



**DONCASTER
SAFEGUARDING
CHILDREN
PARTNERSHIP**

ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020



Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2019/2020

Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to have the opportunity to introduce the DSCP Annual Report for 2019/20.

I took up the role of Independent Chair of the Joint Adults and Children Safeguarding Board in December 2020. I had no involvement with safeguarding in Doncaster in the twelve months covered by this report, and of course am not in a position to comment in any detail on the work undertaken, the achievements, and the areas for improvement identified in that period. However, one key role of an independent chair is to challenge and scrutinise performance and reporting. Statutory guidance requires this annual report to be subject to independent scrutiny. I hope therefore that there may be some advantage in the opportunity for a newcomer to cast an independent eye over and comment on this first annual report published under the revised multi-agency safeguarding arrangements introduced by the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

As that newcomer I ought to give a brief summary of my background. I have spent my career in social work practice, teaching and management across both adults and children's services. I was Director of Adult Services in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets for nine years, and then Director of Social Care and Deputy Chief inspector in Ofsted from 2009 to 2013. Since then I have undertaken improvement work in a number of local authorities, and currently chair the Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Safeguarding Adult Board in the London Borough of Redbridge.

This report covers the twelve months to March 2020. The floods of November 2019 made huge demands on all public services, challenging them to find new ways of responding to crisis; and since then, of course, the world has been turned upside down by the terrible impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. All services and agencies have had to respond at pace to the unprecedented circumstances of this pandemic with even greater flexibility, capacity to innovate, and readiness to adapt. Services have faced huge challenges, but at the same time the crises have opened up opportunities for new ways of working and strengthened partnerships. It is already clear to me from my brief engagement with Doncaster that partner agencies, and above all individual practitioners and managers, have risen to this challenge, going the extra mile and beyond, and demonstrating an outstanding example of public service values and commitment at their best.

This report does not cover the period since March 2020 which has been dominated by the demands of the pandemic response. An analysis of those demands, the risks that have emerged to children and young people during the pandemic, and the way in which the partnership has worked to manage and mitigate those risks, will undoubtedly be a major theme of the report for 2020/21. Inevitably, the pressures on all agencies have delayed the production of the report, and it is now almost a year since the period covered by the report ended.

There is much that is positive in the report. The evidence on the impact of the Early Help Strategy on outcomes for families in the year in question is particularly encouraging. I know that partners in Doncaster are very clear that effective engagement with families at an early stage can be crucial both in securing better outcomes and experiences for children and families, preventing a need for more intensive and potentially invasive interventions at a later stage, and in managing demand for more intensive services. There is some recent evidence that the early help pathway needs some reviewing and strengthening, to make sure that more families get the right help at the right time, and I am aware that much work is currently being undertaken on this.

The report reflects on the first year's experience of the arrangements that have been put in place in Doncaster to achieve a more integrated approach to safeguarding across both adults' and children's services. There is a Joint Adults and Children Safeguarding Board, with a linked Safeguarding Adults Board and Safeguarding Children's Partnership, supported by a Joint Business Unit. It is encouraging to learn from the report that:

Feedback from the reconfigured Boards has been positive. Members consider the revised joint format to be more effective in facilitating a joint approach to shared issues across Children and Adult Services.

The report highlights some creative initiatives that have come out of cross-fertilisation between what were previously two entirely separate Boards. The community-focused Keeping Safe Forum was originally developed by the Safeguarding Adults Board and the Practitioners Forum by the Safeguarding Children Partnership. Both now operate across both sectors, and I look forward to engaging with them in the coming months.

Partners have agreed that two years on from the implementation of these new arrangements it would be timely to review them. I have been asked to carry out that review. It will be important to ensure that the benefits of integration are maximised, focusing on genuinely shared issues with a real impact on outcomes for vulnerable adults, children, young people and families, while at the same time making sure that focus is not lost on those challenges and issues that are specific to the adult safeguarding or children's safeguarding agendas.

The annual report is required, under the 2017 Act, to evaluate the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in practice. It ought to answer the question: how well are children and young people in Doncaster safeguarded? What are the key strengths, and what needs to be better? I hope that next year's report will be able to answer those questions more robustly than it has been possible to do in this first report produced under the new arrangements. There is clearly much good practice in Doncaster, commended most recently by Ofsted in reporting on their "focused visit" in December 2018. The annual report refers to a series of multi-agency audits that were undertaken in 2019/20. Having read those audits, I can confirm that they were thorough and rigorous, and they did indeed identify much good practice. They did also, however, identify some very significant areas for improvement: inconsistencies in some basic practice (in the

quality of assessment, for example), inconsistencies in reflecting and reflecting on the lived experience of some of the children concerned, and a need for the much better “join up” between different services that the joint safeguarding arrangements in Doncaster ought to be exceptionally well placed to promote – between children’s social care and adult mental health services, for example. I am aware that partners in Doncaster have identified the need for practice and service improvement in a range of areas and have established a Partnership Improvement Board charged with delivering the necessary improvements at pace.

Children’s services in Doncaster were found by Ofsted to be failing in 2015, and in only two years had improved to ‘good’ – perhaps the fastest trajectory of improvement in the country. A year later, services were judged to be still focusing “highly effectively” on continuing improvement. I have been very impressed by the strong commitment of all partners to refocus on that improvement, and I look forward to working with them on the next stage of what overall has been a very impressive improvement journey.

John Goldup, Independent Chair of Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership

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Principles, Priorities and Values

The DSCP and DSAB have a joint strategic “plan on a page”. The guiding **principles** of this are:

- Always put the wellbeing of the child, young person or adult first;
- Ensure services address the impact of adverse childhood experiences across the life stages;
- Promote a culture of creativity and curiosity;
- Promote whole family working.

There are four strategic priorities:

- To assure effectiveness and impact of safeguarding arrangements;
- To lead and shape safeguarding practice;
- To be able to respond to current and emerging issues;
- To collaborate, trust and build partnerships.

A core **value** is that we ensure the voice of the Child / Adult informs all that we do “*Nothing about me without me*”.

Legislative changes (2017 Children Act) mean local safeguarding children arrangements are now the responsibility of the three statutory ‘**safeguarding partners**’ –Doncaster Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group, and South Yorkshire Police along with Doncaster Children Services Trust (DCST). The new arrangements require the statutory partners to put in place local arrangements including how they will work with relevant agencies (agencies who the safeguarding partners identify as having a key role in safeguarding children). The partners have previously agreed to form a joint Board with the DSAB as well as having a partnership board specifically for children. The Board commissions an Independent Scrutineer who has no connection with any of the local agencies. The implementation of the strategic plan is delegated to a range of sub groups some of which are run jointly with the adult board.

The structure provides oversight so that all agencies in Doncaster are clear about their responsibilities and that they work together to co-ordinate all their safeguarding activities. The Partnership is supported by a joint Adult and Children Business Support Unit. It works closely with a number of other multi-agency strategic partnerships including the: Health and Wellbeing Board; Safer Stronger Doncaster; Children & Young People’s Partnership and Early Help Strategy Group. There are clearly overlapping areas of concern across these areas. To address this Doncaster has put in place a Chief Officers Safeguarding Overview Partnership (COSOP) in order to ensure that there is co-ordination and linkages with other partnerships and plans such as Doncaster Growing Together, and the plan for Team Doncaster. The DSCP Board meets quarterly: a children’s partnership meeting, an adult board meeting and a joint meeting all take place on the same day.

CONTEXT

66,918 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in Doncaster, this is **21%** of the total population in the area.



Doncaster (based on ONS Mid-Year Estimates)



22%

Approximately of the local authority's children aged under 16 years are living in low-income families.

Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for **11%** of all children living in the area, compared with **27%** in the country as a whole.

The proportion of children entitled to free school meals:

20.5% in primary schools (the national average is 17.7%)

19.5% in secondary schools (the national average is 15.9%)



The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are White Eastern European, including Gypsy/Roma Communities



Doncaster is

41

in the ranking for deprivation



The total number of open Children In Need Cases as at 30th September **2,580** – including care leaver's **2,284** – Excluding Care Leavers

2.8% of our pupils had an EHCP compared with **3.3%** nationally, and **12.3%** had SEN Support compared with **12.1%** nationally (As at January 2020)



Doncaster has:

383 children with a Child Protection Plan

519 children are in care

296 care leavers.



The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language:

12.0% in primary schools (the national average is 21.3%)

8.9% in secondary schools (the national average is 17.1%)



5.8% of our young people are 'Not in Education, Employment or Training, compared with **10.4%** nationally (As at August 2020)



Local Context

Doncaster is currently ranked 41st most deprived out of 326 local authorities according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2019) suggesting that a significant proportion of families in Doncaster will face challenges in caring for and raising their children. There are approximately 65,000 children and young people under 18 in Doncaster. Demand for children's services in Doncaster is higher than the national average: referral rates to children's social care are higher. This has been the case for a number of years and is likely to reflect the impact of historical serious case reviews alongside other demographic factors.

In Doncaster, 6.2% of residents were born outside the UK. The main group outside of white British is 'white other' which equates to 3.1% of the population aged 0-24. The main language in Doncaster, for people aged 3-15, if not English, is Polish.

A report **By us, for us: A youth-led commission on child poverty in Doncaster**, commissioned by the Children and Families Executive Board (September 2018) concluded the following: *in Doncaster almost 1 child in 3 lives in poverty – that's over 20,000 children. Poverty affects children's lives in lots of different ways: people can lose their homes, or become victims of crime if their area is unsafe. Poverty affects how well children do in school, how healthy they are and how they behave. It also affects their future – what kind of jobs they can get and whether they end up being poor as adults.*

Partnership Achievements

One of the most successful aspects of the multi-agency learning centred on the audits that were undertaken around exploitation; mental health; sexual abuse and domestic abuse. The learning from these led to improvements in procedures and practice briefings being produced to cascade the learning across the workforce. The DSCP has a statutory duty to undertake Section 11 audits on a bi-annual basis. No Section 11 audits were undertaken during the time period covered by the report. These occur bi-annually and these are underway at the time of writing.

Overall progress has been made in implementing the new arrangements. Feedback from the reconfigured Boards has been positive. Members consider the revised joint format to be more effective in facilitating a joint approach to share issues across Children and Adult Services.

The Early Help Strategy for Children, Young People and their Families 2017 – 20 provides prevention and earlier intervention when a need is identified or as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. During 2019 –2020 there were 7063 referrals made for Early Help support; slightly up from the previous year of 6181 referrals. The focus on practice development improved outcomes for families, evidenced in the overall closure outcome, most notably 'plans completed' rose from 29.2% in 2018-19 to 43.9% in 2019-

20; 'family disengagement' decreased from 26.6% to 20.2%; and 'step up' to social care fell from 26.6% to 23.5%.

The Year 2019/20 began with 314 children subject to Child Protection Plans, and closed with a decrease to 300. The trend is a steady decline over recent years, and there are no Child Protection Plans that have been in place for two years or longer. This suggests that effective early intervention is preventing problems from escalating to a point where child protection procedures are required. When child protection plans are required the gradual reduction in duration of these plans suggests that effective and timely planning and support for children and families is being provided. This is generally desirable as child protection procedures can feel intrusive and threatening for families, hence it is preferable to be able to engage families voluntarily at an earlier stage. There has been an increase in children and young people's attendance at conferences and at core groups, with more meaningful contributions and greater engagement with the plan. There is a shift in culture leading to other professionals habitually seeking the views of young people and championing their involvement and contributions. Overall, this represents a very successful area of practice and helps towards meeting the statutory requirement to ascertain the voice of young people.

Local Solution Groups were piloted to inform the transition into the locality-working model and were key in managing demand caused by the November 2019 floods and Covid response from March 2020 onwards.

The DSCP has continued to develop the Neglect Strategy aiming to ensure the early recognition of neglect and improved responses to it by all agencies, so that life changes of children are promptly improved and the risk of harm is reduced. This is led by a Neglect Strategic Group, which is part of the Team Doncaster Children and Young People's Partnership.

DSCP Sub Groups

The Sub Groups are the "engine room" of the Partnership and have delegated responsibility for implementation of the strategic plan. It delegates its functions to a number of sub groups via the strategic plan and each group has an individual action plan.

Case Review Group: The CRG fulfils the statutory requirements outlined in Working Together 2018 relating to "child protection and safeguarding practice". Learning Lessons Reviews promote the participation of frontline practitioners and provide a detailed insight into issues and experiences in safeguarding casework. A key impact of the group is that Practice Briefings are produced to disseminate the learning to the wider workforce. In response to two Lessons Learned Reviews a detailed suicide contagion protocol has been developed in conjunction with Public Health. During Q4 the first Rapid Review was completed leading to a Local Child Practice Safeguarding Review being commissioned. Publication is delayed pending the conclusion of the criminal process.

Workforce Development: The Partnership has a strong commitment to multi-agency training and continues to work with our established multi-agency training pool to offer a training programme covering a wide range of safeguarding issues based on a training

needs analysis. Places are provided at no charge funded by annual partner contributions. During the year 1365 multi-agency professionals attended a total of 412 hours of training covering a diverse range of subjects. This contributes to a well-trained and highly skilled workforce. In February the Partnership hosted its first joint conference with the DSAB. This followed on from the nine previous conferences and was equally well received by the 180 delegates present. It was described variously as inspiring, informative, excellent and powerful.

Child Death Overview Panel: CDOP reviews all child deaths that occur in Doncaster in accordance with the statutory responsibilities outlined in Working Together 2018. Modifiable factors arising from reviewed cases included: Smoking by either parent during mother's pregnancy; Body Mass Index of mother; Co-sleeping and parental compliance advice; Internet safety and online information regarding self-harm; Low birth weight of baby; Delay in seeking medical attention by parents. This has led to recommendations for the following actions: Health staff training regarding safe sleeping and alcohol use, and smoking in pregnancy; Young people's safe user use of the internet.

Significant progress has been made in meeting the requirements of Working Together 2018. The four South Yorkshire areas have collaborated to strengthen the existing shared learning forum which takes place quarterly.

Quality and Performance The group has explored the use of data and intelligence to inform the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, in response to Working Together 2018. A revised data set and reporting process has been implemented during 2019 - 20. The group has commissioned four highly successful multi agency audits using the JTAI framework. These have led to action plans to improve practice. The impact of the group is that the Partnership is better able to understand and analyse the functioning of the whole system and implement actions to resolve any issues.

Child Exploitation: A Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy 2017-19 and Action Plan is overseen by the Group, chaired by a senior Police Officer who is a member of the Partnership Board. The multi-agency team is co-located with specialist police officer colleagues and Missing Persons Investigators. This means that information can be shared in a timely way and responding to concerns can be undertaken quickly. The Industry Sector Group has worked hard to train taxi drivers, private landlords and hoteliers, to raise awareness of the signs and indicators of exploitation.

Practitioner Forum: This is chaired by the DSCP Independent Convenor and has representation from multi-agency practitioners across adults and children's services in Doncaster. The Forum has met on 5 occasions within the period of 2019/20. Each forum has led to sharing of valuable information on practice issues. These help inform the Board of those priorities to take forward. The Forum has always been well attended and seen an increase in engagement. It is a platform for practitioners to directly inform senior leaders in the DSCP of practice related issues.

Keeping Safe Sub Group and Forum The sub group and Forum are run jointly between adults and children. Engagement with the voluntary and faith and culture sectors is being

further developed into the Keeping Safe Forum, to ensure that the sector is well represented serving as a voice and influence sub-group for both the Adult and Children's Boards. Community, faith and cultural groups and sports clubs are also invited to DSCP training events and conferences. Both safeguarding partnerships have also worked together on an annual safeguarding fortnight, with activities and communications to raise awareness about safeguarding and protection issues with the general public and professionals.

Areas of development and future challenges

A significant amount of time was invested in developing the new DSCP website. It is envisaged that this will promote a universal training calendar detailing all children and adults training courses linked to Safeguarding.

There is a need to more systematically capture the voice of the child. While a number of agencies have been very successful in doing to this to the extent where young advisors are commissioned to inform individual governance boards there is a need to develop this on a multi- agency basis.

The DSCP has been fortunate in that since the advent of Working Together 2018 up until April 2020 there has only been one serious incident that met the criteria for Rapid Review. This occurred in January '20 so the Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review was only at the stage of being commissioned by the end of March'20. The most significant learning arose from Lessons Learned Reviews following two young people taking their own lives. A suicide contagion protocol has been developed as a consequence of this and has proven to be effective.

Key priorities for 2020-21 will include:

- The multi-agency response to the ongoing Covid pandemic.
- Improved integration with the Safer Stronger Doncaster Partnership at both a strategic and operational level to address issues arising from domestic abuse.
- Seeking assurance from the Health and Wellbeing Board in respect of the impact of mental health issues on young people's well-being.

References

DSCP Website: <https://dscp.org.uk/>

New Local Arrangements can be found at <https://dscp.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-09/DSCP%20New%20local%20arrangements%20to%20safeguard%20children%2006.2019.pdf>

DSCP- DSAB Strategic Plan 2019-2021: <https://dscp.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-10/DSCP%20DSAB%20Safeguarding%20Strategic%20Plan%202019-2021.pdf>

DSCP Policy and Procedures: <https://dscp.org.uk/professionals/policies-and-procedures>

Early Help Strategy: <https://dscp.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-09/Early%20Help%20Strategy%20Revised%202017%20to%202020%20Final.pdf>

DSCP Training Calendar : <https://buy.doncaster.gov.uk/training>