

# Report to Cabinet

11 June 2024

## Children's Safeguarding Partnership Review

### Cabinet Member and Portfolio

Cllr C Sutton, Children's Services, Education & Skills

**Local Councillor(s):** All

### Executive Director:

T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

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**Report Status:** Public

### Brief Summary:

A review of the Pan-Dorset arrangements for the delivery of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership has been considered by the statutory partners: Dorset Police, NHS Dorset and both local authorities (LAs) involved in the Pan-Dorset arrangements, BCP Children's Services and Dorset Children's Services. The review recommends that the partnership arrangements be delivered separately for each LA. This report will therefore set out the recommendation made by the partners who have been given the delegated authority to conduct the statutory duties for their organisation.

### Recommendation:

To agree separation of the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children arrangements and create a Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership and a BCP Safeguarding Children's Partnership in order to meet the needs of two separate Local Authorities and enable the effectiveness of the partnership arrangements moving forward.

## **Reason for Recommendation:**

One of the fundamental reasons behind this proposal is the significant disparity between the two local authorities within the existing partnership. The authorities operate differently, and their approaches to safeguarding and working practices often diverge. The recent changes outlined in the Working Together Guidance 2023 pose an additional challenge for our current Pan-Dorset arrangement. With the removal of the Independent Chair role, implementing the necessary changes becomes considerably more complex under a Pan-Dorset arrangement. By transitioning to a Dorset Safeguarding Partnership and a separate BCP Safeguarding Partnership, both authorities can adapt their structures and procedures seamlessly to align with the revised guidelines. This will enable them to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities independently and effectively across the region, with each Director of Children's Services maintaining individual responsibility and being supported by scrutineers.

### **1. Report**

- 1.1 Considering the distinct operational approaches of the two local authorities within the Pan-Dorset structure, a review of the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership's delivery arrangements was undertaken, and agreement reached that the two local authorities in the partnership operate very differently. Attempts have been made over the years to maintain the current arrangements at a strategic and governance level. However, it is acknowledged this is becoming increasingly challenging.
- 1.2 Attempts have been made to try and maintain the current arrangements and avoid duplication for the partners; for example, the partnership has introduced certain flexibilities over the past two years, adjusting partnership priorities and facilitating place-based subgroups. However, the significant disparity between the two local authorities within the existing partnership is preventing the progress of some key areas of work. The reason for this is each authority operates differently, resulting in divergent approaches to safeguarding and working practices; this creates a need for strategies to be more individual to the two local authorities and for the partnership to respond accordingly.
- 1.3 Additionally, Dorset Children's Services designation as a Pathfinder for the government under the "Stable Homes Built on Love" initiative has further emphasized the need for partners to deliver services in a distinct manner within each authority. For BCP they have a strong focus on improvement

and have regulated priorities they must achieve. Therefore, after careful consideration, it appears that the most favourable way forward is to now agree on a separation.

- 1.4 By establishing individual safeguarding partnerships, we can customize our strategies and operations to suit the unique needs and circumstances of each authority. Consequently, this will lead to improved safeguarding outcomes within our respective areas. It is crucial to note that the proposed separation does not indicate complete isolation. Collaboration among the safeguarding partners can continue, albeit in a modified format.
- 1.5 Under the proposal, the current Safeguarding Partners can convene two or three times a year as a Pan-Dorset group to review shared learning, to address any shared priorities and meet the statutory duties placed upon them as the Designated Safeguarding Leads. This approach ensures that our efforts remain unified and consistent where necessary while minimizing any potential strategic impact resulting from the separation. Furthermore, both local authorities have an existing governance structure where the partnership is already embedded; this minimises the impact on the partners with no additional meetings being suggested. With a review of the membership for the Subgroups already underway in Dorset council it is further aimed to reduce duplication all round. BCP have also committed to undertaking this work too.
- 1.6 Furthermore, a requirement of the Children's Safeguarding Partnership as part of the new Working Together 2023 legislation changes, is that Education will now be included as the 4<sup>th</sup> statutory partner. Dorset Council have already been planning for these changes to be implemented and again a separation allows both councils to focus on their respective areas and determine how best to ensure the right representation of schools and early years provision in their own governance arrangements for the partnership.
- 1.7 Finally, it is helpful to note that the Dorset Integrated Care Board (ICB) has already developed place based arrangements and will therefore allow the two new safeguarding arrangements to feed into the proposed changes seamlessly.
- 1.8 **Proposed Business Team Functions**

There will be some arrangements that will continue to be Pan-Dorset whilst others will be allocated to the new Partnerships as follows:

- **Pan Dorset website**, this will remain in place, but the landing page will have two distinct areas to direct professionals and families to the relevant authority for work that is place based. This will be supported by the creation of a Dorset Council partnership logo and a separate BCP partnership logo.
- **Pan- Dorset Tri X**. This is where policy and procedures are recorded and will remain Pan-Dorset as these reflect legislation, statutory guidance and best practice. The site allows for individual practices to be recorded when required and again the new partnership logos will help differentiate when required.
- **Pan-Dorset Training**. This is hosted by Dorset and is working well across the partnership, training hundreds of partners each month; therefore, this will continue as is and any bespoke training for each LA can be factored accordingly. The team is completely self-funded through income generation.
- **Child Death Overview Panel**, this is a tri authority arrangement that includes Somerset and will remain in place.
- **Partnership Data**, this will need to be separated to allow clear distinction between the two areas. This will further support the Partnership to respond to individual area needs.
- **Partnership Annual Report**, this will no longer be a Pan-Dorset report and the two partnerships will have their own annual reports enabling clear focus on the arrangements for Dorset children and families as will BCP.

## 2. **Financial Implications**

The Safeguarding Partners have agreed that they are committed to maintaining the current financial contributions and neither LA is requesting any additional funding to deliver two separate partnerships. As a result, it is agreed that the contributions will be split 50-50 to allow the Children's Safeguarding Partnership to be delivered separately. There will be some minor rebalancing of funds between the two authorities where Pan-Dorset functions are delivered within Dorset Council, and this has been agreed by the executive partners. As a result, both LAs are in agreement that they can deliver the Children's Safeguarding Partnership business within the allocated funds.

3. **Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implication**

None noted.

4. **Well-being and Health Implications**

A consultation will be undertaken with the business team staff as it will likely mean some changes to the line management and the role of the manager.

5. **Other Implications**

A review of the business manager role will be required as this was a strategic role to enable a Pan-Dorset approach which will no longer be required. HR processes will be followed accordingly should the recommendation for the creation of separate Dorset and BCP partnerships be approved.

6. **Risk Assessment**

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

Current Risk: 10

Residual Risk: 2

7. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

Attached as Appendix 1

8. **Appendices**

Appendix 1: EqlA Childrens Safeguarding Partnership Review

9. **Background Papers**

**Report Sign Off**

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).