lead responsibility is shared between the three statutory partners of **Somerset County Council, Avon and Somerset Constabulary**, and **Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group** with a commitment to shared and equitable leadership of the safeguarding children arrangements, as set out in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018).

We recognise the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and celebrate the work of the partners under extremely challenging conditions. We acknowledge that there remains work to be done to ensure that Somerset children thrive and grow, from pre-birth to adulthood, stay safe and free from abuse in all its forms, and wish to restate our commitment here to working across agency boundaries.

We welcome the continued work of our Independent Scrutineer, Mark Peel, and the value the accountability he brings.

This report details activity for the financial year 2020-2021 and covers much of the pandemic lockdown period.



Val Janson

Director of Quality and Nursing
Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group



Dickon Turner

Superintendent
Avon & Somerset Constabulary



Julian Wooster

Director of Children's Services
Somerset County Council

Governance & Leadership

The structure chart for the SSCP is shown [here](#). This chart also details subgroups and associated functions which are the delivery arm of the SSCP.

Key developments

This year the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership has:

- ❑ Welcomed a new Executive member from the CCG and one from Avon & Somerset Constabulary.
- ❑ Invested in capacity to collect and analyse partnership data.
- ❑ Supported a successful bid to the Department for Education to recruit an additional health professional to support MASH arrangements in 2021.
- ❑ Promoted relevant agency engagement through Safeguarding Forum event weeks in [December 2020](#) and [June 2021](#).
- ❑ [LADO \(Local Authority Designated Officer\) Annual Report 2020-2021](#)
- ❑ Worked with Research in Practice to refresh the strategic approach to tackling Child Exploitation and to complete a Child Exploitation needs assessment to inform a future Child Exploitation strategy.
- ❑ Published a new [SSCP Early Help Strategy](#).
- ❑ Completed multi-agency audits with recommendations and actions.
- ❑ Commissioned two local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews to be published in the summer of 2021.
- ❑ Supported the development of the Effective Support for Children and Families in Somerset (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) guidance.
- ❑ Strengthened the governance structures between the SSCP, Safer Somerset Partnership and the Violence Reduction Unit.
- ❑ Devised a number of initiatives during lockdown to maintain support to vulnerable families, such as pre-birth tracking and a linked professional initiative.
- ❑ Begun a consultation on the next plan for Children, Young People and their Families in Somerset to take effect in April 2022.

Rapid Reviews

The SSCP completed two rapid reviews during the financial year 2020-2021, which did not progress to Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. All agencies have shown a significant commitment to ensure rapid reviews are completed within the 15-day timescale, and that the need to identify the learning and act swiftly on it has been a priority.

In addition, members of the SSCP have participated in two further rapid reviews in neighbouring authorities, centring on the needs of complex adolescents.

The SSCP recognises the need to continue to refine the rapid review process.



These reviews have identified some key areas for consideration, learning and action for the local safeguarding system as set out below:

- ❑ Effectiveness of early help assessments, plans and support.
- ❑ Fathers/male carers could be better included and offered help.
- ❑ Impact of mental health, substance misuse or mental health needs of parents on children, and understanding of addiction by practitioners.
- ❑ Domestic abuse, both current and historic, and its impact on a mother's ability to make safe decisions for children, and the expectation that only women should do so.
- ❑ The importance of keeping close relationships with children placed out of area and ensuring that all their needs are met, with a focus on education.
- ❑ The importance of recognising and acting on neglect early.

Partnership Learning

Partnership learning has been disseminated in the following ways:

- ❑ The commissioning of two local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, with learning briefings produced and published on each case and disseminated to partners before publication.
- ❑ Review and launch of revised multi-agency guidance on the effective functioning of strategy discussions, including an animation.
- ❑ Multi-agency safeguarding training courses with key messages from local learning continually updated.
- ❑ Multi-agency modular training on identifying barriers to effective early support and overcoming them.
- ❑ Multi-agency practitioner information events with a focus on protecting babies and very young children.
- ❑ SSCP Safeguarding Forum event weeks, addressing key learning and partnership interaction, in [December 2020](#) and [June 2021](#)

Learning has also been supported by the national panel's review into sudden unexpected death in infancy [Out of routine: A review of sudden unexpected death in infancy \(SUDI\) in families where the children are considered at risk of significant harm.](#)



Multi-Agency Training

During 2020-2021, 1,051 members of staff from across the workforce accessed the multi-agency training provided by the SSCP. Despite moving to online delivery as a result of restrictions imposed by the pandemic, the training continues to be well-attended and rated highly by delegates, with learning from LCSPRs bringing the content up-to-date.

Participants returned a 96% confidence level that the training would impact positively on their practice, as well as reporting improved understanding of inter-agency working to promote safeguarding (79%) and their own professional responsibilities (85%).

“Excellent presentation, communicated well, and stimulating and prompting reflection of my practice”

Training also provides income to the partnership, which supports further skills-based course delivery, and allows for flexibility as training needs across the system arise.



Impact of SSCP activity

- ❑ Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews have led to the development of training and resources for identifying and supporting needs in the pre-birth period, including revision of the South-West Child Protection Protocols relating to pre-birth assessment.
- ❑ The Resolving Professional Differences escalation policy has been refreshed with a focus on resolution at the earliest stage to support families and enhance partnership working, leading to fewer escalations at a formal level.
- ❑ The effective functioning of strategy discussions has been identified as an area of focus, so the multi-agency guidance has been refreshed, and an animation produced for inclusion with invitations to all strategy discussions.
- ❑ Development of a multi-agency linked professional initiative to ensure families were seen and supported during the lockdown.
- ❑ 96.4% of care leavers are in suitable accommodation.

Future activity

- ❑ Revision of the Effective Support for Children and Families in Somerset (threshold document) to ensure a focus on needs not level descriptors.
- ❑ The SSCP recognises that there is more to do in regional work to ensure a consistent, multi-agency response across the Avon & Somerset force area to police notifications of domestic abuse where children are involved.
- ❑ A review of the Family Front Door to ensure multi-agency involvement and effective response at the earliest stage to family needs.



Young People's Involvement

The **Somerset Youth Forum** consists of young people aged 10 -18 years from across Somerset who want to make a difference for all children and young people by holding the three key safeguarding partners to account against the safeguarding priorities owned by the partnership.

The first conversation with the Executive group took place in October 2020 where young people clearly expressed their views around support for mental health and well-being, physical health, safe educational settings (knife crime and exploitation), transport links and the challenge of returning to a post-COVID world.

The statutory safeguarding partners committed to working more closely with schools to create safe environments and addressing mental health and well-being support.

Young people were key to the Somerset 'Safeguarding week' in December 2020, co-presenting a session called '[Learning & Good Practice: Hearing the Voices of Young People](#)'.

In addition, under the new safeguarding arrangements, the SSCP takes oversight of the priorities identified by children and young people in the [Somerset Plan for Children, Young People and Families 2019-2022](#).

The plan will be refreshed, taking into account the views of the Youth Forum, to take effect in April 2022.

To view the achievements of the Youth Forum please [click here](#).

Two Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, to be published summer 2021, have sought to involve families, with some success. This can be partially attributed to remote working during the pandemic, and partially to complex family circumstances. These factors will contribute to future learning in conducting LCSPR's.



Independent Scrutiny

The Independent Scrutineer took up post in January 2020. This role provides assurance to the three statutory safeguarding partners in the form of an annual report. In addition, the Youth Forum provides the opportunity for young people to scrutinise the work of the partnership and hold the Executive members to account.

An independent author, commissioned to carry out the two local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, has also contributed to an independent view of the performance of the SSCP.

In 2021-2022, the commitment is to ensure further scrutiny, whether from another area, an expert individual, or a national body.



Section 11 Audit

Twenty-one agencies participated in the Section 11 audit in 2020-2021.

Areas of success identified include effective information sharing between agencies, and safeguarding supervision generally of a good standard. Some agencies, particularly the voluntary sector, felt that there was scope for greater engagement with the new partnership arrangements. The impact of the pandemic also contributed to this, despite the online SSCP Safeguarding Forum weeks. Conversely and positively, many agencies also reported that use of technology during the pandemic made multi-agency engagement and responsiveness much improved, including greater involvement of parents in child protection conferences. Findings will be tested through a series of 'walk-about' activities in winter 2021.

There is more to do to revise and embed the Effective Support for Children and Families in Somerset (threshold document) and associated guidance for children and young people with SEND, both of which are a focus for 2021-2022.

Strategic Priorities:

Early Help

As a result of findings from ongoing local Child Safeguarding Partnership Reviews (LCSPRs), early help remains a priority to ensure early identification of need, particularly for very young children. This year, the SSCP refreshed the Early Help strategy which is owned by the Early Help Strategic Commissioning Board as a subgroup of the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Introduction of modular Early Help training has been particularly welcomed by frontline colleagues, and it remains an entrenched issue.

“Knowing where to find advice and how other professionals interact with each other for the best outcome for children and families are great starting points for helping families”

LCSPR learning also confirms that fathers, male carers and extended family need to be included better in assessments and in planning activity, particularly at the early help level.

Guidance around early help ways of working was strengthened by new materials for Team Around the Family activity.

Team Around the Family One Minute Guide.

Evidencing the impact of early help remains a challenge and will also be addressed through the development of the next Somerset Plan for Children, Young People and their Families.

Focus for next year:

The Effective Support for Children and Families in Somerset where there are special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) was launched at the end of 2020.

In 2021, the Effective Support guidance will be refreshed to ensure a stronger common understanding of child and family needs and appropriate responses.



Multi-Agency Safeguarding

Multi-agency safeguarding in 2020-221 had a key focus on the quality of strategy discussions, following learning from LCSPRs and audit activity.

The SSCP developed new multi-agency guidance for strategy discussions, including an animation for training purposes and to be sent to all attendees of strategy discussions to outline role and responsibilities.

[SSCP Guide to Strategy Discussions](#)

Further audit work in winter 2021 will evidence the effectiveness of improvements to strategy discussions and decision-making to keep children safe.

Focus for next year:

The effective functioning of multi-agency strategy discussions will remain a key priority for the partnership.

Involvement of fathers/male carers will form the basis of the December 2021 SSCP Safeguarding Forum week and will include the promotion of healthy relationships, following the Ofsted review into *Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges* (July 2021) in which the SSCP participated.

Neglect

Neglect continues to feature in the rapid reviews conducted in 2020-2021. The Neglect Toolkit is promoted across the workforce to support the identification of neglect and was relaunched in electronic version as a result of feedback from frontline staff during the pandemic. However, it remains unclear how far this is used and specifically how it supports the impact of neglect on children, despite large numbers of downloads, and this is something which the SSCP needs to address in future.

Focus for next year:

The partnership is committed to refreshing the neglect toolkit to support practitioners to identify neglect, and help parents to make changes where required.



Child Exploitation

Local responses to child exploitation continue to change as new practices for exploiting children emerge. This has remained a priority for the SSCP, given that a number of communities in Somerset are known to have increased exploitation activity, as well as adopted new methods of exploitation during the pandemic.

Following a successful partnership bid to Research in Practice, the Somerset response to child exploitation has been reconsidered and refreshed with a greater emphasis on transitions for young people. To that end, the remit of the Child Exploitation strategic subgroup has widened to include young people with additional vulnerabilities up to the age of 25, and therefore includes the Somerset Safeguarding Adult Board and Adult Social Care.

Focus for next year:

Complete a needs assessment on Child Exploitation in Somerset and develop a new partnership Child Exploitation strategy.



Child Death Overview Panel

In 2020-2021, there were 16 child deaths from Somerset and 25 child deaths from Dorset considered at the Child Death Overview Panel. Somerset has merged its Child Death Overview Panel function with that of Dorset to ensure a wider pool from which to learn.

Future training developments include:

Ensuring a diverse range of face-to-face and virtual training opportunities, with good take-up across the partnership, including multi-agency practitioner information groups, conferences, and lunchtime learning opportunities. eLearning packages and cascade packs for single agency delivery will be kept up-to-date and available 'on demand'.

Developing opportunities to use **webinars** and **shared online learning**. This will build upon areas of improvement identified by the workforce where training is delivered virtually, such as better management of break-out rooms for activities.

Development of the Training and Development subgroup into a wider **Workforce Development Group** with an associated strategy, which should include quality assurance of single agency training.

Close liaison between the Avon and Somerset Strategic Safeguarding Partnership to standardise training offers and increase transferability of training across the area. Work is underway to develop a **region-wide skills-based training offer** from early 2021.



Current developments:

This report was completed during the COVID-19 pandemic, to which the SSCP has responded with a number of initiatives:

Safeguarding **training and supervision** have been offered in virtual environments, using webinars and video conferencing. For some agencies, there has been an enhanced level of safeguarding supervision whilst the COVID-19 restrictions have been in place, as a result of not needing to travel, and blended solutions will be used in the future. Similarly, online multi-agency training was maintained during lockdown to ensure continued compliance across the workforce, as well as sharing of local learning, reaching over 200 frontline practitioners.

Early help ways of working have been strengthened by the [multi-agency linked professionals arrangements](#) which have promoted stronger inter-agency working and the role of the lead practitioner.

Likewise, tracking of **vulnerabilities in the pre-birth** period have been addressed by enhanced multi-agency planning and intervention.

Child protection conferences have been well-attended in the virtual world, as have **SSCP subgroups**.

Practitioners and families have been offered '**walking support**' to ensure that face-to-face contact can be maintained outside.

Educational establishments have **reported effective pastoral support** across the partnership, including work with a residential centre to offer breaks for children in residential units or living in vulnerable families and provide outdoor activities for them.



The SSCP would like to thank our partners, frontline practitioners, and the children, young people and families in Somerset who have engaged with our training, events and consultations throughout 2020-21

Thank You

