

Health and Wellbeing Board

20 March 2024

Families First for Children Pathfinder & PDSCP Annual Report 2022-23

For Review and Consultation

Portfolio Holder: Cllr B Quayle, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help

Local Councillor(s): All

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

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Job Title: Programme Director (Families First for Children Pathfinder) /
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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

This report brings together two key pieces of work across Children's social care and the wider partnership:

- Children's services involvement with the Families First for Children Pathfinder (FFCP)
- The Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership (PDSCP) annual report 2022-23

There are strong links between both pieces of work. The ambitions of the FFCP and PDSCP's priority areas for partnership working will support each other as we implement pioneering reforms in children social care and across the partnership. As such, we present these items collectively.

FFCP

This report is an update to the People and Health Overview Committee on Children's Services involvement with the Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme. It provides an update on progress with a focus on the implementation plan for the Pathfinder.

PDSCP Annual Report

The Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership (PDSCP) is the statutory body which oversees multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and covers the local Dorset and BCP council areas. This report contains a background and introduction to the statutory functions of the partnership and the council's responsibilities which includes the requirements to publish an annual report.

The annual report of the PDSCP is therefore provided as an attachment for consideration. The annual report details reflections on partnership work in 2022/23 including:

- Outlining the findings from a review of the safeguarding arrangements.
- Summarising local and national learning including in relation to Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.
- Providing an overview of multi-agency training.
- Outlining the funding arrangements for the partnership.
- Providing information from the Child Death Overview Panel.
- Detailing work across the partnership linked to the priority areas for 2022/23.
- Outlining other key developments by the statutory safeguarding partners.

The report also outlines the agreed revised priority areas for 2023 to 2025.

The report has been approved by the PDSCP Executive who are the representatives of the Safeguarding partners as outlined in Working Together Guidance. The Executive group is chaired by an Independent Chair and Scrutineer who provides support and challenge to the partnership.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that members note the contents of the reports and support our on-going participation in the Families First for Children Pathfinder programme and the work of the PDSCP, suggesting any further considerations

Reason for Recommendation:

FFCP

Participation in the Pathfinder programme is a huge opportunity for Dorset to shape the transformation that is required in children's social care, to secure DfE funding to support the required change, and for our children and families to benefit from the reforms sooner rather than later.

PDSCP

The production of an annual report is a statutory responsibility. This has been endorsed by the four statutory partners (Dorset Council, BCP Council, NHS Dorset, Dorset Police) and is being shared as part of those governance arrangements.

1. Introduction and Background

FFCP

1.1 The Independent Review of Children's Social Care published its final report in May 2022. The Review was described as a "once-in-a-generation opportunity" to set out a bold and broad plan to improve outcomes for children and families. The big question it sought to answer was: How do we ensure children grow up in loving, stable, and safe families and, where that is not possible, that care provides the same foundations?

1.2 The review found the current system to be increasingly skewed towards crisis intervention, with outcomes for children unacceptably poor, and costs continuing to rise. It reported that without a 'radical reset' of the whole system, outcomes will remain poor, and in a decade's time the children in care population will have increased from 80,000 to 100,000, and costs will increase to £15billion from £10billion now.

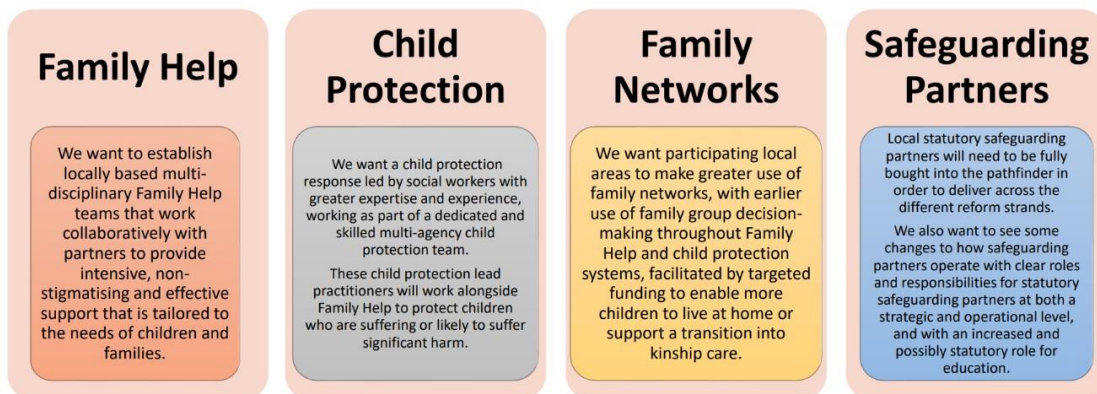
1.3 'Stable Homes, Built on Love', published in February 2023, is the Government's strategy for implementing the recommendations of the Review.

1.4 The Strategy sets out six pillars to transform children's social care. These are as follows:

- Family Help provides the right support at the right time so that children can thrive with their families.
- A decisive multi-agency child protection system.
- Unlocking the potential of family networks.
- Putting love, relationships, and a stable home at the heart of being a child in care.
- A valued, supported and highly skilled social worker for every child who needs one.
- A system that continuously learns and improves and makes better use of evidence and data.

1.5 The Government is sponsoring several test and learn pathfinder programmes to test out delivery of some elements of its strategy before they roll it out nationally. Dorset is one of three local authorities nationally who have been selected to deliver the Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme. This Pathfinder involves designing a new model of provision to deliver the following elements of the strategy:

There are **four key reform strands** to the Families First for Children pathfinder that will be delivered as a whole system transformation. There will be minimum requirements alongside local flexibility and delivery questions to be worked through via co-design.



In summary, the ambitions of the Pathfinder are to deliver:

- Deeper integration and partnerships in child protection and family help.
- More support and help to families early, preventing crisis.

- Support to enable families and family networks to make their own decisions and plans to keep children safe.
 - An enhanced safeguarding role for education at the strategic level
- 1.6 From August – December 2023 we undertook a co-design process to agree our proposed delivery model for the pathfinder reforms. This exercise was carried out in collaboration with Children’s Services staff, the wider council, and partnership colleagues. The model has also been built in line with the views and lived experience of our children, young people, and families.
- 1.7 Our delivery plan was submitted to the Department for Education in December 2023. This has now been agreed subject to some final policy clarifications.

PDSCP

- 1.8 The Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (PDSCP) is the statutory body which oversees multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements covering the Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) footprints. It was introduced in 2019 in line with the statutory guidance Working Together 2018 (updated 15th December 2023 [Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118427/working-together-to-safeguard-children-2023-statutory-guidance.pdf)) The guidance outlines the legislative requirements placed on individual service and provides a framework for how partners are required to work together. This requires three local safeguarding partners (local authority, integrated care boards, and chief officer of the police) to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children, including identifying and responding to their needs.

Executive team of the partnership maintains oversight and responsibility for the partnership’s statutory functions, provides strategic leadership and seeks assurance about the effectiveness of the safeguarding system and provides strategic leadership and has an independent chair. The partnership operates at a Pan-Dorset level, and place based operational delivery arms serve each local authority area to allow for both authorities to meet the needs of their children. This is to enable the delivery of multi-

agency safeguarding delivery in a way that is responsive to local community needs and in line with local service provision.

- 1.9 In Dorset, the place-based arrangements are driven through the multi-agency Strengthening Services Board, chaired by the Chief Executive of Dorset Council. These arrangements have enabled the partnership to deliver timely responses to local safeguarding priorities and offer strong alignment with other local partnerships such as the Community Safety Partnership, Health and Wellbeing Board and Safeguarding Adults Board.

2. Overview of the Families First for Children Pathfinder Model

- 2.1 In our co-design work, we established a set of key principles we felt should inform our model, as follows:

- 2.1.1 **Putting our Children and Families First** – we will continue to take a whole family approach to our work with children and families and will put their experience of our services and the improvement of their outcomes at the centre of everything we do.

- 2.1.2 **Maintaining our strengths.** We have been careful to make sure that the design of our pathfinder model builds on and enhances our strengths, rather than losing any of the things we do well.

- 2.1.3 **Enhancement and growth.** The model is about enhancing the way we operate and builds on the strengths of our current model. It extends and expands on our integration with partners and provides additional capacity to support children and families as soon as they need it.

- 2.1.4 **Developing our workforce for the future.** As one of the first pathfinders, we are in a unique position to develop our workforce for the future system which will be built on the ambitions of the pathfinder and new central government policy.

- 2.2 The enhancements to our delivery model are structured around the four key reform strands in the Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme: Multi-disciplinary Family Help Services, Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams, Unlocking the Potential of Wider Family

Networks & Safeguarding Partners. We are now into the implementation phase of the programme with. We expect the majority of the pathfinder model to be in place by June 2024 with a phased implementation plan. Key elements of our model are set out below:

2.3 **Family Help:**

2.3.1 **We will increase integration in our conversation based front door, which currently includes** our Children's Advice and Duty (ChAD) Service, our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), and our Family Help Hub, by adding the Dorset Education Advice Line (inclusive of the Educational Psychology consultation service), and the CAHMS Gateway.

2.3.2 **We will enhance early support commissioning,** bolstering the Voluntary and Community Sector offer to deliver earlier, preventative support to children, young people, and families in their communities.

2.3.3 **We will merge Early Help and Child in Need (CIN) work** into a single offer called Family Help. The majority of what we currently call CIN work will be held in this Family Help Service. All families/cases supported in this space will benefit from oversight from qualified social work staff.

2.3.4 **We will enhance and grow our locality Family Help and Inclusion & Belonging teams.** These teams will provide Family Help that is overseen by qualified social workers. Our Inclusion and Belonging Teams will include a range of professionals from different disciplines including educational psychologists, specialist teachers, targeted youth workers, special educational needs provision leads, and provide greater support to families and work in partnership with Family Help Teams.

2.3.5 **Family Help Lead Practitioners** are those professionals identified as the lead worker allocated to a family receiving family help services. The Lead Practitioner could be a professional from any discipline and any agency working with the family, for example a health

visitor, school nurse, or a Family Help Team worker, depending on which professional is best placed to support the family and undertake that role.

2.4 **Child Protection:**

2.4.1 **We will establish Multi Agency Child Protection Teams** which will include a range of different practitioners including Health (Drug and Alcohol Misuse, Domestic Abuse and Mental Health Practitioners) policing colleagues, our wider partners, and our most experienced social workers, who will be the Lead Child Protection Practitioners.

2.4.2 **We will establish Lead Child Protection Practitioners** to sit in our Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams. This is a defined role set out in the DfE Families First for Children requirements. Our experienced social workers will undertake this role. These practitioners will have low caseloads to ensure the role is attractive and that they have capacity to use their skills, experience, and expertise to safely lead child protection work and provide support and guidance to professional colleagues. Lead Child Protection Practitioners will work closely with the Family Help Lead Practitioner where appropriate.

2.4.3 **We will enhance advocacy for families going through Child Protection Processes** to ensure they understand the process, are well prepared, do not feel stigmatised, and are supported to have their voice heard.

2.4.4 **We will test a new model for Child Protection Case Conferences**, with new roles for social workers and Quality Assurance Reviewing Officers (QARO's)

2.5 **Family Networks:**

2.5.1 **Families will be offered Family Group Conferencing** in child protection by default. These are a family-led meetings in which the family and friends network come together to make a plan for a child.

2.5.2 **Families will be offered Family Network Meetings** in Family Help. Again, these are family led meetings and will support the family to develop their plan.

2.5.3 Families who have had a Family Network Meeting or Family Group conference **may be able to access a Family Network Support Package**. These packages will provide practical and / or financial support to the wider family network to enable children to live and thrive at home.

2.5.4 **We are developing a local Family Network/Kinship Care**

Strategy that will embed a kinship care / families first approach.

2.5.5 **We will develop a dedicated Connected Persons Service**, bringing together assessment and support for Connected Persons Foster Carers, Special Guardians, kinship carers caring for children subject to Child Arrangement Orders, and Private Foster Carers.

2.6 **Safeguarding Partners and overall system design:**

2.6.1 **We will develop a single whole family assessment and plan** so that families only have to tell their story once, that is family led and that can be the foundation for the identification of further needs or specialist assessments if required.

2.6.2 **Our practice framework** will be strengthened, and we will continue to expand and embed the principles of Motivational Interviewing, Therapeutic Thinking, and Trauma Informed and Restorative & Relational Based Practice across the whole children's workforce and the partnership.

2.6.3 **We will undertake an efficiency review** of our key partnership forums and governance to streamlining wherever possible.

2.6.4 **Practice leads** will be established to support with practice changes and to sustain quality of practice and application of legislative changes.

2.6.5 We will strengthen the role of Education as a safeguarding partner by including our Education Director as a member of our safeguarding partnership and identifying nominated education professionals to sit on our safeguarding partnership subgroups.

3. Functions of the partnership (PDSCP)

3.1 The partnership undertakes a number of key roles including:

- Learning from practice: the partnership facilitates learning from practice through multi-agency case audits and when required the commissioning of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and the implementation of any learning.
- Child Death Overview Panel: arrangements for reviewing child deaths are through a panel that covers the Pan-Dorset and Somerset local authority areas. The aim is to identify any patterns or trends that can be used to systematic or local changes to prevent future deaths.
- Delivering and evaluating multi-agency safeguarding training.
- Undertaking multi-agency quality assurance activity including single agency and multi-agency audits and gaining the views of practitioners, children and families with the aim of improving practice.

4. Annual Report

4.1 In order to bring transparency for children, families, and all practitioners about the activity undertaken, the safeguarding partners are required to publish a report at least once every 12 months. The report must set out the work that have been undertaken and as assessment of the effectiveness of the partnership arrangements.

4.2 This is the fourth annual report under the 2018 multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. The report reflects the safeguarding commitments and hard work of all executive partners, professionals and volunteers alike, as we work together to address shared priorities. The priorities are shaped by the issues facing children and their families across the areas of Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

- 4.3 The draft report is provided as an appendix to this report. This report will highlight a number of key areas of activity.
- 4.4 The findings of the PDSCP Executive review of the PDSCP multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including the geographical area, covered by the partnership. This concluded that the partnership could work most effectively when they worked together across the Pan-Dorset area, and changes to the geographical area covered by the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements were not required to ensure that the partnership was able to effectively meet its functions. The review also identified areas of development for the partnership arrangements, and these were addressed.
- 4.5 During 2022/2023 the PDSCP training and development team delivered 156 safeguarding courses to over 2876 multi-agency practitioners.
- 4.6 The partnership reviewed and updated its quality assurance activity. They responded to national learning including reviewing practice, policies and procedures in relation to the findings from National Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews such as the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson and the national review in relation into Safeguarding Children with Disabilities in Residential Settings.
- 4.7 The findings from local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and other learning events can found on the PDSCP website [Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews](#) and [Learning Reviews](#). These led to key areas of activity for the partnership to improve the lives of children and families.
- 4.8 Key areas of activity for the partnership included:
- 4.8.1 Working with the system and practitioners to improve identification and interventions with children and families where there was intra-familial child sexual abuse including this being subject of a Conference in 2022.
- 4.8.2 The partnership also worked with practitioners to improve their understanding and knowledge of working with children where parents are sex workers. This included developing policies and procedures and was the theme of a Conference in 2022.
- 4.8.3 The partnership has also been focusing work on the experience of older children/young people including in relation to their experience of neglect and domestic abuse, extra-familial harm including knife crime and working with gender identity. These areas were covered in a Conference in October 2023.

- 4.8.4 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children was an area of focus in 2022/23. This included the need to ensure there was an effective system to: undertake age assessments, assess and intervene with young people including providing effective education and placements.
- 4.8.5 The partnership developed key-principles for organisations in relation to developing trauma-informed practice, provided tools for organisations and has now developed further training.
- 4.9 The report contains updates from partners on their work on the priority areas for 2022/23:
- 4.9.1 Tackling Child Exploitation, early intervention and effective disruption.
- 4.9.2 Sexual Abuse - intrafamilial, link to violence against women and girls and sexual abuse in schools - peer on peer.
- 4.9.3 Recognising and responding to the impact of domestic abuse involving children and young people (including under 1's and unborn safety and wellbeing)
- 4.9.4 Supporting children to maintain positive mental health and emotional wellbeing, understanding the longer-term impact of Covid-19.
- 4.9.5 In 2022/23 the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership reviewed their priorities and agreed. This was undertaken in consultation with both BCP and Dorset Community Safety Partnerships and both BCP and Dorset Safeguarding Adult Boards. The following priorities were agreed for 2023-2025:
- 4.9.6 Priority 1: Violence experienced by children and young people including sexual violence and abuse, domestic abuse, physical violence and knife crime.
- 4.9.7 Priority 2: Children's mental health and emotional well-being.
- 4.9.8 Priority 3. Neglect.

5. Financial Implications

FFCP

- 5.1 Participation in the Pathfinder presents an opportunity to secure a level of DfE funding to undertake the change and development

work required that is unlikely to be available for other authorities once the Pathfinder programme has finished.

5.2 Our final costed plan that was submitted to the DfE includes detail of how we intend to use the grant funding to deliver the Pathfinder reforms and includes:

- Seconding/backfilling roles in police/health to support development of the programme and deeper integration.
- New/additional roles in the Multi-Agency Family Help and Child Protection spaces (examples include, family help workers, youth practitioners, advanced practitioners)
- Programme management roles
- Enhancements to the learning and development offer for staff in line with the new model
- Commissioning services differently (e.g., in the early support space)

The total funding we will receive for the programme is **£4,897,346**

The grant funding allocation runs to the end of 2024/25, and we have costed up to this point. It is our expectation that there will be an uplift to the settlement for Children's Services in Dorset and nationally for 2025/26 and beyond to account for the costs of delivering the Government's Strategy thereafter.

PDSCP

Safeguarding partners are required to provide equitable and proportionate funding to cover all elements of their multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements ([Working Together 2018](#)). The funding should be transparent to children and families in the area and sufficient to cover all elements of the arrangements.

There is a dedicated Business Team to support the work of the partnership across the Pan-Dorset area. Following an external efficiency and effectiveness review of the Business team in 2022, a proposed restructure introduced a new single Business Manager across the Pan-Dorset area and introduced further administrative support. Both new roles have been successfully recruited and the remaining roles in the team made permanent.

In February 2022 the Executive approved a recommendation from the review for the need for all partners to contribute an equal share into the PDSCP budget and agreed for 2023/24 that this would be £75,785 per partner. This would mean a total budget of £303,140. It was noted that this would be an increase for the police of £26,940, for Dorset Council of £6,853 and for Health of £785 with a reduction for BCP Council of £7,639.

At the end of 2022/23 the PDSCP carried forward a small surplus of £21,697, due to the unpredictability of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, which fluctuate from year to year.

6. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications

There are no implications for the environment, climate, and ecology other than that there may be benefits that may arise from a reduction in cross country travel if this strategy is successful in creating more local care placements for Dorset and for other authorities around the country.

7. Well-being and Health Implications

FFCP

The aim of the Government Strategy is to improve the lives, and the health and wellbeing of children, young people, and families. Successful delivery of the strategy in Dorset will bring improvements to the health and wellbeing of our children, families, and communities.

PDSCP

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 children are protected from harm and provided support when they need it.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1** Participation in the Pathfinder puts Dorset on the national stage, leading the implementation of a national strategy and with a responsibility and an expectation that we will thereafter support others on their own implementation journey.
- 8.2** There will be a reshape of some existing roles within our locality structures, predominantly a change in portfolio responsibility. However, we do not anticipate any significant contractual changes.

9. Risk Assessment

9.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

10. Equalities Impact Assessment

FFCP

10.1 An EQIA in draft status in relation to the workforce planning element of the reforms. It has been reviewed and agreed by HR and is now with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer for final review and agreement.

10.2 A full EQIA for the programme will be completed ahead of the 1st of April 2024 if needed.

PDSCP

None completed for this report. The Partnership's core business is to reduce the impact of inequalities, both on individual children and young people and on groups, cohorts of children and young people.

11. Appendices

11.1 FFCP Delivery Plan

11.2 PDSCP Annual Report 2022-23

12. Background Papers

FFCP

[Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation](#)

[Working together updated guidance](#)

[National social care strategy](#)

[Kinship care national strategy](#)

[Digital and data strategy](#)

PDSCP

Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership Website:

[Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership - Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership \(pdscp.co.uk\)](http://pdscp.co.uk)

Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Reports (Historic):

[Annual Reports - Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership \(pdscp.co.uk\)](http://pdscp.co.uk)

13. Report Sign Off

- 11.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)