



Reading | West Berkshire | Wokingham

# Annual Report 2021/2022



**WOKINGHAM**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



## Foreword/Executive Summary from the Berkshire West Statutory Safeguarding Executive

**Welcome** to the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP) Annual Report for 2021/2022, which provides an account of the work and progress undertaken by the multi-agency partnership to promote the safeguarding and wellbeing of children in Reading, West Berkshire, and Wokingham.

As an ambitious tri-borough partnership, we recognise that working across local authority borders can be challenging and effective partnership arrangements take time to embed. Throughout this document you will see examples of our positive progress, where working in partnership has made a difference. These include but are not limited to the alignment of Threshold Guidance to support continuity for practitioners working across Berkshire West, provision of support and training for schools (Alter Ego Productions) and clear and specific updated procedures as a result of case reviews.

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), our partnership continues to move toward the completion of 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. Please see page 14 for further information on these reviews and the learning identified.

We are clear that there is some way to go in embedding our arrangements and maximise the benefits from working over the wider footprint. As a Safeguarding Executive, we have spent time this year reflecting and focusing on strengthening our governance arrangements and specifically the roll and responsibility of Executive. Please see the Governance and Accountability page below for more information. In addition, throughout the report you will see ‘Scrutiny and Challenge’ boxes that highlight to us where we need to focus our attention. This information comes from our own analysis, what we have learnt in audit and case reviews, but also from scrutiny via Independent Reviewers.

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and say thank you to each and every member of the Partnership, our Subgroup Members, practitioners from all our partner agencies, education colleagues, volunteers, and those people out in the community for their commitment and the work they continue to do to help keep children in Berkshire West safe and to improve their life chances.



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## Message from the outgoing Chair of the Safeguarding Executive Group, Deborah Glassbrook

I have thoroughly enjoyed the privilege of Chairing this group for the past six months; I thank the partnership for this opportunity and wish the whole partnership well for the future. While this report recognises the positive advances made, the next steps need to focus on embedding the work started and evidencing positive impact for the children, young people, and families of Berkshire West. We recognise that there is always space for improvement, and I know that the partnership is in a stronger place with the members of the Executive Group, all our safeguarding leadership colleagues across our partner agencies, and our new Independent Scrutineer and Chair, David Goosey. I offer a warm welcome to David, who joined us in June 2022, and we are delighted that someone with his experience, knowledge and passion has taken on this post. The partnership is looking forward to the independent challenge and scrutiny that he will bring across the partnership but also as the new Chair of the Safeguarding Executive. Finally, I would like to thank our impressive Partnership Support Team, who manage all the partnership meetings, support the Chairs, and keep in communication with colleagues across the whole of Berkshire West. This is no mean feat, and we all appreciate the consistently positive nature of the team, the high calibre of work produced, and their ability to keep the partnership on track.

## Governance and Accountability – review and future arrangements

Our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements were created as a result of revised statutory guidance (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018) and have been in existence as the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP) since June 2019. The Statutory Safeguarding Partners hold the oversight, governance, and responsibility of the partnership arrangements, with delegated responsibility to the BWSCP Safeguarding Executive. The composition of the Safeguarding Executive from June 2022 is:

- Directors of Children’s Services - Reading, West Berkshire, and Wokingham
- Nurse Director - Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- Head Protecting Vulnerable People - Thames Valley Police
- Chief Superintendent, Local Policing Berkshire – Thames Valley Police
- Independent Scrutiny representative

From the outset our multi-agency arrangements have been designed to be flexible, with the Safeguarding Executive acknowledging the need to review the structure and responsibilities if required. As such, we recognised there were some challenges and improvements required in our high-level accountability and governance, communication between subgroups, and our scrutiny model.

The statutory responsibility for the partnership arrangements sits with the Chief Executives of the safeguarding partners, who delegate this duty to the BWSCP Safeguarding Executive, but it is vital that the Chief Executives remain informed of progress and are themselves curious about risks or improvements made, plus the potential or realised benefits of a tri-borough shared arrangement. We recognised that this link needed to be stronger, therefore we initiated regular joint meetings between the three Local Authority Chief Executive Officers and the three Directors for Children’s Services. These meetings have supported the Executive to focus on key themes such as assurance in relation to safeguarding training across the partnership and effective communication in relation to case review work, as well as ensure high level scrutiny of the partnership’s effectiveness. As we develop, we will look to build on this work to include the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police and the Chief Executive of the new Integrated Care Board.

The Safeguarding Executive also recognise that the extent of independent scrutiny over the past year has been limited due to capacity. As you will read below, we have had strong Independent Scrutiny through a range of case review work, but we have been missing the full range of assurance required and evidence that local leaders have been held to account. Following a review of our scrutiny model in November 2021, we agreed that an Independent Scrutineer post was required, who would also provide support by Chairing the Safeguarding Executive and the three localised Independent Scrutiny and Impact Groups. We are clear that 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. This also allows the safeguarding leaders across agencies to focus on the required work, discussion, and evidencing of impact.

As a Safeguarding Executive we spent time at the beginning of the year reflecting on our role, responsibility, and place within the partnership structure. We recognised that more pace was required to move the partnership to where we want it to be, and particularly as we had lacked effective independent challenge. From November 2021 we started, and continue, to meet every month to ensure conversations can move quickly and discussion focusses on impact. To support this work, we have initiated the formal commissioning of projects to specific subgroups based on identified areas of concern or need. This has included the review of threshold guidance and gathering assurance in relation to safeguarding training.

We know we need to improve communication through the partnership, and the initiation of the partnership newsletter is an element of this. Further work will continue with closer links between the Executive and Subgroup Chairs as they are invited to periodically join the Executive meetings and discuss how the work of the groups can be better understood and shared.

A clear area of focus for us going forward is the need to improve our multi-agency audit planning and delivery, with a move to a more formal quarterly commissioning of audits. The lack of an Independent Scrutineer to Chair the Independent Scrutiny and Impact Groups has meant that these groups have not been coordinated enough and require more objective oversight to enable us to evidence the safeguarding assurance we require. This is a high priority for the new Independent Scrutineer.

Our partnership structure allows us to promote partnership collaboration, which has enabled constructive independent scrutiny from partner agency colleagues. This has been evident locally in our subgroups but is also replicated in our pan-Berkshire work in relation to the Berkshire Child Safeguarding Procedures, and Section 11 arrangements, which are well regarded across the county. Further details can be found in the following sections.

#### **Scrutiny and Challenge:**

We have recognised the challenges and improvements required in our high-level accountability and governance and our scrutiny model and the changes we have put in place, as detailed above, will support a much stronger culture of positive challenge to promote progress. During the 2022/23 year we expect the pace of partnership led work that we have implemented over the later stages of 2021/22 to continue, but we will continue to evaluate the way we work together, and the arrangements we have in place, to ensure a more robust approach to quality assurance and evidencing impact.

## Our Key Priorities

The BWSCP priorities are based on the areas of concern faced by our children, young people, their families, and our practitioners, which were backed up by evidence from data, auditing and inspection findings, and themes identified in our local case reviews and multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, we re-evaluated our overarching priorities, which remained relevant, but our outcomes and activities were adapted to reflect the change in need and risk.

Work to meet the priorities has been carried out across the local, Berkshire West and Pan Berkshire Subgroups. The BWSCP subgroup structure chart can be found in Appendix 1. Whilst individual organisations respond to emerging and existing safeguarding concerns, the information below represents the joint partnership approach, work, and outcomes in relation to these priorities. We are working towards a consistent Berkshire West approach to enable the sharing of skills and identify best practice across a wider footprint, to help improve the life chances for all our children.

### Priority 1 –Safeguarding risks to young people in today's society

#### Practitioners understand the approach to extra-familial risk – contextual safeguarding, exploitation, and serious youth violence

We recognise the importance of practitioners understanding the local approach to 'contextual and complex' safeguarding and how this work needs a response often outside of our usual safeguarding frameworks.

There are regular multi-agency meetings in each of the three areas that discuss individual cases and separate strategic meetings to agree a joint agency response. These are routinely reviewed and changes to approach taken where necessary. For example, in Reading the multi-agency risk assessment operational groups have incorporated serious youth violence into their agenda. Due to the inclusion of serious youth violence the meetings are in the process of transitioning to new names: Extra Familial Triage and Review meeting and Extra Familial Harm Operational Group to encompass their new remit and updated Terms of Reference have been written. Additional police representation and involvement is expected to enable fuller discussion in relation to serious youth violence. Progress of this transition will be monitored and reported on in the next annual report.

In Wokingham, the Exploitation and Missing Risk Assessment Conference (EMRAC) was evaluated in early 2021 with the aim of becoming more child focused and gaining an understanding of what disruption activities were required. Feedback from a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review has identified that this meeting requires further development to ensure that discussions and information sharing at these meetings are proportionate and timely and focus on supporting operational practice to assist with safety planning. This work is in progress as part of the case review action plan.

Each area continues to review the effectiveness of their strategic approach, with changes made in Wokingham and Reading over the past year to strengthen the partnership ownership and engagement at the highest levels. In Wokingham there has been a revised coordinated approach towards serious violence and exploitation, creating a collaborative board that looks at both issues with strategic direction and oversight from the Community Safety Partnership. In Reading in early 2021, the Safeguarding Exploitation Group merged with the Adolescent Risk Group of the One Reading Partnership (Children and Young People Partnership) to cover a broader range of risk concerns and drawing on a wider breadth of partner organisations. In West Berkshire, the existing group remains well represented, with strong links with Building Communities Together (Community Safety Partnership). These approaches in all three areas have strengthened the governance arrangements, bringing the front line and strategic processes closer, and learning and responding together.

### Impact of Partnership working:

**Adolescent Risk – Reading Festival** – Concerns were raised by local services 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; funding was secured by Festival Republic. A survey was sent young people in years 10, 11 & 12 in local Schools in order to gain the views of young people on the safety and safeguarding arrangements in place at events they attend. Following on from the completion of the survey a series of webinars were arranged to cover the areas of concern covering sex, bodies, consent and assault, substances, alcohol, risk, and choices. These webinars were delivered to pupils in the participating Schools and are in the process of being evaluated further. As part of this work a satellite medical facility, social workers, and safeguarding leads were available on-site for the weekend of Reading Festival as well as multiple health and safeguarding professionals being on-call and able to coordinate a response quickly should any issues have emerged. Learning from the work undertaken in Summer 2021 and has fed into the planning for the Reading Festival 2022 and so far, have led to the following improvements being 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)

### Identification and support offered to children and young people who are vulnerable to exploitation and serious youth violence

To support our vulnerable young people, it is crucial that practitioners have the right tools and knowledge. In the past year across Berkshire West hundreds of staff have received contextual safeguarding or similar training.

Colleagues are also supported to use the Pan Berkshire Exploitation Indicator Tool, which is regularly revised to ensure it is fit for purpose. As a result of ongoing case reviews and a rise in serious youth violence locally, in September 2021, the Pan Berkshire Child Exploitation Indicator Tool was updated to include Serious Youth Violence, and further amendments to reflect changing terminology and phraseology to support a trauma informed approach, which is becoming a more standard practice model across the county. This work is undertaken by the Pan Berkshire Exploitation Subgroup, and therefore brings together a county wide approach and knowledge base. Locally, audits have shown the tool is well used and subsequent referrals are appropriate. For example, colleagues in West Berkshire undertook an exercise to review the Child Exploitation Indicator Tool trends in comparison to the previous year. Although most of the data was similar to that of the previous year, some of the emerging themes are thought to be due to the impact of Covid-19, for example the increase in exposure to domestic abuse, bereavement, and increase in substance misuse.

A survey with Schools in Wokingham was undertaken so that Thames Valley Police and School Leaders could understand students' thoughts in relation to weapon crime; this was commissioned due to the increase in serious incidents within the local area. Students were asked to answer a series of multiple-choice questions which formed part of the planning of a project to raise awareness and over 1000 responses were received. It was agreed that the scope of the survey would be widened to include other Wokingham Schools; all Schools in Wokingham have been contacted and are receiving knife crime seminars jointly presented with the Youth Offending Service.

In Reading, weapon crime continues to be a priority; officers have a process in place to stop and search "habitual" knife carriers in the community. Thames Valley Police will continue to provide safety arches in Secondary Schools when needed and the Neighbourhood Police Team have offered to support and undertake work with primary schools. Funding has been secured by Thames Valley Police to provide assemblies from St Giles Trust in Reading schools. The assemblies will be delivered to year group's seven, eight and nine and will focus on debunking the myths and stereotypes around crime, weapons, gangs, county lines and related issues.

The Reading, Thames Valley Police School Safeguarding Officers have also trialled a presentation in Schools around knife crime; the sessions are interactive and age appropriate. In the next academic year these presentations will be offered to all Schools.

In West Berkshire, three schools piloted a Drug Diversion Scheme and the outcome showed that it worked well; all West Berkshire Schools have agreed to participate in the scheme moving forward. When monitoring its impact in Schools it was found that there were no re-referrals. The same scheme was run in the community; this was also successful with high levels of engagement in drug education and harm minimalisation. When a School finds a student in possession or suspected of drug dealing, they the contact TVP Safeguarding Officers who divert the young person to local services for intervention.

#### Impact of Partnership working:

**Starting Point – Navigator Programme** - 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. The Navigator programme is a Berkshire West service for young people and also includes SEND and care leavers. Since June 2021 Starting Point recruited 24 volunteer Navigators who have worked with 28 young people. Of these 28 young people 28% had injuries associated with violence, 58% were admitted due to drug and alcohol misuse and 90% reported that they struggled with their mental health. After engaging with the Navigators 100% of young people said they had found meeting a Navigator helpful and 42% went on to access support in the wider community. Starting Points Impact Report states *'It has been clear that the young people we meet very rarely have one issue resulting in requiring A&E assistance, but issues around violence, mental health and risk-taking behaviour are all interlinked'*.

#### Scrutiny and Impact:

In each area there is a continued drive to ensure processes and strategic direction are strong or improving, through evaluation and review. Whilst changes have been implemented our Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews have highlighted that more is required. These recommendations need to be acted upon quickly, and the learning shared widely. There continues to be significant examples of serious youth violence in our area, spanning our local borders, and the Safeguarding Executive must work together with Community Safety and Public Health colleagues to embed necessary changes in approach and practice.

#### Increasing our awareness and understanding of the risk of sexual abuse and harassment in schools:

Following the Ofsted Review into Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges, the three Education Safeguarding Engagement Groups evaluated their local processes, considered their involvement in the local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and what support or guidance was required to support education settings. Following these discussions Brighter Futures for Children produced a local advice document to support Schools with their response to reports of Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB), Sexual Harassment or Sexual Violence; this document was shared across the Partnership as good practice guidance for all areas to consider. School Designated Safeguarding Leads also received a presentation that included range of local advice on the steps to follow when an immediate response is required.

The West Berkshire Education Group received a presentation from Thames Valley Police regarding work that was taking place within the locality relating to Violence against Women and Girls. Officers are engaging with young people in the community, reaching out to young males to encourage them to challenge their friend's behaviour and narrative around women and girls. A fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic is a concern for young people's naivety, due to the lack of socialising which has led to basic safety advice not being followed. The Neighbourhood Policing Teams will be completing work in schools around staying safe whilst out in the community.

### Online safety and social media:

Locally, we have seen an increase in nude/semi-nude images being shared between young adults/students. As a response to this and other concerns with regards to young people's safety online the Partnership delivered an Online Safety Forum for all agencies which covered topics such as grooming, bullying, impact of covid-19, and self-generated indecent images. This was recorded and remains available on the BWSCP YouTube channel.

To further support schools, parents, and young people, we developed an Online Safety Page on the BWSCP website. It contains information relating to various types of online abuse that our young people can experience with links to guidance and agencies that can provide further information or support. There are also links to some useful articles for parents and carers about how to keep young people safe online. Online Safety features regularly in the BWSCP Facebook and Twitter posts.

We recognise that social media has been highlighted as a significant concern within the Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews focussing on serious youth violence. Whilst the scope of the reviews could not evidence social media as harmful contributory factor, the criminal processes and a subsequent documentary did highlight the influential effects of pushed content and how social media can be used to organise and incite violence. As a result, our reviews have included recommendations for our local Partnership to both support practitioners and schools with current knowledge and information, whilst recognising that this is a national, if not global, issue.

### Priority 2 - Intervening earlier to safeguard effectively

This priority is crucial to preventing escalating risk by supporting all partners to be able to respond to concerns and confidently hold responsibility for risk at an appropriate level. This should prevent our children and their families from having to access high level support or not be subjected to Children's Social Care involvement if not required.

#### Effective understanding of child protection thresholds to ensure appropriate safeguarding referrals - Aligned Threshold Guidance

Each Berkshire West locality has their own Threshold Guidance document, due to locality differences in relation to referral routes and service provision. However, the last review of the guidance in 2019/20 initiated a move to a more aligned approach across Berkshire West. A subsequent Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) in Wokingham noted that the Wokingham document did not adequately reflect information in relation to the risks associated with domestic abuse, and the new Domestic Abuse Act. This has prompted a large-scale review of the content and layout of all three documents, with a view to:

- Address the issues highlighted by the DHR, but also update and improve risk and protective factors in relation to exploitation, special educational needs and disabilities and sexual harassment in schools.
- Fully align the document detail across the three versions, with the only differences being referral information and some specific service detail.
- Improve the layout to enable practitioners to more easily access the important information.
- Improve information and detail about consent requirements at each level of need.

These changes, which have been agreed in July 2022, further support practitioners who work with children across our Berkshire West footprint. Once published, these revised documents mean that whichever document a practitioner refers to they know that the detail within the levels of need and our approach to thresholds is the same in each local authority area. Details and links to the documents can be found here: [BWSCP website - threshold guidance](#)

#### BWSCP are assured that Child in Need processes are seen as equally robust, secure, and as important as the Child Protection process

Previous and more recent local case reviews had identified that there was a misunderstanding around Child in Need (CIN) processes, including the multiagency involvement, how it is communicated and how we effectively engage with families. To fully understand the changes required, alongside specific recommendations by

Independent Reviewers, we have undertaken a multi-agency Child in Need audit across Berkshire West. This has been a significant undertaking, with almost 80 cases audited, and has yielded learning both in terms of the audit results but also the audit process.

The recommendations include:

- The need for best practice guidance to be produced for all practitioners. This should be aimed at the wider workforce, to support their understanding and expectations of the Child in Need process, and the explicit need for consistent, engaged multi-agency involvement.
- That processes are enhanced to ensure that the practitioners that best know the family, from a range of agencies, are invited and contribute to the Child in Need process. This will support the family better and encourage improved engagement.
- Improvements in the way Child in Need Plan information is shared (both in terms of timeliness and with whom) to support effective ongoing discussions.
- Improved documentation for families, to help them understand the Child in Need process.

An action plan is in place following the agreement of the recommendations which will be progress throughout 2022.

#### Scrutiny and Challenge:

We have recognised that there is differing understanding both by practitioners across the network and families of the Child in Need status and processes. However, the scale of the Berkshire West footprint multi-agency audit and lack of ownership at senior management level has meant a delay in the final recommendations and actions being agreed. The learning from this audit needs to be embedded more swiftly and consistently across Berkshire West, with future auditing reflecting the need to be focused, owned, and completed at pace.

#### Practitioners understand the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people, with appropriate support in place to mitigate the risk

Domestic Abuse has been a significant feature in recent reviews; therefore, a multi-agency audit was undertaken in West Berkshire in early 2021 to test processes and practitioner understanding and identification of risk. We also wanted to know that the child's voice or lived experience was 'heard'.

Overall, the results were positive, with swift responses to concerns, positive engagement with family members including children, and recognition if cases were repeat incidents. However, there was learning identified which included:

- An automatic process (known as Op Encompass) is triggered if a child experiences a Domestic Abuse incident which notifies key partners such as schools. It was found that the full recording process was not widely understood by Police Officers, and, in some cases, it caused delays in reporting the issue to the schools. Officers thought that they had triggered the Encompass process when in fact they had not. **Response:** Thames Valley Police immediately put processes in place to rectify this issue, including Officer training and team briefings locally, but have also raised the issues with the Protecting Vulnerable People unit as a finding for the whole Force. Subsequently, robotic automated processes have been introduced to the Op Encompass process which has drastically improved the notification rate - in October 2021, 47% of potential Encompass notifications were successfully shared with schools, compared to 14% in October 2020.
- Voice of the Child – Clarity and training for Police Officers was required to avoid confusion in relation to safeguarding duties and ensuring children in the household are seen and spoken to. **Response:** A force-wide briefing was presented to operational officers in relation to these concerns.
- It was noted that victims and families can refuse the support offered by consent-based services, which can leave universal services such as schools frustrated and concerned for the welfare of the children. **Response:** The audit group agreed that a supplementary plan should be considered for these situations.

The full audit has been shared with the newly formed Domestic Abuse Partnership Board in West Berkshire, and during a review of the action plan in the July 2022 Independent Scrutiny and Impact Group meetings, there was agreement to re-run this audit to evidence impact. Work to understand the level and reach of domestic abuse training was also agreed to provide Safeguarding Partnership colleagues with assurance.

**Impact of Partnership Working:** As detailed above, learning from the domestic abuse audit was immediately responded to, with additional training to Police Officers. It is extremely positive that this learning was not only shared locally but has been taken across the whole Thames Valley Police force area.

#### **Scrutiny and Impact:**

Domestic Abuse is another example of a high-risk concern where the responsibility for a coordinated response lies with multiple partnership arrangements. It is vital that BWSCP members engage fully with the three new Domestic Abuse Partnership Boards to ensure the risk to children is appropriately included in their agendas and remains a robust challenge within the safeguarding partnership.

### **Priority 3 - Engagement of Children, Families and Practitioners**

Our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements recognise the need to improve our partnership engagement with children and families, ensuring that their voice and experiences are part of our discussions and decision making. Whilst this remains a work in progress, colleagues have undertaken surveys that we have considered in our partnership meetings.

**Attitudinal Survey:** West Berkshire conducted a Young Persons Attitudinal Survey in 2021 to understand the attitudes of young people, of school age, in West Berkshire to child exploitation, sexting and domestic abuse. The aim of the survey was to understand how aware young people are of child exploitation, sexting, domestic abuse, and their attitudes towards them. 2076 completed questionnaires from year 7 - 13 pupils and the findings included:

- 62% young people surveyed had heard of Child Sexual Exploitation
- 50.9% young people surveyed had heard of Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines
- 76.3% young people surveyed knew what sexting was with 75.3% considering it a big issue
- 3.2% young people surveyed thought there were occasions that people deserved physical, emotional, financial, or sexual abuse in a relationship

In comparison to the previous survey there had been a decline in some of responses received for example around information being obtainable in school; this is thought to be influenced by the impact of Covid-19 and Schools being closed for a period of time. Work is underway with the local Children's Delivery Group to consider and respond to the findings.

**Reading Festival** – as noted above, work across the Partnership with Festival Republic and IT Happens took place to prepare young people for Reading Festival and how to stay safe while attending events, with a survey with young people in Years 11, 12 and 13, to gather information about their understanding of staying safe when at parties and attending large events. This directly led to the supported and planning for the 2021 festival as well as 2022, which is detailed in the Partnership Impact box on page 5.

**Crest Advisory:** Crest Advisory worked with the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit and local Schools to look at the relationship between social media and serious youth violence. Using a case study based on a local incident they discussed the behaviours young people see or engage in online and how these behaviours can lead conflict and violence. A report relating to this work will be published in the Summer of 2022; this will include key findings around social media and violence and include recommendations on how to prevent and disrupt these behaviours.

**Wokingham Weapon Crime Survey:** A survey with Schools in Wokingham was undertaken so that Thames Valley Police and School Leaders could understand students' thoughts in relation to weapon crime; this was commissioned due to the increase in serious incidents within the local area. Students were asked to answer a series of multiple-choice questions which formed part of the planning of a project to raise awareness. There were over 1000 responses to the survey. It was agreed that the scope of the survey would be widened to include other Wokingham Schools; all Schools in Wokingham have been contacted and are receiving knife crime seminars jointly presented with the Youth Offending Service.

**Practitioner Engagement:** Our engagement with practitioners has predominantly continued through auditing and case review work. We have ensured that all our Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) have included a practitioner event, where the independent reviewer has had a chance to ask questions and hear directly from those involved about their experiences and what they feel is the key learning. This has been particularly challenging in an environment of online meetings, and these sessions would always be preferable as face-to-face, however we have endeavoured to make sure practitioners are supported through the process and feel comfortable to speak. Given the number of CSPRs ongoing throughout the year, we have heard more from practitioners this way than we would in a normal year, and this has strengthened the review process.

Auditing is also a key area where practitioners are able to reflect and feedback on areas of work or practice. Multi-agency and single agency audit (where there is a safeguarding element) findings are reported back to the Independent Scrutiny and Impact Groups with audit topics including (but not limited to) pre-birth assessments, first time entrants into the Youth Offending Service, referrals from the Royal Berkshire Hospital Foundation Trust to the three Children's Services, vulnerable caseload audit from Health Visiting and School Nursing, and the Berkshire West Child in Need audit.

#### **Scrutiny and Challenge:**

This continues to be an area of challenge for the BWSCP. It is positive to receive the results of surveys from our children and young people, but there is not enough direct evidence of subsequent decision making by the partnership as a result. Whilst there are plans to engage young people more directly within our partnership arrangements, for example within the Reading Adolescent Risk Strategic Group, we need to ensure this is done with care and clear purpose.

#### **Priority 4 - Effectiveness of our Partnership Arrangements**

We are aware that we have challenged ourselves locally by forming a tri-borough safeguarding partnership arrangement, with the aim of building on the positive aspects of previous local arrangements, sharing good practice and taking the opportunity to work more coherently and collaboratively across the three borough boundaries. Below are examples where we have made progress on these aims.

#### **Supporting the Education Sector**

As referenced in earlier sections of the report, we have three locality-based Education Safeguarding Engagement Groups, with Headteacher and Local Authority Safeguarding Leads/representatives, which provides a mechanism for education leaders to identify and inform the development of safeguarding and improvement across schools and ensure that issues specific to the school/education community have a voice and can be escalated for discussion to the Statutory Safeguarding Partners. Alongside these meetings are locality-based learning sessions for Designated Safeguarding Leads where we are able to share consistent but tailored safeguarding messages.

**School Safeguarding Audit:** A continuing success has been the alignment of the Section 175/157 (school safeguarding audit) process across the three authority areas; the return rate for this academic year was again positive, which demonstrates that schools find this process useful and supportive. We use the NSPCC audit tool, and for the 2021/2022 assessment a third option of 'Partially Met' was included; it is anticipated that as Schools become more familiar with this addition the use of this option will increase, therefore grading their safeguarding measures more accurately.

It is a requirement that schools confirm that they have completed the audit with their Safeguarding Governor and that it is seen by the Local Governing Body, to promote awareness and responsibility for safeguarding within the school governance structure. The returns are analysed by safeguarding leads locally to identify any areas of concern. The results are shared between the local authority leads across Berkshire West to enable the learning to be shared across the three areas, but also with the Education Safeguarding Engagement Group in each locality. This process enables school safeguarding leads to raise concerns and receive support directly from Local Authority leads, with the local authority colleagues also proactively approaching schools if an issue has arisen. Examples of identified areas of improvement include:

- The measures in place to prevent and respond to Peer-on-Peer abuse required further consideration, and as a result Peer-on-Peer abuse is now included in the Universal Safeguarding training and DSL training.
- Governor and Trustee training needed to be strengthened so they have the knowledge and information needed to carry out their responsibilities. As a result, a free Universal Training session for Governors was arranged.
- Schools to ensure that they work with other agencies such as children's social care to ensure the right steps are taken to keep Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children safe – meeting to agree response has been arranged.
- Topics such as relationships and sex need to be relevant to all children, and discussions, for example about healthy relationships, should include all types of relationships so all children can feel represented.

**CDOP Bereavement Pack:** Following discussions at the Pan Berks Child Death Overview Panel, a Bereavement Guide was produced for school professionals on how to respond to a sudden or unexpected death of a child or young person. The guidance outlines the Child Death process and other statutory functions that need to be considered as well as providing useful contacts, resources, and links to local support services. This has been shared with schools across Berkshire West.

**Thames Valley Police Intelligence Sharing:** Through the three locality-based Education Safeguarding Engagement Groups, school colleagues raised that there were ongoing concerns with regards to sexual exploitation/images/threats/weapon crime/vaping and wanted to understand the way of reporting soft intelligence to the Police so that they had an overview of what was happening in the community to create a bigger picture of safeguarding concerns and areas of focus. The Thames Valley Police Intelligence Submission Form was shared with Schools and DSLs across Berkshire West to enable them to report incidents or potential safeguarding concerns, and Officers have attended these meetings to answer questions.

**Alter Ego:** In order to support our local Schools with ongoing concerns relating to Online Safety the partnership has funded 10 Alter Ego sessions in each area for Primary Schools focusing on Online Safety. The partnership has also funded 10 Secondary performances in each area focusing on Sexual Violence and Harassment. These will take place in the Autumn Term 2022.

### Website and eLearning

One of the main mechanisms for sharing information with the wider workforce and our families is through the BWSCP website; this continues to be updated regularly and contains a wide range of safeguarding information, guidance and links for support and training.

From April 2021 to March 2022 there were over 130,000 views on 74 pages. The most accessed page was eLearning with over 6,000 views; this is where the Universal Safeguarding Training is hosted alongside various other learning opportunities, and it is positive that the workforce knows where and how to access this. Across Berkshire West we have, for many years, provided a free online level 1 universal safeguarding training module, available to anyone working with children and young people. It has always been our aim to retain this element of training for our workforce as free to access, and it is hugely positive that over the past 12 months 3625 people have successfully completed the online Universal Safeguarding Training.

We have increased our social media presence with regards to promoting safeguarding campaigns. Some of the identified areas of focus for this year have been:

- Summer campaigns on water safety and the danger of open windows
- Safe Sleeping
- Weapon Crime
- Online Safety
- Healthy relationships & Domestic Abuse

### **Pan Berkshire Arrangements**

BWSCP has continued to support the Pan Berkshire safeguarding arrangements through the Section 11 Panel, Pan Berkshire Policy and Procedures Subgroup and Pan Berkshire Exploitation Subgroup. These groups are well respected by colleagues from across the county and are crucial to effective partnership arrangements.

The Section 11 Panel requests that representatives from key agencies who work across two or more Berkshire local authority areas attend the panel to present their Section 11 self-assessment return. A tool is provided to enable agencies to demonstrate and provide evidence that they are fulfilling their safeguarding duties under the Children Act 2004. Panel members scrutinise the return, ask questions of the presenter and provide feedback on areas for improvement. This is seen as an effective process, which agencies value.

The Pan Berkshire Policy and Procedures subgroup is also a multi-agency group with representatives from agencies across the county. The meetings scrutinise chapter amendments suggested by the procedure's provider, but also has a timetable of chapters for local review. This cross border and multi-disciplinary approach enable all Berkshire Safeguarding Partnerships to maintain up-to-date localised procedures that are easily accessed by all practitioners.

**Impact of Partnership Working:** This group also reacts to findings from local case reviews, an example being revisions in the Child Protection Conference chapter following a West Berkshire Child Safeguarding Practice Review. The chapter is now clear that when a case is stepped down from a child protection plan that a child in need plan is in place for at least three months and be subject to management scrutiny and review before closure. It now also states that if there is a significant change within 3 months of the conference that removes a child's name from a Child Protection plan then a multiagency strategy meeting should be convened, to determine whether a s47 enquiry is necessary to enable the local authority to decide whether it should take any action to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child, for example, a Child Protection conference should be held. It is positive that an issue raised in one local authority area can positively impact procedures that are accessed by six local authority areas.

### **BWSCP local datasets support focussed discussion on key topics**

Our three areas have very different demographics, and as such are never in the same group of statistical neighbours. However, our children and families regularly cross the borders and as a Berkshire West area we obviously share many safeguarding risks. To support discussions on our local potential or known concerns the Independent Scrutiny and Impact Groups (ISIGs) now review a combined Berkshire West dataset that includes the same information from all three Children's Services to provide a comparison, as well as data from other key partners. A selection of the data included in the dataset can be found in Appendix 2.

The comparison of local data has led to several discussions regarding specific topics over the year, such as referral numbers. Over a period of time, it was identified that in Wokingham the referral rate had remained low and had not returned to pre pandemic levels; this had not been the case for Reading or West Berkshire. Various reasons for this were considered such as school holidays, covid-19 pandemic restrictions and school closures. After the initial concern was raised, a review of referrals was undertaken in Wokingham to identify if there were any unidentified issues. The review concluded that there were no concerns or issues identified with threshold application and provided assurance that for the foreseeable future this is likely to be the new normal for Wokingham.

We also encourage thematic discussions at the ISIGs which can lead to better multi-agency involvement. For example, during, and following the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic there has been a recognised national increase in Elective Home Education, and locally numbers have continued to increase. The Southeast Sector Led Improvement Programme (SESLIP) are undertaking work in this area and colleagues agreed to consider the results, and to establish if numbers remain raised at the beginning of the school year. As a safeguarding partnership we recognise that School is a protective factor in children's lives. Children who do not attend school can become hidden, which means that we are less able to help and protect them. Following on from discussions at the ISIGs the Safeguarding Executive have commissioned a project to consider:

- How we identify those families that are genuinely keen to Electively Home Educate as opposed to those that have become disenfranchised with schools?
- How each area assures itself that children are receiving appropriate and adequate learning opportunities, particularly for the harder to reach families?
- How they ensure that universal services are aware that they must inform the local authority if they become aware that a child is EHE?
- A plan to implement the awaited new Government Statutory guidance.

**Case Complexity:** Locally, agencies are reporting that there is an increase in the complexity of cases; this increase is thought to be due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. There has been a significant increase in concerns raised regarding young people's emotional health and wellbeing, and this is reflected in data received within the Independent Scrutiny and Impact groups. A survey was undertaken with Schools in Wokingham to identify the key areas of focus; the survey highlighted Families in Acute Stress as the highest area of concern; this is reflected in the work undertaken in Reading to identify where the increase in case complexity has come from. There is not one singular factor, but families are in acute stress with multiple factors presenting. This surge in complexity has seen an increase in the cases coming into the front doors across Berkshire West with cases, in all areas, being open for longer than they would have been previously. West Berkshire have seen the number of children and young people subject to Child Protection plans increase significantly, due to complexity; however, a review of cases has been undertaken which concluded that the right families are receiving the right services at the right time. In addition, feedback from Ofsted recognised that the Family Safeguarding Model used in West Berkshire is effective and caseloads have been well managed.

#### **Scrutiny and Challenge:**

We recognise that working over a Berkshire West footprint is complicated and it requires continued engagement, ownership, discussion, and willingness for it to work at all levels and to be successful and provide added value. Our tri-borough partnership provides us with the opportunity to think more creatively, for example, the opportunity of cross boundary working allows us to identify common safeguarding issues and consider the strengths of joint discussion and co-working with partners. The examples above provide some evidence of the positive impact for our workforce of working in this coordinated way. However, the Safeguarding Executive and all the subgroups recognise that improvements need to be made, and this continues to be the challenge for the forthcoming year.

## Case Review Activity

### Rapid Reviews

As partly detailed in last year's annual report, from the first lockdown period in March 2020 up until June 2021 the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership completed Rapid Reviews for 22 children across Reading, West Berkshire, and Wokingham. This unprecedented number of notifications of serious child safeguarding incidents partly reflected the strain that families countrywide were facing as a result of the pandemic. The significant rise in non-accidental injuries was not only seen locally but nationally, plus we saw a rise in serious youth violence, which tragically resulted in fatal stabbing incidents in Reading. This directly led to seven of the notifications as we sought to understand the role of multi-agency support to the alleged perpetrators in their lives before the incident, as well as that of the victim. The Rapid Reviews have progressed to five individual Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, plus a thematic Child Safeguarding Practice Review focussing on serious youth violence (see below for more information).

### Independent Scrutiny:

Following this large number of notifications, the Partnership were keen to ensure that the learning identified in the subsequent Rapid Review was not lost in the increased pressure on workload for all agencies due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. As such, an independent appraisal was commissioned to undertake a concise evaluation of the 22 Rapid Reviews completed by the Partnership. The key aims of this analysis were to:

- Independently evaluate the effectiveness of the multi-agency BWSCP process to undertake Rapid Reviews, highlighting any issues with effective engagement or information sharing by organisations and providing an assessment on the quality of the multi-agency discussion and report produced as a result.
- Review the Rapid Review reports, with supporting documentation and minutes of meetings if required, to draw together learning themes.
- Ascertain through discussion with key colleagues and the Case Review Group, that the learning identified has or is being progressed, discuss, and suggest recommendations to support the embedding of learning, and identify any impact evidence; and
- Link the findings/learning/recommendations from the Rapid Review reports with those of any local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews subsequently initiated to ensure concerns and findings were taken forward and considered in these reviews.

The Independent Reviewer 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 CSPRP has noted in a high number of the reports submitted to them'. Discussion with local colleagues also found that they agreed that the process enabled good communication between partners, with good engagement and transparency from all agencies, allowing productive and proactive discussion, even when the situation may be challenging.

The reviewer found that there was not a consistent approach within and across agencies to deal with learning gained through Rapid Reviews. This includes, for example, learning points being taken to other forums and scrutinised to consider the best way to disseminate it across an agency, plus action tracking, oversight, and governance. This has meant that checking how effectively learning has been embedded was acknowledged as more problematic. However, there were examples provided of direct influence on practice of the learning identified in Rapid Reviews, which are captured in the Impact box below.

### Impact of Partnership Working:

The Rapid Review process allows for immediate learning to be taken back to agencies. Examples given as part of the Independent Review include:

- In West Berkshire, learning and resources in relation to water safety following the drowning of a child in Newbury Canal and safe sleeping advice (from a separate incident) with the Lullaby Trust, were shared across services. There is evidence of both being used in our front door Children and Family Services Triage service and Early Response Hub. In addition, as unborn children and under 1s were identified as particularly vulnerable, enhanced screening tools were developed during Covid-19 which have continued to be used and expanded to develop additional enhanced screening which includes Domestic Abuse.
- In Brighter Futures for Children, an example of identified learning was in relation to 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.
- In Wokingham Children's Services, an example of improving the sharing interim safety plans with other agencies when a family is under-going an assessment, was swiftly implemented due as the manager involved in the Rapid Review took the learning back to the respective members of the workforce.
- Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust have reported an increased number of referrals staff make to Children's Services. Professional training and development, in part originating from learning from case review activity, will have played a part in this, but the Rapid Review process has also highlighted the importance of designated post-holders being accessible and visible as a means of supporting and empowering practitioners to learn and develop their safeguarding practices.

The Independent Reviewer identified a number of themes that were highlighted across the Rapid Reviews. These include:

- Information Sharing
- Assessment and management of risk
- Escalation and challenge
- Recording
- Thresholds
- Professional curiosity
- Communication
- Non- or dis-engagement by parents
- Decision making
- Hearing the child's voice
- Contextual safeguards
- Covid-19 impact

### Suggested areas for development:

- Make adjustments to the Rapid Review Report template to distinguishing learning from remedial action, to support agencies with improvement activity.
- Improve use of single and multi-agency action plans and tracking sheets to better evidence development and improvement activity.
- Develop and embed a process for to assess, scrutinise and evidence progress and impact.
- Consider time limited 'theme lead' approach to learning and improvement, based on the identified key themes, targeted at either a strategic or operational level and act as a lever for raising the profile of the theme, thereby influencing practice and cultural change.
- Create a more systematic approach to sharing and disseminating learning identified in Rapid Reviews and most full case reviews.

This report was presented to the Case Review Group and the Safeguarding Executive in May 2022, and actions to address these recommendations are being taken forward and will be reported in the next annual report.

### Case Review Group Activity

The Case Review Group continues to promote active discussion about any cases that colleagues may feel meet criteria for a level of multi-agency review. This was particularly important considering the significant drop in 2021/2022 of cases being identified that met the criteria for making a notification of a serious child safeguarding incident. Due to the reduction, consideration was given to the process in place and challenging discussions took place to review whether any cases may have been missed.

During this period the Case Review Group continued to review cases of concern, that didn't meet the criteria for notification, to ensure that there was a multi-agency view and to consider if any further local-based work was required. This is an open, honest but challenging group, where individuals actively scrutinise safeguarding practice.

An outcome of the case review process discussion and the Independent Reviewer report was that it highlighted that the Safeguarding Executive had not been fully sighted on all the Rapid Reviews from across Berkshire West, at the different stages of review. This inadvertently meant a lack of clear ownership and direction at the Executive level which subsequently impacted on the ability of the Safeguarding Executive to be fully assured about the process, learning identified and the impact. A thorough review of the process has been undertaken, to ensure that appropriate Safeguarding Executive members are informed or involved at key stages of the process.

### Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

The purpose of a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) is to look at the multi-agency response of organisations working alongside children and families, to identify any improvements that can be made to the services they provide; and as a partnership for us to understand and share good practice and learning to improve and promote the wellbeing of our children and young people.

#### Published CSPRs:

Three CSPRs have been published in the first half of 2022. These relate to two cases of known or suspected non-accidental injury of a young child, and one case of sexual abuse. All our CSPR reports are published on this page: [Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership - Safeguarding Practice Reviews](#).

Some of the key areas of learning from the cases include:

- Assessments should recognise and take account of the multiple risk factors, analyse statements of fact about a parent/adult with what impact the issue may have on a child's safety and welfare, ensure records reflect this thinking process, management oversight promotes clear rationale for decisions.
- Recognising and understanding patterns of behaviour through the use of chronologies (single or multi-agency) to support assessment and risk management work.
- Ensuring safe step down of intervention - to include a clear, multi-agency process to support these cases once higher level of intervention is removed and re-assessment of risk if the family circumstances change, or parental disengagement is a cause for concern.
- All cases reiterate areas for improved information sharing at different stages in safeguarding processes, plus the need for empowering practitioners to escalate if they have a concern or difference of opinion.
- It is important to find out and understand if family members have any learning needs or borderline learning difficulties - professionals must make sure that family members understand what meetings they are asked to attend, why the meeting is happening, and what is expected of them.
- The importance of Child Focused Practice - professionals should always try to understand and record children's views where possible, even if they are young with limited verbal skills, with due consideration of different communication styles, including issues of disability, age, and language.

As part of the Child safeguarding Practice Review process we also identify and highlight the positive work undertaken by practitioners. Many examples of this were identified, including:

- Clear identification of vulnerabilities in families and multi-disciplinary discussions being undertaken.
- Early referrals when concerns identified, and examples of quality assessments.
- Swift responses after an incident to safeguard children and their siblings.
- Practitioners effectively sharing information and communicating, and examples of cultural sensitivity.
- Positive examples of practitioners being child focussed and challenging decisions when they felt it was appropriate.

- Significant support was initially put in place for a family, which was appropriately reduced when good progress was made.
- Examples where the multi-agency response when some new information was received was timely and coordinated.

Recommendations and action plans are in place for these reviews, are being actively monitored and acted upon through the Berkshire West Case Review Group and the locality based Independent Scrutiny and Impact Groups. These include single and multi-agency actions, and we expect to report in more detail the results of these reviews in the next annual report. A number of actions have been completed which include:

- Undertaking the multi-agency Child in Need audit, leading to practitioner and family guidance being produced to help support more effective engagement in the process.
- Review and update of the Threshold Guidance.
- Review and update of the Escalation Guidance and procedures.
- A range of locality and agency specific, plus Berkshire Wide procedures and processes have been reviewed and updated as a direct result of CSPR learning.

#### **Ongoing Reviews related to Serious Youth Violence:**

We currently have reviews ongoing that we aim to publish in Autumn 2022 that relate to, and were triggered by, incidents of serious youth violence. Whilst not yet published, much of the process of the reviews, including discussions with families, practitioners, and managers across the partnership, took place with this annual report period. Key themes identified in these reviews include:

- Recognition that this cohort are likely to have a range of complex needs and are at risk of school exclusion.
- Improve information sharing with schools about pupils at risk of exploitation.
- The need for appropriate alternative education provision to support a multi-agency response.
- Earlier referral and engagement with CAMHS for children at risk of exclusion, and understanding the role of speech and language services.
- Development of diversionary support to avoid entry into the criminal justice system.
- The need to reduce the number of professionals involved, whilst enabling consistency and continuity of workers to build relationships with the young people and their family.
- Improving data to understand the problem profile more accurately.
- Ensure that the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are really understood by all professional working with them.

#### **Sharing learning:**

Along with ensuring processes and procedures are effective, one of the key outputs from any case review is to share learning to improve practice. Whilst there is much learning for practitioners involved in a case review, while the process is ongoing, we also produce a two-page learning brief for each case published. This focusses on the learning identified, the recommendations, and information and guidance for practitioners. Along with the full report, we share these widely with the expectation that these are used and discussed within agencies and teams.

In addition, details of the learning and recommendations from the Rapid Reviews and recently published CSPRs have been collated and shared widely, particularly at sessions with School Designated Safeguarding Leads and nearly 100 GPs across Berkshire West. Along with common themes and learning from previous case reviews the presentation slides, published reports, learning briefs and 7-minute briefings can be found here:

[Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership - Safeguarding Practice Reviews](#)

### Review of National Cases of local interest

The Berkshire West Case Review group regularly reviews recently published national cases. Information is collated and shared with regards to learning and recommendations that would benefit from further consideration locally.

Following the tragic death of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes, the trial of his dad and his partner and the subsequent Joint Targeted Area Inspection in Solihull colleagues across Berkshire West initiated a project to review local services against the JTAI findings; this work is due to conclude in the Summer of 2022 and will be reported on in our next annual report.

### Impact of Partnership Working:

Learning from local and national safeguarding case reviews highlighted the need for a clear escalation policy that all practitioners felt confident to use. To support our local practitioner's additional escalation guidance was produced to explain how to work towards the best outcome for a child, particularly in complex cases, local contact information for each agency was included so that contact can be made should an escalation reach a stage where formal resolution is required. A briefing note template was also included for practitioners to complete, to allow them to outline their concerns and describe the solution they are looking to achieve. Our approach to the escalation process has been replicated in the Pan Berkshire Policy.

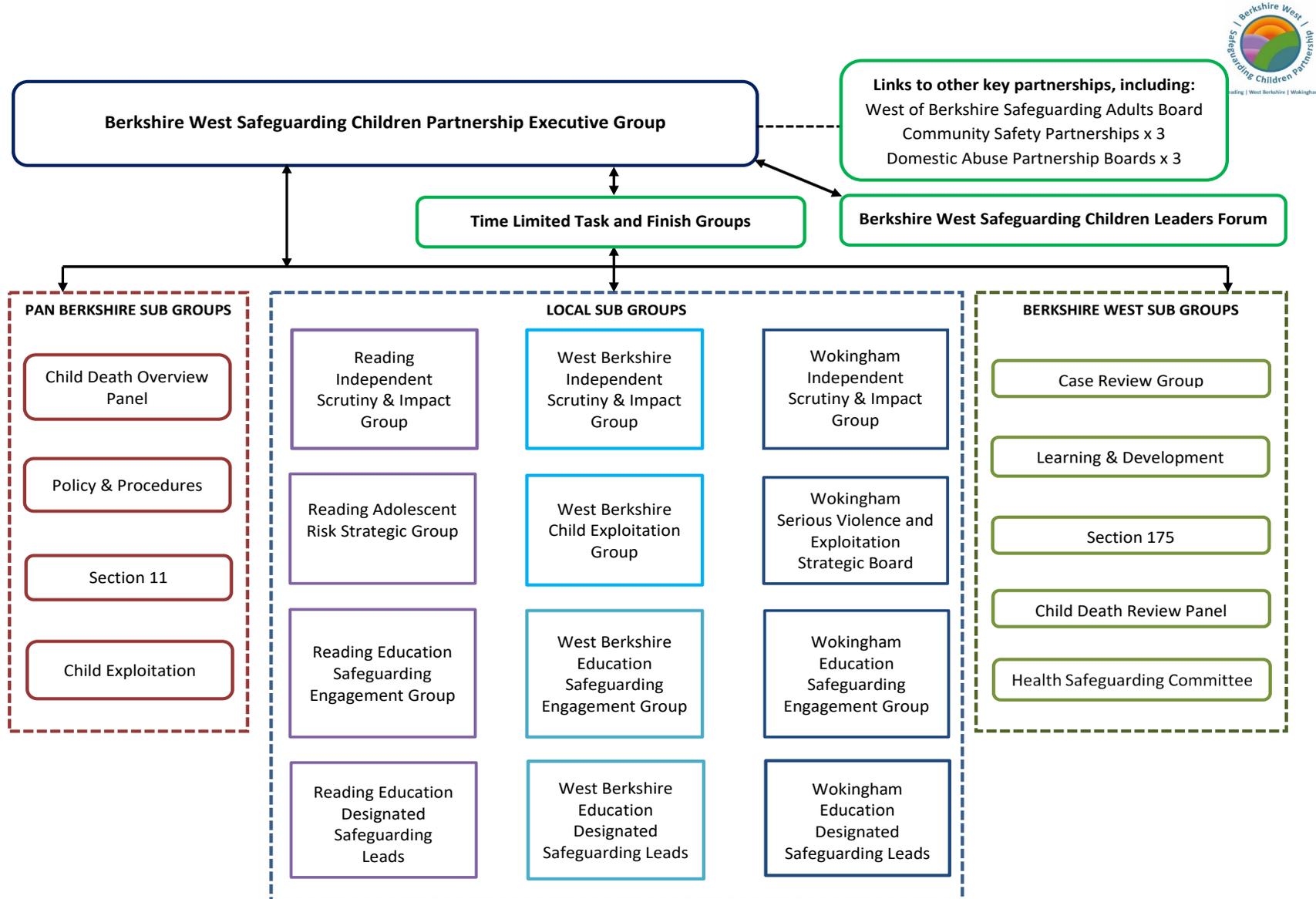
### Scrutiny and Challenge:

There is considerable independent scrutiny built into the case review process, with multi-agency partners scrutinising information at the Rapid Review stage and Independent Reviewers brought in for Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. The multi-agency discussion of cases prior to notification to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel has improved, eliminating some of the previous unnecessary notifications. The Case Review Group continues to scrutinise any cases of concern to ensure the appropriate decision has been made.

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.

## Appendices

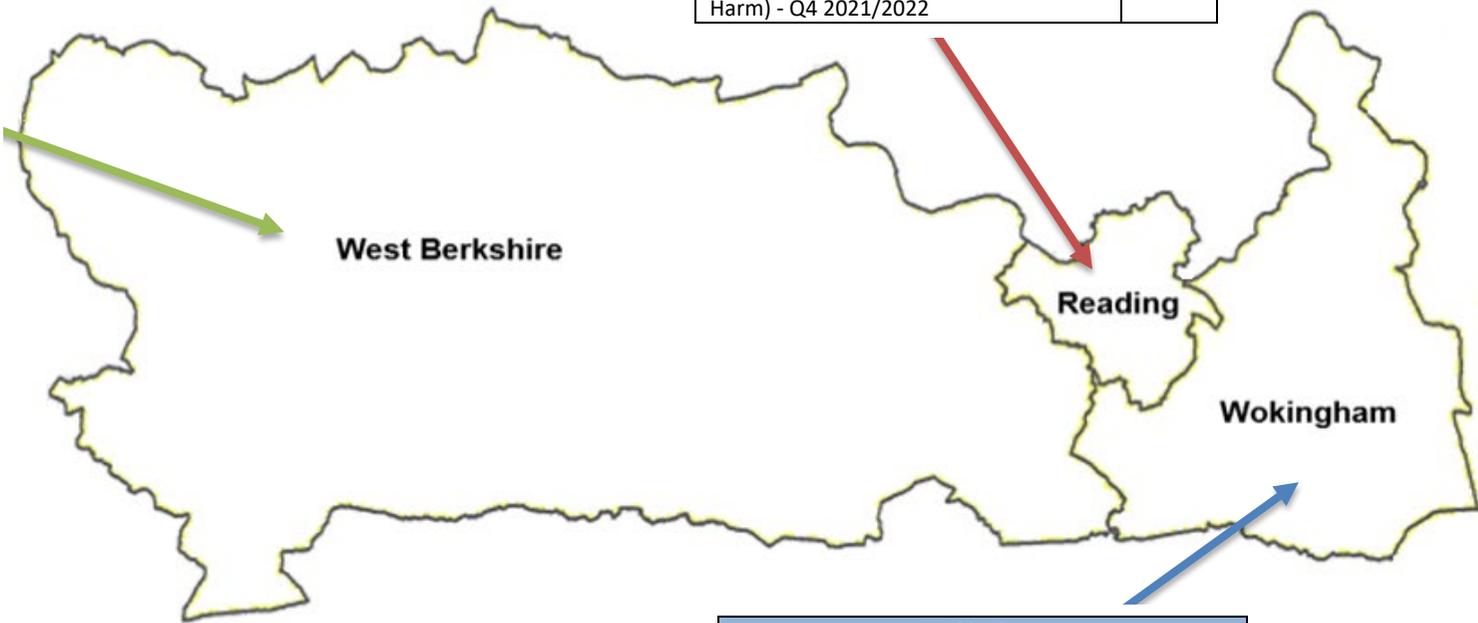
### Appendix 1 – Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership Sub-group structure chart



### Appendix 2 – Knowing our children

West Berks	
West Berks Under 18 Population	35,595
Children Subject to Child Protection Plan (Rate per 10,000) March 2022	52
Number of Children in Need (Rate per 10,000) March 2022	348
Children in Care (Rate per 10,000) March 2022	46
Domestic Incidents involving Children Q4 2021/2022	351
Total number of children 0-18-year-olds admitted to RBFT (including MH & Self-Harm) - Q4 2021/2022	44

Reading	
Reading Under 18 Population	37,254
Children Subject to Child Protection Plan (Rate per 10,000) March 2022	58
Number of Children in Need (Rate per 10,000) March 2022	406
Children in Care (Rate per 10,000) March 2022	63
Domestic Incidents involving Children Q4 2021/2022	596
Total number of children 0-18-year-olds admitted to RBFT (including MH & Self-Harm) - Q4 2021/2022	72



Wokingham	
Wokingham Under 18 Population	40,417
Children Subject to Child Protection Plan (Rate per 10,000) March 2022	40
Number of Children in Need (Rate per 10,000) March 2022	140
Children in Care (Rate per 10,000) March 2022	33
Domestic Incidents involving Children Q4 2021/2022	259
Total number of children 0-18-year-olds admitted to RBFT (including MH & Self-Harm) - Q4 2021/2022	52