

Cabinet

7 September 2021

The 2021 Annual Report of the pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr A Parry, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

Report Author: Anthony Douglas CBE

Title: Independent Chair and Scrutineer of the pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation: That the Cabinet note the overall report, suggesting any further changes

Reason for Recommendation: The report is a statutory responsibility to produce hence the endorsement of all 4 statutory partners is needed – Dorset Council, BCP Council, Dorset CCG and Dorset Constabulary.

1. Executive Summary

The pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (PDSCP) is the statutory body which oversees multi-agency child safeguarding services which cover the Dorset Council and BCP Council footprints. Other pan-Dorset services include Aspire, the Regional Adoption agency and the Dorset combined youth justice service. The annual report sets out the work done and the issues involved. The report describes how operational services have been increasingly devolved into the two respective councils, so that safeguarding practice can be grounded in all other operational services to children and young people. In Dorset, this has

meant an expanded remit for the Strengthening Services Board and the linked multi-agency quality of practice and action group (QPAG). These arrangements are working well in Dorset already and this is changing the pan-Dorset Partnership's role and work to be more of a strategic oversight of child safeguarding in Dorset as a whole.

2. Financial Implications

The Partnership is funded by contributions from the four statutory partners. 2020 to 2021 contribution:

2020/21 Statutory Partner Contributions	Contribution	% of total budget
BCP Council	£83,424	32%
Dorset Council	£68,932	26%
Dorset CCG	£86,050	33%
Dorset Police	£21,906	8%
Total Annual Statutory Partner Contributions to PDSCP	£260,312	

The strategic intention by partners is to move to equal contributions which clearly means a greater contribution by the police and proportionately reduced contributions from the other 3 partners.

3. Well-being and Health Implications

All of the Partnership's work is designed to impact positively on the well-being and health of Dorset's children and young people, by keeping them safe, by reducing the risk of harm and through raising awareness of child safeguarding issues so that all those who support children and young people are aware of their needs, the meaning of their behaviour and how best to support them in times of trouble. Specific issues to mention are:

- The need to ensure child (and adult) safeguarding is both protected and enhanced in the new Dorset Integrated Care System (ICS). A central aim of the ICS development nationally is to enhance multi-agency working and this will need development work to be guaranteed;
- In the new arrangements, Dorset Council will be a system leader, commissioner and provider so partnership working with the ICS and provider collaboratives will be complex and any tendency to a fresh fragmentation needs to be monitored;
- There are opportunities for greater multi-agency engagement about supporting vulnerable children and young people e.g., through Dorset Police's model of child-centred policing and the priority they are giving to reducing vulnerability;
- Many children and young people have been adversely affected by the Covid pandemic and their recovery in areas like child and adolescent mental health is of paramount importance. This is a priority across service commissioning and provision for Dorset Council as it is for all partners.

Climate implications

None arising, as child safeguarding work has to be carried out face to face with children, young people and their families and there is little scope to carry this out through remote platforms or telephone consultation. The shift towards holding more conferences and reviews online will mean less travel for professionals, which makes a small contribution to reduced emissions

4. Other Implications

The main concern to report is the significant rise in referrals to all child safeguarding services recently which has been termed 'the pandemic boom'. If sustained, this has very considerable implications for the services children and young people receive; for waiting lists; and for medium-term financial planning. When considered in the round, including the deficits for councils in their High Needs Block, it makes it all the more important for councils to have stable political and managerial leadership which keeps a firm focus on how to continuously improve the quality of services whilst demands increasing and budgets are under pressure.

The implications for many related services, such as those provided by the voluntary and community sectors, are also potentially considerable though they are as yet unclear at the local level. However, it is clear that the financial stability of many small organisations is under even greater threat.

I have been impressed by Dorset Council's improvements recently, including in corporate parenting, the conversation-based and strengths-based approach to service provision and the strong and positive internal culture in children's services. It will be crucial to maintain and consolidate on these gains next year.

5. Risk Assessment

Risk is the core business of our Partnership so I will confine myself to some points about risk to the Partnership rather than the intrinsic risks children and young people face which remain high. These risks are not exclusive to the Partnership but to all of the multi-agency systems leadership activity required across Dorset:

- 1) A limited resource and capacity which places an onus to work smartly and to identify new ways of working to deliver high impact services and outcomes for children, young people and their families. If this capacity dips below the minimum level needed there will be inevitable shortfalls
- 2) The Partnership is entering a new era with a new Permanent Independent Chair and Scrutineer – I have been working on an interim basis for eighteen months. This is an example of the leadership of the Partnership becoming increasingly stable which means we have a reduced risk of discontinuity;

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

Children and young people in need of safeguarding are nearly always living within families in relative social and economic need, who tend to experience multiple disadvantage and adverse childhood experiences, sometimes inter-generationally. The Partnership's core business is to reduce the impact of these various inequalities, both on individual children and young people and on groups, cohorts or clusters of children and young people who face particular issues. These include issues outside of the family such as the risks from exploitation. The Partnership's overview seeks to identify new inequalities early and to address these through multi-agency action. This is a continuous over-riding objective.

7. Appendices

8. Background Papers

The draft pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report (2021/22)

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

