



READING HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

DATE OF MEETING:	20 January 2023		
REPORT TITLE:	Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP) Annual Report 2021/2022		
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ORGANISATION:	Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership		

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 statutory guidance requires that a flexible equitable safeguarding partnership is established in each local authority area. From March 2019, the safeguarding partners across the west of Berkshire (Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham) joined to become the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP). BWSCP is the key statutory partnership whose role is to oversee how the relevant organisations co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Reading (and across Berkshire West) and to ensure the effectiveness of the arrangements.
- 1.2 This Annual Report is being presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure members are informed about the work of and achievements of the BWSCP for the 2021/2022 financial year.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Health and Wellbeing Board note the attached annual report.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 As required by Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, the BWSCP is required to publish an annual report on the effectiveness of child safeguarding arrangements and promotion of the welfare of children in Berkshire West, detailing the work and progress undertaken within the year, giving an account of how it has discharged its duties against statutory guidance. This is a Berkshire West report, but information in relation to Reading is included within it.
- 3.2 In July 2018, a revised Working Together to Safeguard Children was published, which required that the three Local Safeguarding Partners (the Local Authority, Clinical Commissioning Group and Police) must take a shared and equitable responsibility to agreeing, funding, operating and publicising their local safeguarding partnership arrangements. In recognition of the benefits of working collaboratively with our neighbours, the statutory safeguarding partners within the three local authority areas of Reading, Wokingham and West Berkshire agreed to become a tri-borough partnership.
- 3.3 For information on the published safeguarding arrangements and links to previous annual reports, follow this link:
<https://www.berkshirerwestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/scp/about-the-scp/berkshire-west-multi-agency-safeguarding-arrangements> .

4. CONTENT OF THE REPORT

- 4.1 Partnership working and scrutiny underpin an effective safeguarding partnership and this report contains information on some of the activities and achievements which have taken place that demonstrate this locally and the impact this has on practice. BWSCP members have championed and led the safeguarding agenda within their agency, plus brought to partnership meetings issues regarding safeguarding that relate primarily to their own agency, but which have implications for the co-operation between agencies and the monitoring role of the statutory partners.
- 4.2 The report provides information regarding our third year formally operating on a Berkshire West footprint, the work and progress made against the BWSCP priorities, our case review work, plus updates from various sub-groups which are either local, pan Berkshire West or pan Berkshire.
- 4.3 The report focusses on the work we have undertaken together as a partnership rather than as single agencies or areas. Below are some examples, with a particular focus on Reading:
- The threshold guidance document has been fully aligned across the three local authority areas, with the only differences being referral information and some specific service detail. Alignment of the threshold guidance documents supports and provides continuity for practitioners and schools who work across the area to make informed decisions when assessing the needs of the child.
 - Following the unprecedented increase in notifications of serious child safeguarding incidents and Rapid Reviews in the 18-month period from March 2020 (primarily due to the Covid-19 pandemic), the partnership continues to complete and publish the resulting Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. The Child Safeguarding Practice Review process requires significant resource from all our partner agencies, and it is a huge strength of our local safeguarding leads that they have, and continue, to commit to each review with openness, fully prepared to identify and respond to immediate learning.
 - An independent review of the Rapid Review reports and process found ‘that the quality of Rapid Review reports is judged to be high; the documents are coherent, comprehensive, concise, and well written; the report template is user friendly and sensibly structured and consistently reflect a good level of discussion, reflection, and analysis. This is something that the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel has noted in a high number of the reports submitted to them’. As an example of learning from these processes, Brighter Futures for Children identified the lack of fathers being involved in the work undertaken with the family. This was addressed through case review learning being disseminated through service meetings and then an audit undertaken to establish how this learning has positively impacted on practice, and in this instance specifically, social workers involving fathers in the single assessments being completed.
 - Within the Reading Education Safeguarding Engagement Group, concerns were raised about the safeguarding and welfare of young people who attend large scale events such as Festival’s. Schools across Berkshire West were invited to participate in a project aimed at reducing risk and staying safe ahead of Reading Festival. Partly as a result of this project and of work taken by local colleagues directly with the festival organisers, the improvements were implemented:
 - A dedicated area adjacent to welfare tent to respond to incidents of sexual assault, with specially trained police officers available 24/7 and messaging to young men about their behaviour
 - Brighter Futures for Children, Mental Health Team will be supplying mental health information and advice to welfare services at Reading Festival
 - Lids for glasses and ‘dip stick’ testing will be available in the welfare tent so that young people who are worried that their drink might have been spiked can get it tested
 - Additional safeguarding policy/process around employees including contractors will be developed in respect of abuse of power (inappropriate behaviour/supplying drugs)

- Concerns around serious youth violence have led to:
 - The Starting Point Navigator programme launched in June 2021 based within the Royal Berkshire Hospital over the weekend to support young people who come to the Emergency Department due to violence or risk-taking behaviours. Starting Point worked closely with NHS colleagues and the Violence Reduction Unit to agree the design and implementation of the programme.
 - Revision of the Pan Berkshire Exploitation Screening Tool to include identifiers of serious violence and changes language to be trauma informed.
- Improvements in Pan Berkshire Child Protection Policy and procedures have been made as a direct result from learning from our local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. This positively supports practitioners in agencies Berkshire wide.
- The Safeguarding Executive recognised that the extent of independent scrutiny over the past year has been limited due to capacity. Although there was strong Independent Scrutiny through a range of case review work, the partnership was missing the full range of assurance required, and evidence that local leaders have been held to account. Following a review there was agreement for a new Independent Scrutineer post to be recruited to. This role would also provide support by Chairing the Safeguarding Executive and the three localised Independent Scrutiny and Impact Groups. This role does not hold responsibility for the partnership, which firmly remains with the Safeguarding Executive, but Chairing these groups will provide a vital communication link between them, and the consistency in Chairing provides a helicopter view across Berkshire West which is a clear benefit.

4.4 Each section within the report provides an overview of key achievements and the impact of partnership working. There are also boxes for ‘Scrutiny and Challenge’ that identifies where further work is required or progress has not been as quick as expected. One area identified is that whilst the partnership has a proven successful process for Rapid Reviews and supporting Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, however, there is a need now to establish how best to action learning across a tri-borough arrangement, ensure there is clear responsibility for plans and a method of effectively monitoring and tracking impact. Work on a revised quality assurance framework will be progressed this year.

4.5 Governance - page 20 of the report is the current structure chart for the BWSCP arrangements. Although not explicit in this chart, there are and will continue to be links to other multi-agency partnerships such as the Safeguarding Adult Board, Health and Wellbeing Boards, the Community Safety Partnerships, and the Domestic Abuse Partnership Boards in all three areas. In Reading in particular, there is a strong link to the One Reading Children’s and Young People’s Partnership. The statutory safeguarding partners are key members of these groups and will ensure that priority areas of work are not duplicated, and that good practice or areas of concern are shared.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO READING’S HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The work of the BWSCP aligns with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy by contributing to the Strategy’s priorities of ‘Help children and families in early years’ and ‘Promote positive mental health and wellbeing in children and young people’.

5.2 The report also supports the fact that Reading’s 2017-20 Health and Wellbeing Strategy is built on three foundations - safeguarding vulnerable adults and children, recognising and supporting all carers, and high quality co-ordinated information to support wellbeing.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no environmental or climate implications arising from this report.

7. COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

7.1 The Annual report has been written with contributions from all BWSCP partners and circulated to and agreed by the Statutory Safeguarding Partners. It was disseminated to all partners and published on the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership website in November 2021.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not applicable, however, equality and diversity continue to be a key theme for the safeguarding partnership arrangements.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Not applicable

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Not applicable

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None