

SHROPSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT

2017 - 2018

Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board annual report 2017- 2018 provides an account of the activities, development and impact of the Board and its partners in fulfilling their statutory responsibility of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in Shropshire.

Ivan Powell, SSCB Independent Chair
Sam Anderson, Safeguarding Boards Business Manager

December 2018

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2 FOREWORD

Welcome to Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board's annual report for 2017 - 2018. This is a public report which sets out the work of the Board and its view of the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements across the county. The report aims to give everyone who lives and works in Shropshire a sense of how well local services and people in the community are working together to keep children safe. The report is also intended to inform the decisions made by those responsible for leading, commissioning and funding local services.

Many of the organisations which contribute to the Board's work have continued to face significant financial pressures, requiring difficult decisions about allocation of resources. This has also meant organisations have had to implement different ways of working together to effectively carry out their safeguarding duties.

The Board partners are also managing an ever-growing number of children who are victims of exploitation. This is both a national and local issue and an area that will continue to be of focus in the year to come, with the aim of supporting families more effectively and providing the much-needed support to children and young people.

During this reporting period Shropshire also welcomed Ofsted for a four-week inspection of children's services and were rated 'good', putting Shropshire children services in the top 30% nationally. SSCB was also found to be good. The inspectors particularly praised the work around keeping children safe, fostering and adoption services and work to tackle children at risk of sexual exploitation.

Throughout the year, agencies have continued to demonstrate their commitment to safeguarding children through contributing to the multi-agency work of the Board, taking part in multi-agency auditing and challenge activities, and sharing their own data and self-assessments. The Board's agreed priorities

focus attention on areas which present the greatest risk to Shropshire's children - child sexual exploitation and going missing, neglect and domestic abuse.

Whilst the Board has not published any serious case reviews during the year covered by this report, we have reviewed individual cases and groups of cases to identify both good practice and areas for improvement. We have commissioned an SCR on an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child which is now finalised and awaiting publication. We have also commissioned a further SCR which is due to be published in the coming months. We will continue to monitor the impact of the learning from these cases on the quality of local practice and report on them in next years annual report.

Another important development for the Board has been the increased focus on joint working with the Keeping Adults Safe in Shropshire Board whose remit is to oversee the safeguarding arrangements for adults with care and support needs. In November we commissioned a review by an independent consultant to look at the way both boards operate, considering the Care Act 2014 statutory guidance and the now enacted Working Together 2018. The result of this was a combined business support unit and the introduction of the Statutory Safeguarding Partnership (SSP).

Mental Health continues to be an area of focus for the Board and will be actively considered during the coming year as well as children with disabilities because of their additional vulnerabilities. We want to ensure that every child has access to the help and support they need.

The report sets out what the Board will do during 2018-19 to continue strengthening arrangements for safeguarding children and developing access to early help services. This will involve working with partners both within the SSCB context, across Shropshire, and more widely across the region. The year will also see attention paid to putting in place future arrangements for safeguarding children in response to the changed legislative context that has been introduced by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which gives greater flexibility locally

whilst increasing accountability for NHS and police partners alongside the local authority.

Finally, as ever, there are staff and volunteers who day to day demonstrate their commitment to children and families through their work and dedication. We thank them all for everything they do to safeguard children and promote their wellbeing. We also want to thank the volunteer trainers who make up the training pool, delivering outstanding training to organisations and ensuring we continue to offer a consistent and high standard of training.

Ivan Powell

SSCB Independent Chair

3 INTRODUCTION

Shropshire’s Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) is a statutory body established under the Children Act 2004. It is independently chaired (Working Together 2015) and consists of senior representatives of all the principle stakeholders working together to safeguard children and young people in the county. Its statutory objectives are:

(a) to coordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area; and

(b) to ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 requires the Independent Chair to publish an annual report on the effectiveness of arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in the local area. The guidance states that the report ‘should provide a rigorous and transparent

assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services. It should identify areas of weakness; the causes of those weaknesses and the action being taken to address them as well as other proposals for action. The report should include lessons from reviews undertaken within the reporting period.’

This annual report for the SSCB covers the period between April 2017 and March 2018 and evaluates the work and impact of the Board whilst identifying future challenges and priority areas of work for the period 2018– 2019.

Chapter 1 sets out the contents of the report.

Chapters 2 and 3 include a foreword from the Independent Chair and an introduction to the annual report.

Chapter 4 sets some context and includes a strategic overview of safeguarding within Shropshire, including local demographics, implementation of the Children and Young People’s Plan, challenges faced by partners and information about the SSCB.

Chapter 5 focusses on the SSCB’s priority areas of work and progress made against these during 2017-2018 set against the SSCB’s strategic objectives.

Chapter 6 outlines other activities and functions of the SSCB including the development of policies and procedures, safeguarding disabled children, private fostering, case reviews (including the findings of a recent Learning Review), multi-agency training, the work of the Child Death Overview Panel, managing allegations against professionals and participating in the planning of services.

Chapter 7 analyses the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements through SSCB’s quality assurance processes.

Chapter 8 details the ways in which SSCB engages with children and young people

Chapter 9 provides a conclusion and a look to the future of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and what implications this may have for the SSCB and partner agencies in 2018-2019.

The report is ratified by the SSCB and is presented in final version to the Chief Executive of the local authority, the Leader of the Council, the local Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board. In addition, the report will also be presented to Shropshire Council Young People's Scrutiny Committee, Shropshire Children's Trust and the Chief Constable of West Mercia Police.

4 CONTEXT AND STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

4.1 CHILDREN IN SHROPSHIRE

Shropshire is one of England's most rural and sparsely populated counties with a large geographic area of 1,235 square miles. Situated in the West Midlands, bordering Wales to the west and Cheshire to the north, the area has a population of 317,500 (ONS, mid-year estimates 2017). Shropshire's population is largely of White British ethnic origin. The number of residents from minority ethnic groups is low; comprising 4.6% of the population (this includes white other, gypsy/traveller and Irish). 40.1% of Shropshire's population live in the main market towns of Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Whitchurch, Market Drayton, Ludlow and Bridgnorth. (Census 2011)

Shropshire has approximately 63,300 children and young people under the age of 19 years. This is 20% of the total population (ONS, mid-year estimates 2017). In total 8.7% of pupils who attend Primary, Secondary and Special Schools including academies and 6th form are entitled to free school meals, which is below the average for both national and statistically similar local authority areas (April 2018.) Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account

for approximately 6.1% of the 0-19 population, compared with the English average of 24.2%. (Census 2011). In 2018, the percentage of children whose first language is not English was 4.1% of primary and 2.9% of secondary pupils, which is significantly lower than national statistics and lower than statistically similar local authority areas.

Shropshire has 150 state funded schools: 91 primary schools, 4 infant schools, 4 junior schools, 6 secondary schools, 2 special schools and 43 academies. There are also 41 local authority maintained nurseries. The 43 Academy Schools consist of 27 primary, 13 secondary, 2 special, 1 all through and 1 free school (as at April 2018).

According to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index 2015 [IDACI], Shropshire had approximately 13% of children (aged 0-15 years old) considered to be living in income deprived families, low compared to national figures. However, this statistic masks pockets of deprivation where 9 areas are amongst the 20% most deprived nationally in terms of the IDACI. It is estimated that 1,195 children living within these 9 areas (around 38% of dependent children aged 0-15 within the 9 areas) are classed as living in families which are income deprived.

A characteristic of Shropshire is the large numbers of looked after children placed with private care providers by other local authorities. This number is estimated at around 400 at any one time, although the local authority is not always notified when young people move out of area. Whilst these children remain the responsibility of the placing authority this does have a significant impact on several local services, particularly police, health, mental health services and children's social care (Local Authority Designated Officer - LADO).

4.3 CHALLENGES FACED BY PARTNERS

Public sector organisations continue to face the dual challenges of managing with reducing resources whilst facing increased demand and complexity for their services. This complexity provides an additional challenge for example the emerging issue of County Lines and Cuckooing. This is where criminals involved in the unlawful supply of drugs seek to involve vulnerable young people and in addition subject them to criminal exploitation. SSCB members are determined to work collectively to tackle all forms of exploitation of children and young people.

Partner agencies have demonstrated commitment to the work of the SSCB by ensuring agency representation and contributions to the work of the sub-groups of the Board, including multi-agency audit activity, and by keeping the Board informed of any plans for service re-design through the SSCB Safeguarding Impact Assessment. This has enabled the SSCB to be assured that safeguarding and outcomes for children have been considered in service redesign and that any risks have been mitigated against.

In this challenging climate, partners have worked hard to develop a range of effective early help services which can support children and their families at an earlier stage. By meeting their needs in a timely manner this helps to reduce demand for the more specialist services.

The joint working of statutory partners, as outlined in Working Together 2018, has seen a commitment from local authority, health and police working together, with shared and equal responsibility to ensure effective safeguarding arrangements are in place in Shropshire.

4.4 SHROPSHIRE'S SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

SSCB is a multi-agency partnership that is jointly funded by its partners. The core budget for 2017-2018 was £219,260.

The SSCB carries out much of its work through a number of subgroups and task and finish groups, supported by the Safeguarding Boards Business Unit. All sub-groups terms of reference and work plans have been reviewed to ensure they progress the SSCB Business Plan.

Subgroups are well supported by a wide range of agencies, including schools, colleges and voluntary sector organisations as well as the larger statutory organisations who also contribute to the main Board.

There are also a number of reference groups related to the SSCB which contribute significantly to progressing the safeguarding agenda in Shropshire. These include:

- the health safeguarding governance group, which brings together safeguarding leads from across all the NHS providers working in Shropshire and beyond its borders;
- the private providers' forum, which promotes safeguarding of looked after children placed within Shropshire from elsewhere;
- the schools safeguarding group, which provides a close link with schools across all phases, from early years to further education.

During 2016-2017, Shropshire Safeguarding Children's Board and the Keeping Adults Safe in Shropshire Board commissioned an independent review of both boards working arrangements in support of business delivery in place at that time. This review was also cognisant of the consultation taking place following the 'Wood Review' and in anticipation of new government guidance Working Together 2018 which was published in November 2017.

In November 2017, the Board appointed a Safeguarding Boards Business Manager to oversee both the SSCB and Keeping Adults Safe in Shropshire Board (KASiSB), and increased the resilience of the business unit to support both boards.

A key aspect of the Working Together consultation document was the identification of the Local Authority, Police and Health as the three statutory safeguarding partners each having joint and equal responsibility for the safeguarding arrangements in the local authority area.

This was coupled with the recognition of the need for not only these principle organisations to work closely together, but to secure the support of wider organisations, to ensure safeguarding arrangements within the local authority area are robust and effective.

SSCB have introduced an overarching strategic group, the Statutory Safeguarding Partnership (SSP), consisting of the Director of Childrens Services, Director of Adults Social Care, Chief Superintendent West Mercia Police and Director of CCG. This is in line with legislative requirements.

We look forward to this group developing over the coming year and strengthening our safeguarding arrangements further in 2018-19.

As part of Ofsted’s inspection during September and October 2017, the inspectors also reviewed the effectiveness of the SSCB. The Board was rated ‘good’ which reflected the high standards held by the Board and commitment of its members. The Board did receive one recommendation as follows;

“To better enable an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of performance and practice, ensure that there is appropriate analysis and commentary on the dataset made available to board members”

This recommendation has now formed part of an action plan that is progressed via the Quality and Performance subgroup.

5 SSCB Effectiveness

An account of progress made on priorities set for 2017-18

SSCB Priorities:

- **Child Sexual Exploitation and children who go missing**
- **Neglect**
- **Domestic Abuse**

Progress against objectives and priorities is monitored by the Board and reviewed annually. In November 2017 the SSCB held a development day with the KASiSB. SSCB members retained the three priorities however both boards agreed to a joint priority of exploitation. The current CSE and Missing group of the SSCB lead on the development of this joint priority and will have an extended sub group membership top include representation from adults services. This sub group will retain the focus on CSE and missing.

5.1 CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE) AND CHILDREN WHO GO MISSING

What we know:

A new system has been implemented and data capture is slightly different this year. During 2017-2018 85 CSE referrals were considered by the CSE panel, representing a slight drop in referrals based on 2016 – 2017 figures.

Children’s Social Care continued to receive risk identification assessments from private care providers as part of their notification of the placement of out of county looked after children into Shropshire, but this figure too, had dropped based on the previous year.

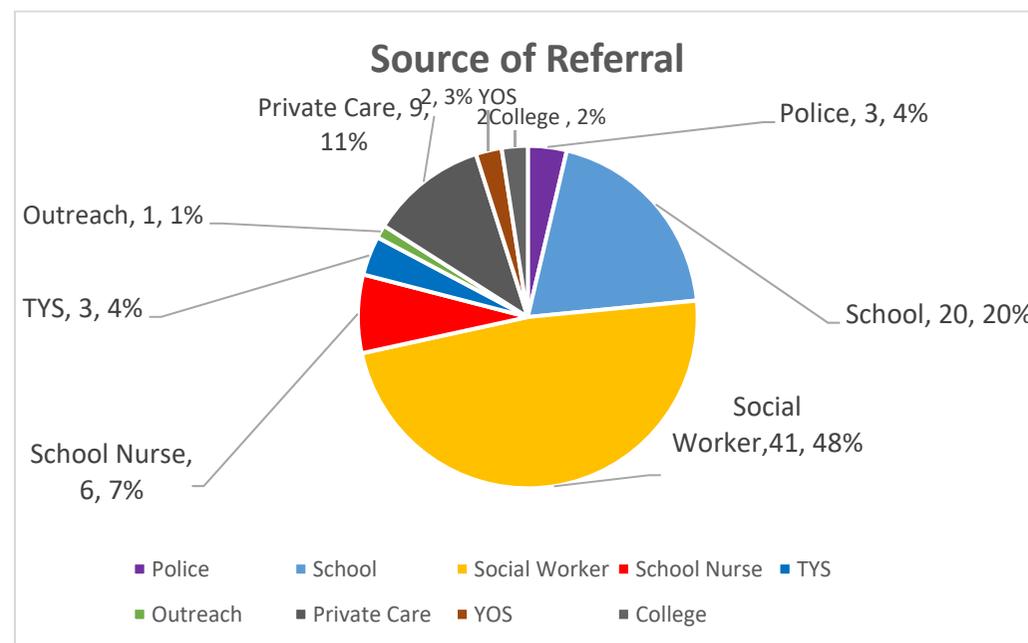
At the year end, CSE was an identified risk for 67 children (15 of these being OLAC – out of area Looked after children), only six were male. The breakdown of the risk levels as follows:

Being exploited: 0

High: 15 (4 of these being OLAC) – of these 4 were managed on CP plans and 2 managed on CIN plans and the others are currently being assessed by the assessment team.

Medium: 27 (3 of these being OLAC)

Low: 25 children (8 of these being OLAC)

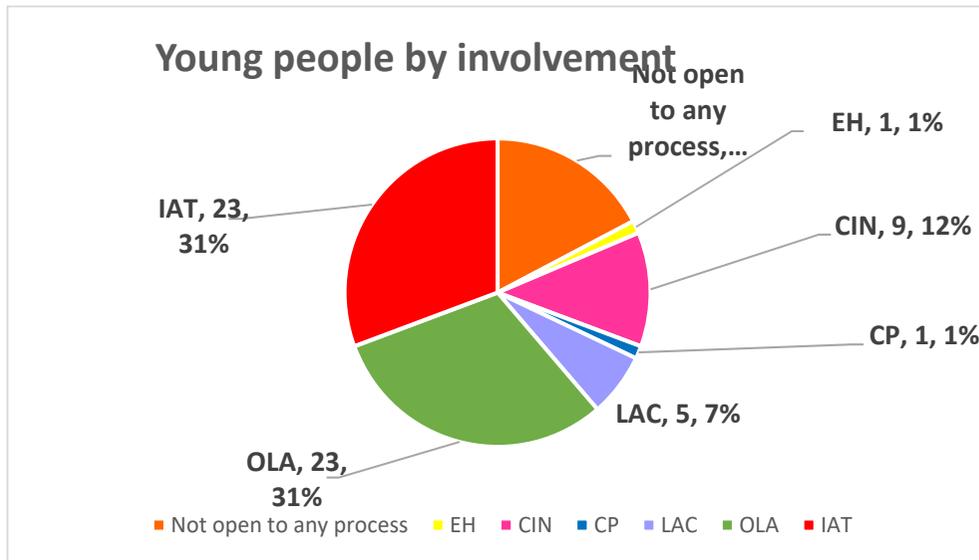


Most referrals in 2017-2018 were for females and were made by schools, social workers, private care homes and school nurses. Referrals from health agencies remained low.

The CSE profile for Shropshire indicates that the most common type of exploitation involves young women aged 13 – 15 years being exploited online or by male peers or young adult males. The local profile suggests there may be an under-identification of male victims.

Most referrals come from the north of the county, followed by central Shropshire, with few referrals from the south. The SSCB is confident that overall the understanding of CSE has improved, but there are still areas of the county where referral rates are low, and this issue is being considered by the Board.

The breakdown of categories of involvement being presented and considered at CSE panel is as follows:



Early Help – 1

Child in Need – 9

Child Protection Plan - 1

Shropshire Looked After Child– 5

Other Local Authority Looked After Child – 23

IAT (Initial Assessment Team) – 23

Not open to any process - 13

During the reporting year the following key highlights were reported to scrutiny.

- Children who go missing from home or are at risk of child sexual exploitation are identified quickly by effective partnership working and receive a timely assessment.

- Specialist workers are allocated promptly with swift completion of return home interviews and child sexual exploitation risk screening tools.
- Once needs are identified, children and families are offered a range of services.
- Cases are reviewed regularly at well-attended monthly panels with clear actions to reduce risks for children.
- Rigorous arrangements trace children who go missing from education.
- Multi-agency partners respond appropriately to children who experience risks associated with offending, misusing drugs or alcohol, being sexually exploited or going missing.
- Effective plans help to reduce the risk of harm or actual harm for most of these vulnerable children.
- The local authority has undertaken significant work to safeguard children at risk of child sexual exploitation, built on well-established strategic and operational relationships with partners such as West Mercia police. This has enabled rigorous responses to safeguard children and young people who go missing or who are at risk of sexual exploitation.

SSCB has a robust training schedule in place, including single agency and multi-agency training delivered across Shropshire, open to all partners. CSE is a topic covered in the induction of all new staff and throughout Safeguarding training. Specialist training is delivered for those in specialist roles, for example social work staff to ensure they have the right skills and knowledge to carry out their duties:

- To increase awareness of the key issues of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- Be able to identify different models and stages of grooming
- Know how to respond to concerns of Child Sexual Exploitation locally
- To consider own agencies response to help safeguard children and young people against CSE and help support those who have been sexually exploited.

The Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) and The Children's Society delivered a workshop to all professionals across West Mercia who work with children and young people to improve their knowledge and understanding of child sexual exploitation.

Schools have access to E-Safety resources and the CSE subgroup was updated in September 2017 of the E-safety proposals. Empower, a two day 'keep safe' programme for young people at risk of CSE, continues to run with sessions taking place every six to eight weeks. The sessions evaluations indicated a greater understanding of risks following the sessions. A group for young men identified as being potential perpetrators of CSE is being piloted in a North Shropshire school.

A multi-agency audit was carried out in November 2017 and the following good practice identified:

- Tenacity from agencies in pursuing support for young people experiencing CSE including education and school nurses.

- Good practice from substance misuse services when involved.
- CSE Risk assessments are embedded within the partnership and carried out.
- Better working since the revision of the CSE Pathway.
- The multi-agency partnership is clearly able to recognise CSE concerns and there is evidence that they have taken steps to address this.
- Good monitoring from the police.

Identified areas for improvement:

- CSE/single assessments carried out during the school holidays did not contain vital information from schools. They will be contacted before the case is closed to ensure that there are no further concerns.
- There needs to be a clearer understanding of when parental/carer consent was required for a referral to childrens services.
- Better exploration of possible CSE in same sex relationships.
- Need to be able to deliver effective support to victims of CSE which provides enduring support and builds trusting relationships with appropriately trained workers.

What SSCB will do next:

SSCB will need to harness the capacity from across its constituent partner agencies to deliver the revised CSE action plan and through its existing governance processes hold partner agencies to account for their contribution to the collective work to tackle CSE in Shropshire. More specifically SSCB will:

- Continue to raise awareness of CSE, particularly in areas of the county where there are lower rates of referrals. This remit will widen and cover all aspects of exploitation including County Lines and Cuckooing. This is an aspect that the SSCB will do jointly with the Keeping Adults Safe In Shropshire Board where appropriate.
- Monitor and analyse performance against a revised exploitation scorecard and strengthen the joint exploitation sub group.
- Support the development of and seek assurance that a mechanism for gaining the views of children who have been sexually exploited on their experiences of interventions/ support services.
- Review the capacity and approach used to provide enduring support to sexually exploited children.
- Deliver a PSHE briefing, to include CSE, to all Independent Schools in preparation for PSHE becoming statutory from September 2019. CSE/single assessments carried out during the school holidays did not previously contain vital information from schools. They will now be contacted before the case is closed.
- Secure improved understanding of CSE in same sex relationships.

NEGLECT

What we know

Neglect has been a priority for the SSCB since 2016. By year end 2017, children subject to child protection plans under the category of neglect, stood at 59%.

During 2017-18 this reduced by 6% to 53%. (Current performance information indicates an in year increase to previous levels.) Neglect remains the highest category of need for those children subject of a plan.

Currently SSCB remains unable to collect data in relation to number of children with an early help plan where neglect is the predominant safeguarding risk. This is an area for development being carried forward and a feature of the revised Early Help strategy.

A recent audit by children's services has shown that most children who are subject to a 2nd or subsequent child protection plan have suffered neglect.

Neglect multi-agency audit

A multi-agency audit was carried out on the theme of neglect utilising a tool based on the West Midlands inspection tool for Neglect. A key theme for this audit was review of progress of the implementation of the 'Graded Care Profile 2' tool or GCP2.

All cases considered had been open to children's social care and probation and involved a range of additional issues including substance misuse, alcohol misuse and mental health. The audit demonstrated how challenging agencies had found this work to be and all cases were graded as Required Improvement.

Themes Identified Included:

- Although the GCP 2 was discussed by agencies and was evident in the case file, there was not any evidence that a tool had been completed.
- 4 out of 5 of the children subject to audit lived in the same area and the police were clear that drugs and alcohol were a key theme in these cases.
- An issue was raised regarding core group minutes being sent to professionals. A recent audit has been carried out by children's services and the writing up of core groups was found not to be consistent. This was identified as an area for improvement.
- Housing have identified they would benefit from training in GCP2.

The key recommendations from the audit were:

- Information regarding GPC2 training to be re-circulated, attendance to be monitored including housing services.
- In depth analysis of data related to neglect to be undertaken, identifying any related factors, trends and any areas where neglect is more prolific.
- Multi-agency core group audit to be undertaken to check agency invites, attendance opportunity to contribute and receipt of core group minutes. A follow up audit will take place in a further 3 months.

Individual actions for each agency from audits are managed through the quality and assurance sub group.

What action we have taken

In September 2016, SSCB considered the revised Neglect Strategy and proposals for the implementation of Graded Care Profile 2, (GCP2).

GCP2 (licensed by NSPCC) is an evidence-based assessment tool which assesses parental care. GCP2 focusses on one specific child and parent. It provides a way to measure and scale the quality of care delivered whilst keeping the child at the centre. It is designed to be used alongside other assessment tools in Shropshire, Whole Family Assessment and Webstar.

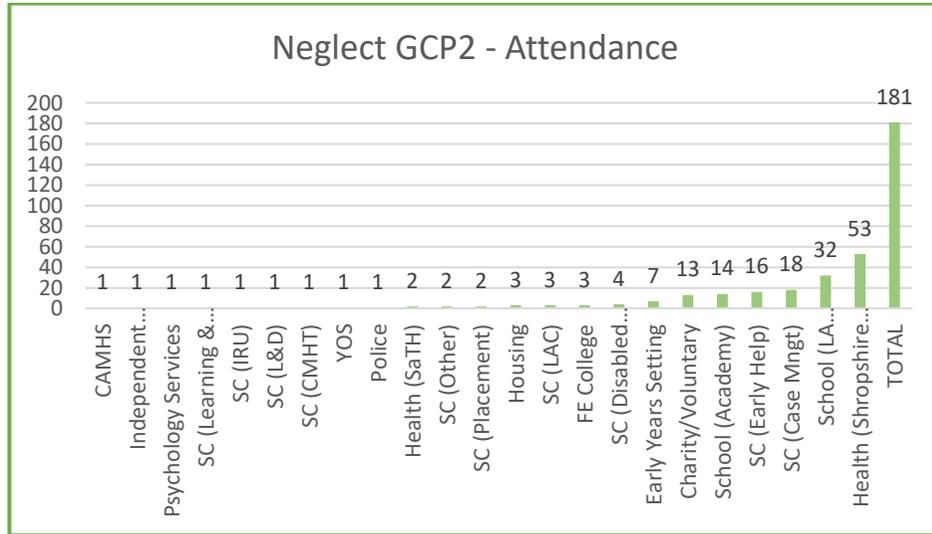
The Board developed a set of assurance questions in relation to Neglect to inform the Neglect dataset and to assist the SSCB Executive in monitoring the effectiveness of the Neglect Strategy. The assurance questions were as follows:

- How well do we understand the nature and scale of neglect in Shropshire?
- Do we recognise if there are any underlying themes either geographical or issue based in Shropshire?
- How well do we identify neglect and respond early?
- How do we know we're making a difference?
- How well used is the GCP2 assessment across agencies?
- How is the neglect strategy and toolkit embedded in agencies that don't predominantly work with children?
- How many referrers have completed GCP2 and what action has resulted?

A Neglect Task and Finish group is now in place to respond to the assurance questions posed during 2016-17 by

1. Revising the current data set
2. A review of the way in which the data is captured at the early help stages
3. Training more people in GCP2

In 2016-17 the number of people trained in GCP2 has increased on the previous year:



What SSCB will do next:

- Revise the neglect strategy and review its effectiveness through performance data and a multi-agency audit planned for 2018-19.
- Continue with the task and finish group to revise and analyse the neglect data set.
- On implementation of 'Liquid Logic'; Identify themes and patterns to better understand the effectiveness of managing neglect across the system, including Early Help, Step Up and Step Down and Child Protection.

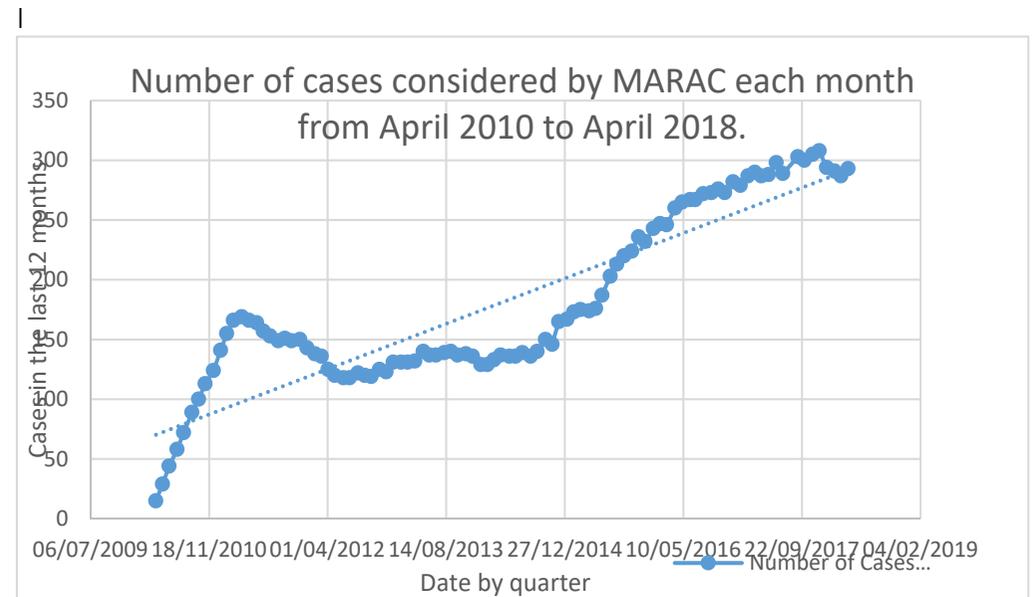
DOMESTIC ABUSE

What we know

There has been an increase in children who have been exposed to domestic abuse over the past year which will need to be explored further.

West Mercia Police recorded 585 cases of domestic abuse where a person was injured in the 12 months year ending March 2017. For the year ending February 2018, this increased to 1149 reports of domestic abuse where the victim was injured.

In the twelve months April 2016 to March 2017, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences, (MARAC), recorded 293 cases; 116 (39%) of these cases were recorded as 'repeat cases'. These involved 345 children.



There has been a slight decline in the number of cases considered by MARAC in 2016-17. The SSCB will need to consider in the forthcoming year whether recording crime as with or without injury would lead to more consistent data.

The Board data set has been adversely affected by the implementation of a new police system 'Athena', which has resulted in a reduction in the quality of data presented by West Mercia Police.

What action we have taken:

Shropshire Recovery Partnership have raised awareness amongst social workers on how and when to make a referral to their service.

Regular domestic abuse triage meetings now take place in COMPASS (Shropshire Local Authority's front door to children's services) and notifications are sent to schools to alert them to domestic abuse incidents where children have been present in the household. An improvement made following the OFSTED inspection is that children's services now record all incidents.

The SSCB dataset has been revised and will be an area of on-going development alongside the collation of domestic abuse data to monitor the effectiveness of the revised domestic abuse strategy. This remains a focus and a challenge because of Athena.

Challenge and scrutiny

- The SSCB contributed to the development of the revised domestic abuse strategy to ensure it included a more robust and comprehensive approach to safeguarding children affected by domestic abuse.
- A referral pathway for children who are affected by domestic abuse is being developed along with practitioner guidance and this will remain

the focus of the Board in the coming year.

- The SSCB has implemented the recommendations from the recent multi-agency audit on cases presented to MARAC.
- Continue to refine the SSCB domestic abuse dataset to feed into the partnership dataset to better understand the impact domestic abuse has on children and to monitor the effectiveness of the revised strategy.

What SSCB hopes to see in 2018-2019:

- Clarity around governance arrangements for leading the domestic abuse agenda across the partnership.
- The evaluation results of the voluntary perpetrators programme.
- A review of the impact of the Domestic Abuse Strategy
- More sophisticated performance monitoring to measure outcomes in relation to domestic abuse and its impact on children.

6 OTHER ACTIVITIES AND FUNCTIONS OF SSCB

LSCBs have a number of statutory functions in addition to their objectives of:

- *Co-ordinating what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area, and*
- *ensuring the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.*

This section of the report refers to wider significant areas of safeguarding children in addition to the priority areas for 2016/17.

6.1 DEVELOPING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

It is a statutory function of the Local Safeguarding Children Board to publish multi-agency policies and procedures which set out the action to be taken by practitioners when there are concerns about the safety or welfare of a child, and the policies in relation to a number of practice areas, such as training and safe recruitment.

The SSCB continues to be an active member of the West Midlands Regional Safeguarding procedures Group. The benefit of the launch during the previous year of the regional procedures is now being seen.

SSCB has recently developed additional local Level C procedures including a multi-agency referral form (MARF), a child protection conference report form and revised its thresholds guidance. The SSCB Policy and Procedures sub-group will continue to monitor this area of work on behalf of SSCB, including making use of intelligence via analytical data about accessibility and demand.

6.2 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

All SSCB training takes account of all children with additional vulnerabilities including the needs of disabled children. This is regularly updated and is reflected in the SSCB training annual report.

Where possible, children identified as having a disability have been included in the multi-agency case file audits, dependent on the theme and available case sample.

6.3 PRIVATE FOSTERING

During 2017-2018 Shropshire Council reported on private fostering arrangements during the previous year. The report provided assurance that the 7 National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering are being met. Numbers of private fostering arrangements in Shropshire are still low (10 arrangements during the year) and detailed areas for further development include:

- Continue to raise awareness of private fostering through partner agencies
- Develop and be an active participator in the regional working group to raise the profile of private fostering regionally and nationally.
- Increase the amount of initial visits done within timescales.

6.4 CASE REVIEWS

The SSCB carries out case reviews when it is felt that a case meets the criteria for either a Serious Case Review (SCR) or it is deemed that lessons can be learnt about the ways in which agencies work together to safeguard the child.

A number of different models are used for case reviews including the SCIE Learning Together approach, Root Cause Analysis (RCA), hybrid models and deep dive audits.

In 2016-2017 SSCB having sought advice from the National Panel commissioned an SCR on an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child. This report has been completed and published. The findings of the review will be reported in next year's annual report.

6.5 MULTI-AGENCY TRAINING

In total from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 the SSCB Training Co-coordinator, Training Pool members and commissioned organisations have delivered 63 multi-agency Universal, Targeted or Specialist training sessions to 1164 learners. This is an increase of 5 training sessions with an additional 111 learners from 2016/17.

SSCB provide a set of expected learning outcomes required from induction training which can be found in SSCB Training Strategy they apply to all staff within the organisation.

187 learners completed e-learning offered by the SSCB through Virtual College and 33 learners were still studying or had not passed their modules at the end of this period. This makes a total of 220 licenses applied for through Virtual College in this period. This is a significant decrease of 344 learners from last year. The reasons for this are unknown and the SSCB will seek further clarification for this in the coming year.

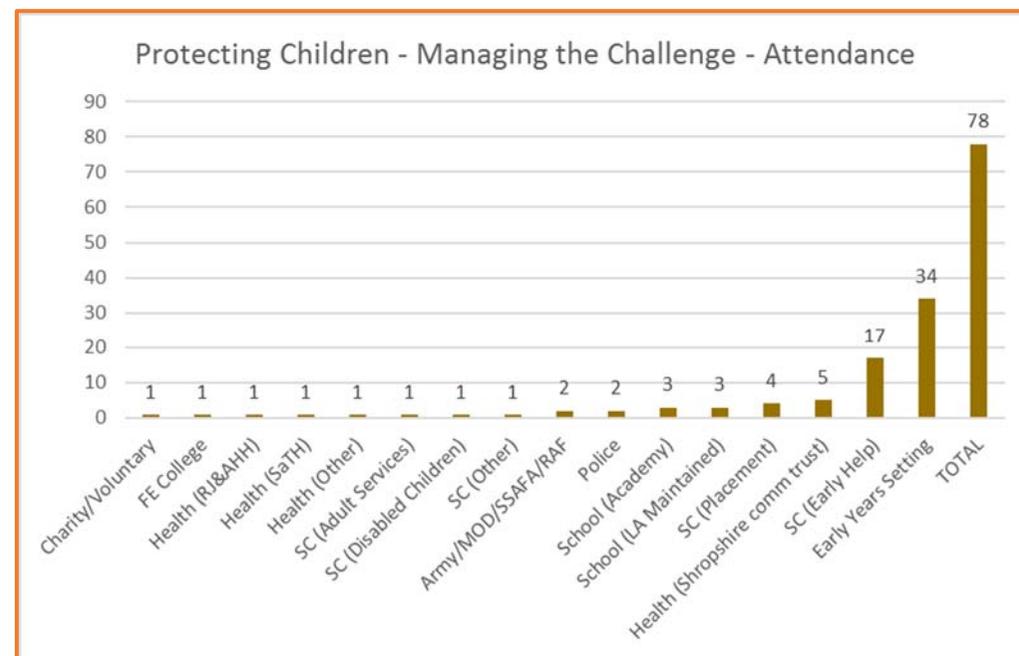
SSCB Training Pool train within their own agencies using the package supplied by SSCB Training Coordinator. As of April 2018, there were 90 trainers in the Training Pool. Numbers do fluctuate due to changes in workforce, however there has been an increase of 23 trainers since last year. Currently 20 training pool members assisting in the development and delivery of SSCB targeted multi-agency training.

Training evaluations demonstrate that SSCB is providing good quality training which is equipping the workforce with the right skills and knowledge to carry

out their roles. This is evidenced further by triangulating with performance data which shows that appropriate referrals are being made and that thresholds are better understood.

The new module, Protecting Children, Managing the Challenge developed during this year has proved successful with 78 learners having completed this so far and 93% stating it has increased the confidence in the area.

The course focusses on a family of five children who are living in an environment where there is Domestic Abuse, Parental Substance misuse, and Parental Mental Ill Health. All children are showing signs and indicators of neglect. The five children aged 1-15 years old show signs and indicators of physical abuse, sexual abuse, radicalisation and neglect.



Challenges

- To be assured that all professionals and volunteers working with children and their families or carers are regularly receiving the right level of Safeguarding Training and are sharing data effectively with SSCB Training Administrator.
- To maintain the level of impact evaluations 3 months after training module to robustly demonstrate the effectiveness of training in terms of improving outcomes for children.
- To ensure an effective training programme is delivered within budget

What SSCB will do next:

- Review the Training Strategy
- Agencies to continue to promote multi-agency training as part of their workforce development strategies.
- Agencies to ensure they continue to promote the completion of evaluations and reflect on the difference training makes to service delivery and children and families lives
- Continue to deliver and evaluate specialist learning events. Those currently being planned for 2018/2019 include: Working together with Joint Training on Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse to support Public Health Domestic Abuse Strategy

- A Joint Exploitation Conference KASiSB Keeping Adults Safe in Shropshire Board and SSCB
- Consider and manage a new Learning Management system upon the current system's renewal in December 2018

In addition to the quality assurance process in relation to training (course evaluation; follow up impact evaluation three months after training; sample telephone evaluations) the training sub group will link with data received by the SSCB Quality and Performance sub group on outcomes for children. This will allow the triangulation of data in terms of the systems put in place (training, procedures etc.) and whether outcomes for children in Shropshire are improving and they are being effectively safeguarded.

6.6 CHILD DEATH OVERVIEW PANEL

SSCB's Child Death Overview Panel is conducted jointly with Telford and Wrekin LSCB. It facilitates multi-agency reviews to understand the causes of all child deaths and learn lessons to prevent future deaths and safeguard and promote children's welfare.

The CDOP considers the death of each child and is required to complete a national proforma regarding its findings for each child. The proforma includes factors relating to the child and family, service provision; categorisation of the cause of death; a judgment regarding whether there were modifiable factors; learning points and recommendations; immediate follow up actions for the family and whether the case should be referred to the SSCB Learning and Improvement sub-group for consideration of a Serious Case Review or Learning Review.

There were 16 child deaths reported in Shropshire in 2017-18. This a slight decrease on last year’s figures. The greatest number of child deaths remain within the neo natal age range due primarily to prematurity and life limiting congenital conditions.

Future development of Child Death Overview Panels

It has been 10 years since CDOP Panels were established across England. The way in which CDOP operate is changing and will include the development of a national child death database, reviewing child deaths over a larger population size and transferring the national oversight of CDOP from the Department for Education to the Department of Health.

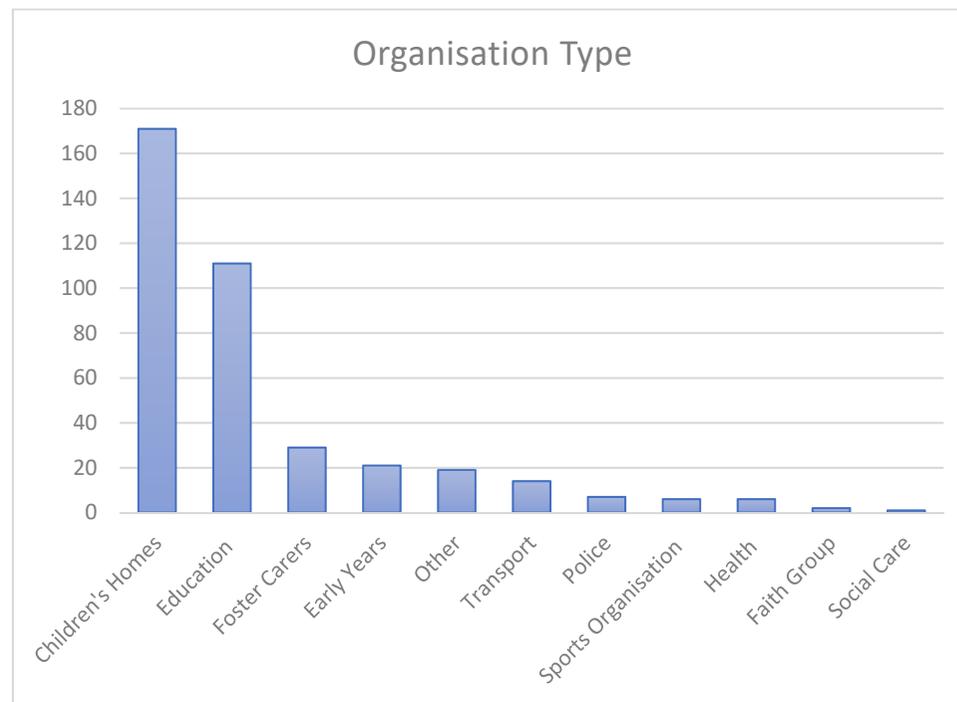
CCGs are leading on the work locally to establish both the geographical footprint and the relevant agencies who will form the future of CDOP in Shropshire. We look forward to working with the CCG wider partners in the coming months and will report on this in the next annual report.

6.7 MANAGING ALLEGATIONS AGAINST PROFESSIONALS

“LSCBs have responsibility for ensuring there are effective inter-agency procedures in place for dealing with allegations against people who work with children, and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of those procedures”

Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015

The SSCB receives an annual report from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) which this year evidenced that the number of LADO contacts has shown a steady increase (8%) from the previous year.



The majority of referrals relate to private care providers, with education settings being the second largest referral group. Referrals from other sectors are all less than 7% of the total referrals.

In the last annual report, we reported no referrals had been received from the police due to an internal issue within their reporting and complaints procedures. This has been addressed.

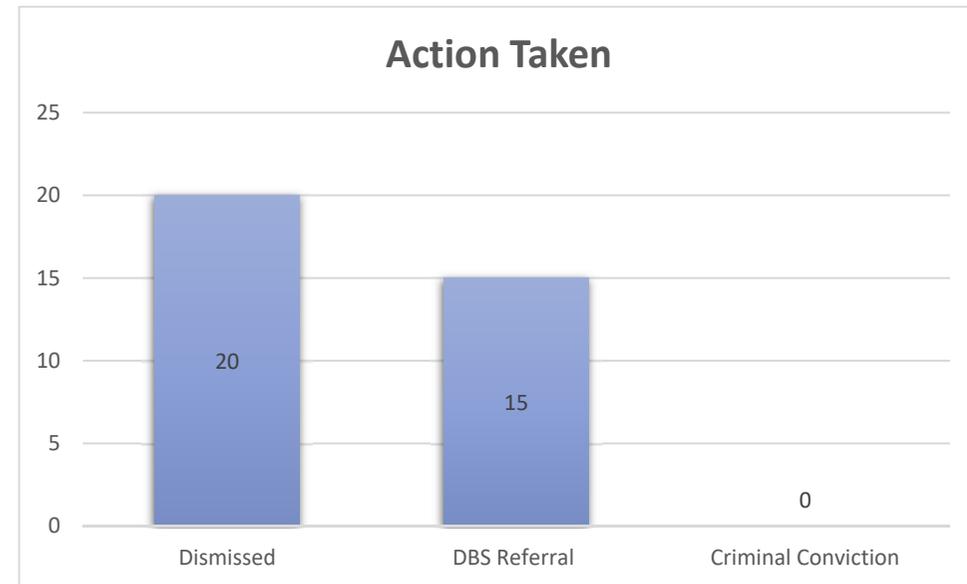
The number of police investigations arising from LADO referrals has increased by 25%. In addition to this, an ongoing police investigation has resulted in a LADO referral.

For the first time, data has been collated relating to suspensions. The number of employees who have been suspended while an allegation is investigated was 72. This equates to around 40% of cases that were accepted as referrals.

Outcomes

There are 16 cases from this reporting period that are ongoing and updated figures will be provided in the next annual report.

As in previous years, the proportion of cases with an “unsubstantiated” outcome remains the highest total. This reflects the number of allegations that are made for which there are no independent witnesses or other evidence which would support or disprove the allegation. Despite allegations being recorded as unsubstantiated, these records are important for future reference, and can be indicative of concerns about an individual that require actioning at a future time. These concerns may be practice concerns that need addressing rather than evidence that an individual may pose a risk of harm to children, but this is as important for employers to be able to identify and address.



The chart above shows final action taken in some cases that have resulted in a ‘substantiated’ outcome. The number of DBS referrals has increased by 87% on last year; this represents a small number of the overall cases (35 in total). Almost half of the investigations that conclude as substantiated result in the employee being dismissed (47%).

There are no cases which have resulted in a criminal conviction during 2017-18. This is because some are still ongoing (16) and 8 are active police investigations.

Areas for improvement include:

Data Collation

During this year, improvements have been made to data capture and comparative analysis.

Private Providers

The number of referrals involving private care providers remains very high. Positive working relationships do exist with private care providers and work is ongoing to provide support and guidance on how to apply threshold guidance. Positive progress has been made in dealing with accumulative concerns regarding Residential Care Workers. The LADO recording systems allow for identification of repeat referrals regarding a particular individual.

6.8 PARTICIPATING IN THE PLANNING OF SERVICES

The SSCB works with other multi-agency partnerships working in Shropshire to improve outcomes for Shropshire's communities. The partnerships which interface most closely with the Safeguarding Children Board are described below.

The Health and Wellbeing Board is responsible for the development and delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Established and hosted by local authorities, Health and Wellbeing Boards bring together the NHS, public health, adult social care and children's services, including elected representatives and Local Healthwatch, to plan how best to meet the needs of their local population and tackle local inequalities in health including early help for families <http://www.shropshiretogether.org.uk/>

Shropshire's Children's Trust leads the elements of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy focused on children. It holds services to account for children and families, including early help services.

Organisations which comprise the **Safer Stronger Communities Partnership** work together to protect their local communities from crime and to help people feel safer. They work out how to deal with local issues like antisocial behaviour, domestic abuse, drug or alcohol misuse and reoffending. They annually assess local crime priorities and consult partners and the local community about how to deal with them.

The overarching purpose of the **Keeping Adults Safe in Shropshire Board** is to help and safeguard adults with care and support needs. It leads adult safeguarding arrangements across its locality and oversees and coordinates the effectiveness of the safeguarding work of its member and partner agencies. There are a number of areas of overlap with the SSCB, both in relation to the transition of vulnerable young people to adulthood, and in respect of adults with care and support needs who are parents and carers of children.

7 EFFECTIVENESS OF MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS

The SSCB draws on evidence from a number of sources to evaluate the effectiveness of the safeguarding system throughout the child's journey. These include reviewing data, receiving assurance reports from agencies, viewing external reports from inspectors, peer reviews, carrying out audits, and reviewing cases.

AUDIT FRAMEWORK

A framework for audit has been developed to build a cumulative picture of practice, share good practice and plan for further improvement where needed. The overall aim of the audit programme is to ensure that agencies' safeguarding work is effective and of high quality, demonstrates continuous improvement and results in consistently good outcomes for children.

The framework sets out three tiers of activity – oversight and analysis, practice, and compliance. The associated tools enable a better capture of this information:

Oversight and Analysis

- Multi-agency audit;
- Deep dive;
- Audit is undertaken by relevant Quality Assurance & Performance subgroup members and frontline practitioners, every quarter on a themed basis.
- Repeat audits

Practice

- This involves evaluating how effectively services are embedding safeguarding practices and integrated working into the delivery of safeguarding children;
- Outcome focused;
- Multi-agency findings and learning are reported to QAP and to the SSCB Executive through agency assurance reports.

Compliance

- Compliance is interwoven across all the tiers of the quality assurance and audit framework;

- Section 11 audits - Section 11 of the Children Act (2004) imposes a duty on specified agencies to ensure that their safeguarding work complies with the requirements laid out in the statutory guidance "Making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children".

The list of key performance indicators to be considered for inclusion on the SSCB scorecard has been reviewed and a 'dashboard' developed of key performance information which is presented at each Board meeting, supported by an exception report highlighting key areas for the attention of partners.

Performance information is included that reflects:

- SSCB's priorities for 2015 – 2018;
- The Children's Safeguarding Performance Information Framework (DfE, 2015);
- Framework and Evaluation Schedule for the inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. Reviews of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (Ofsted, 2014/17);
- Proposals from the West Midlands Improvement and Efficiency Board;
- Partnership working activity

SECTION 11 AUDIT

During 2017 partner agencies and organisations of the SSCB were asked to complete a Section 11 audit using a West Midlands agreed self-assessment tool (template). The audit tool is designed to allow the LSCB to assure itself that agencies placed under a duty to co-operate by this legislation are fulfilling their responsibilities to safeguard children and promote their welfare. Chapter 2 of Working Together 2015 details the common features which must be demonstrated by agencies in order to fulfil their commitment to safeguard children and promote the welfare of children. This has been used as the source document for the key standards defined within the audit tool.

This is the first time that this template has been used in Shropshire and therefore it was piloted in two stages with agencies completing three standards in late 2017 and the remaining four standards being scheduled for completion in summer 2018.

The standards listed in Section 11 and self-assessed within the template during 2017 are:

1. Leadership and Accountability
2. Policies and Procedures
3. Listening to Children and Young People

As well as using a newly designed West Midlands Section 11 audit tool SSCB also invested in the Virtual College's online Enable Audit Tool, to assist with the auditing process. The online tool allows agencies to keep their Section 11 audit 'live' and update it as and when necessary rather than complete the audit on request of the SSCB. The tool also enables agencies to provide a mandatory narrative to support their answers, create an action plan for areas of improvement and upload documentation to evidence their gradings.

What SSCB will do next:

- Agencies will self-assess themselves against the remaining four standards of the Section 11 audit as follows:
 - Recruitment and Selection
 - Staff Induction, Training and Development
 - Complaints Allegations and Whistle-blowing
 - Information Sharing, communication & Confidentiality
 - Consideration will be given to Assurance Reporting in another format (i.e. agencies not completing both a Section 11 audit and an Assurance Report).

- The completed audits will be analysed by taking into account the following:
 - Whether the self-assessment was completed fully
 - Extent of evidence provided and whether this was robust
 - Whether the self-assessed grade appeared justifiable (given the evidence)
 - Whether there was evidence that the organisation is learning from quality assurance activity and acting on findings
 - Risks evident from agencies self-assessment
 - Innovative / good practice
- Proposals for quality assuring agencies completed audits will be agreed by SSCB and implemented during 2018-2019.
- Consideration will be given to the use of one online system across the West Midlands to benefit agencies working across multiple LSCBs, to allow for cost efficiencies and to pool resources for improvement work across the region.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD

The Quality Assurance and Performance Dashboard enables the LSCB to be sighted on performance information by exception with regular reporting of a core dataset and themed performance information. Interrogation of the data allows the LSCB to identify areas in the system that may require improvement or further exploration and often leads to the commissioning of assurance reports, single or multi-agency audits. The Quality Assurance and Performance sub-group has recently revised measures to ensure that agencies are able to provide relevant multi-agency data that is supported by a narrative in order to

understand and analyse the effectiveness of the safeguarding system in Shropshire

Information provided through this method concerning the Child's Journey through the system includes the following (N.B. All England comparisons for 2016 in green, rates per 10k in brackets):

- 641 Early Help Family Assessments were completed (for 1385 children)
- As of end of March 2018, 365 families were being supported by a targeted Early Help service.
- Note that the second indicator is different to 2016/2017 as it relates specifically to cases open to targeted early help services.
- 1488 referrals were received by Children's Social Care 249.2 compared to a national rate of 552.5 (2018). 0.9% resulted in no further action compared to a national rate of 9.4% (2018)
- 94.6% Social Work Assessments were completed within 45 days in 17/18, compared to 65% in 2016/17. This is higher than the national rate of 82.7% (2018)
- The rate of 'Section 47' child protection investigations has fallen from 99 per 10,000 in 2016/17 to 89.6 in 2017/18 compared to national rate of 166.9 (2018)
- 91.1% of initial child protection conferences were held within 15 working days 76.9% (2018)
- 190 children were subject of a child protection plan at end March 18, (31.8), compared to a national rate of 45.3 (2018)
- 6.3% of child protection plans lasted for 2 years or more at end March 18 compared to a national rate of 1.8% (2018)
- 7.5% of children were subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time within 2 years – a decrease on the previous year's figure of 10.5%.

- There were 338 looked after children an increase of 16.5% on the previous year's figure. The rate per 10,000 children was (56.6), compared to national rate of 62 (2017)

SSCB has recognized that Early Help data is not currently available by category of abuse or by SSCB priority area. This is an area for development in 2017-2018 to ensure that SSCB can measure effectiveness across all its priority areas and all categories of abuse throughout the whole system. The Early Help Service is currently in the process of developing a revised performance framework and the SSCB Executive Group advised on the need to understand the impact of early help in outcomes for children around the SSCB priorities.

AGENCY ASSURANCE REPORTS

Partner agencies are required to produce an annual assurance report to the SSCB to evidence compliance, inform the SSCB of any learning from inspections, case reviews and audits and report on how outcomes have improved for children and young people. This allows the SSCB to challenge the arrangements, identify areas for improvement, monitor that work and then seek further assurance about sustained change. Agency assurance reports are presented to the SSCB Executive with a summary report being tabled at the full Board.

A summary of these assurance reports, together with other relevant information, is included in Appendix A.

CHALLENGE LOG

The SSCB administers a challenge log of all challenges posed to partner agencies and their response. This allows for tracking of issues that are pertinent to the Board and areas of risk.

During the year the SSCB has formally raised concern around the strategic oversight of domestic abuse. This has been via the community safety partnership.

8 ENGAGEMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Developing the means of listening and responding to the voices of children and young people has been a commitment across the partnership. Some agencies do have processes in which to secure children and young people's voices for example, Children's Social Care. In October 2017, the Service User IMPACT project was initiated, with a steering group made up of representatives from across Children's Services with the aim to improve and embed service user participation methods more consistently across the service

The Student LSCB is no longer in existence and the Board recognizes that it must formally review the way it engages with young people in the forthcoming year.

9 CONCLUSION AND LOOKING FORWARD

Ofsted reported that Shropshire Council are 'good' at keeping children safe across Shropshire, and that more children and families are receiving help at an earlier stage.

The SSCB has worked hard to ensure that agencies work effectively together to keep children safe. Evidence presented suggests that this has generally been successful, with particularly positive impacts in key areas such as early help, neglect and CSE.

The SSCB monitors progress against its Business Plan, subgroup work plans and learning review action plans. This is evidenced through performance data and findings from audit activity. Progress is regularly reviewed in Board meetings.

The SSCB has provided both formal and informal challenges to other partnerships/Boards and has sought assurances regarding the part they play in the safeguarding system. This has led to improvements within practice, multi-agency awareness raising and more effective multi-agency working throughout the system.

Performance measurement has demonstrated improvements in practice because of multi-agency audits and learning. Evidencing impact has been a challenge this year due to new ways of working, for example the introduction of family assessments, introduction of the GCP2 and revised processes and pathways in respect of responding to CSE. Plans are in place to monitor performance in these areas and evidence of impact will be reported in next year's annual report.

Improved data analysis and collection remains an identified area for improvement and challenge to partner agencies. For SSCB to be able to evidence impact effectively multi-agency data must be made available and be supported by a narrative from partner agencies. Data can then be interpreted with confidence and will provide the SSCB with opportunity to use this alongside audit findings and other learning to highlight good practice and identify areas for improvement.

Developing a consistent approach to hearing the voice of children and young people, parents/carers and professionals continues to be an area for development in 2018-2019.

In terms of quality assurance, the Board has strengthened its processes and is beginning to triangulate data with other partnership boards, incorporating service user feedback and audit findings. This will provide robust evidence of impact regarding the effectiveness of safeguarding systems and practice in Shropshire. Quality assurance reporting aligned to the journey of the child will build on SSCB's revised dataset to ensure that SSCB is able to evidence that

children and young people receive the right service at the right time and evidence of impact against the Board's priorities can be effectively demonstrated.

In addition, to be truly effective, the SSCB has increasingly to work across boundaries with colleagues from other partnerships within Shropshire, and with other LSCB and LA areas. There is a much greater focus now on regionalised working and SSCB is engaged in a number of regional projects across the West Midlands as well as continuing to collaborate on pieces of work with the other three LSCBs within West Mercia.

The SSCB has long maintained a focus on looked after children placed within Shropshire from elsewhere. New challenges associated with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children demand that this is further developed. Much work has been done between the Police and the Local Authority, including providing additional support to and education of foster carers, which has resulted in improved practice and reduced safeguarding concerns for this population of young people. It is known that learning from a current SCR to be reported on it next years annual will include local as well national learning in relation to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Many of the safeguarding partners still face the challenges of financial pressures whilst contending with an ever increasing workload, both in pure numbers terms but also with increasing complexity and inter dependency.

The Board seeks to mitigate impact on safeguarding arrangements by asking agencies to complete a safeguarding impact assessment when undergoing change programmes work.

It is difficult to assess the cumulative impact on the safeguarding system of these single agency pressures but it is a factor which the Board continues to keep in clear line of sight.

Appendix A: A summary of agency assurance reports

Public protection services in Shropshire are delivered by West Mercia Police, The National Probation Service (NPS), Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company (WWMCRC) and West Mercia Youth Justice Service. All of these organisations work across a number of local authority and Local Safeguarding Children's Board areas, which has an impact on their capacity and resources.

West Mercia Police

West Mercia are committed to protecting people from harm and safeguarding children. The service has ensured there are more qualified Child Abuse Investigators. West Mercia Police are actively engaged with the Serious Case reviews and have provided assurance of commitment to the address the findings of the forthcoming publications. West Mercia Police have also tried to use alternative methods to enforcement where possible to help those that maybe perceived as perpetrators who may also be victims themselves. Bespoke vulnerability training has been delivered across the force area, including Shropshire, and Shropshire have maintained dedicated PVP (Protecting Vulnerable People) department consisting of specially trained officers around child safeguarding.

National Probation Service (NPS)

There has been an increase in the number of Probation Officers in Shropshire. NPS were also inspected on the effectiveness of Probation work in the West Mercia area during the summer of 2017. A number of recommendations were made. In relation to safeguarding children, the inspection found that requests for information to police and Childrens social care should be made clearly and tracked.

In addition to the inspection, the template had been revised for the 2016 audit (completed in December 2016). The audit evidenced food multi agency working via MAPPA and child Safeguarding panels. NPS also identified further strong partnership links. Requests for checks Childrens Services checks are usually returned within 4 hours and domestic abuse checks are returned within 24 hours.

Community Rehabilitation Company

The CRC report a shortfall in funding from the MOJ (Ministry of Justice) due to a low number of cases allocated to the service. This has meant a focus on meeting contractual targets which has resulted in a delay in the requests and receipt of child safeguarding checks. Following the joint inspection in 2017 with NPS, the CRC needed to improve the quality of work involving cases of domestic abuse and those involving the safeguarding of children. Following the inspection, an action plan has been implemented and we look forward to reporting on this in the next year.

Youth Justice Service

The YJS implemented a new case management system, Child View, in 2016/17 and introduced the new national assessment framework, Asset Plus, at the same time. There have been issues in extracting accurate monitoring and performance information though out 2017. This has meant that some of planned deep dive analysis referred to in the previous annual report has been delayed. A major upgrade to the system has been recently applied which should resolve the issues relating to data extraction.

The YJS continues to have a significant proportion of looked after children on caseloads, at 20% across the service (including other areas LAC). Within Shropshire there is, in addition to home looked after children a significant number of other authorities looked after children on the YJS caseload. At the end of July 2017 23% of the Shropshire Team's caseload were other authorities

looked after children. The service and management board have recognised looked after children as a priority and are re-establishing a LAC reference group in early 2018.

The Protocol to Reduce Offending by the Criminalisation of LAC was agreed and signed off in the first quarter of 2017.

There is increasing evidence of the correlation adverse child experiences and serious youth offenders. WMYJS is participating in some research commissioned by the West Midlands Combined Authority to investigate the prevalence of abuse, loss, trauma and attachment issues in a cohort of offenders from across the West Midlands. Ten practitioners from WMYJS will be involved in the research which will also identify the implications for and make recommendations for practice.

Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

MAPPA is not a statutory body in itself but is a mechanism through which agencies can better discharge their statutory responsibilities and protect the public in a co-ordinated manner. Fifteen offenders have been discussed in this reporting period. The MAPPA arrangements were discussed in the inspection of the effectiveness of probation work within West Mercia and noted that MAPPA 'was working well'.

Children's Social Care (CSC)

Shropshire Children's Services were inspected by Ofsted in September 2017 and received a Good judgement overall. The inspection recognised the progress that has been made in improving services to vulnerable children and families and found that safeguarding arrangements were robust. The inspection recognised the work done to strengthen services to looked after children and care leavers but also highlighted that further work is needed in these areas.

An Ofsted Action Plan is in place which sets out how we will address all the key findings and recommendations from Ofsted and this Action Plan is subject to scrutiny by the Children's People Committee and has been presented to SSCB. The SSCB will continue to oversee the implementation of this Action Plan.

Performance indicators are one measure of identifying outcomes for children. The following are outcomes of improvement against key performance indicators:

- **More advice and support being provided through Early Help staff in Compass.** There has been an increase of 28% of Initial Contacts progressing to Early Help. In 2017/18 this increase has been maintained with an additional 33 concern forms progressing to Early Help. However, for 2018/19 it is likely we will see a further rise in concern forms arising from Ofsted Recommending that concern forms be opened on all children in the family.
- **Stable rates of referrals.** Despite seeing a reduction in referrals in 2016/17, referrals rates have been relatively stable in 17/18 with an additional 75 referrals being received. However towards the end of quarter 4 there has been an increase in the number of referrals with 191 referrals being received in March 2018.
- **Robust decision-making and effective step down arrangements** means repeat referrals have dropped from 15.5% March 17 down to 14.4 % March 18 and is lower than the England and SN averages.
- **Improved joint decision making in Compass** to agreed and shared thresholds means the highest outcome of strategy meetings is Joint police/SC S47 enquires, which highlights effective partnership working.
- **Improved timeliness of assessments** has been achieved in 2017/18 with 94.6% of assessments being undertaken within timescales. This is in comparison 65% at end of quarter 4 in 2017.

- **Number of Children Subject to Child Protection.** There has been a decrease in Child Protection numbers in 17/18 with 50 less children subject to a Child Protection Plan compared to the previous year. Statistically, Shropshire is below England averages. The rate of child protection plans has dropped from 40.5 to 32 per 10,000 compared to England and statistical neighbour averages of 43 and 41. There is a correlation between the increase in children coming into care and a reduction in children with a child protection plan. Between January and March 18 CSC instigated 18 sets of care proceedings.
- **Sustained outcomes for children through effective CP/Targeted Early Help interventions.** There has been a decrease in the number of children subject to a second or subsequent plan, with a reduction for both measures, falling from 23.6 to 16.4 for anytime and falling from 10.5-7.5 within last 2 years
- **Number of children in care.** The number of children in the care of the Local Authority has increased from 291 – 338 during the course of 2017/18. This is as a result of more children coming into care as well as less children leaving the care system. During the course of this year CSC have seen an increase in the number of young children entering the care system subject to court proceedings. The increase in court proceedings and children in care has impacted on capacity issues across the council.
- **Appropriate action taken to safeguard** There has been an increase for those in care who are subject to an interim care order or care order; 64% March 16, up to 66% in March 17 and 75% in March 18. This is an increase in 9.7% over the past 12 months. This mirrors a 10% decrease in those children accommodated subject to Section 20 from 31% to 21%.
- **Number of Children in Need.** Overall there are approximately 1250 children open to the service. In the last 12 months, our CIN rates have remained stable. We regularly review the length of time children are open subject to

a CIN plan and although has been a slight increase in the number of CIN cases open for 9 months or more, CSC are satisfied that this is as result of court orders requiring these cases to remain open – Supervision Orders and Family Assistance Orders and not because of any delay.

- **Improvement in hearing the experience of the child and parent.** Children’s Social care recognise that there is more to do in the area of service user feedback and that it should be an integral part of our Quality Assurance Framework. In October 2017, the Service User IMPACT project was initiated, with a steering group made up of representatives from across Children’s Services with the aim to improve and embed service user participation methods more consistently across the service.

Early Help

Effective Early Help universal services and targeted 1:1 support have been available to families who need help and support in the last 12 months. Partners understand the thresholds provided by Shropshire’s Children’s Safeguarding Board. The result of the audit work undertaken highlights that there is further improvement work that is needed to improve the quality of Family Assessments, and family action plans need to be outcome focussed and SMART.

The strategic future direction of Early help provision being delivered through proposed Early Help Family Hubs which are well co-ordinated, focussed and delivering evidence based interventions will help to secure better outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people. An update regarding the impact of this process will be available in the next annual report.

