

# **OLDHAM SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP**

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

**1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021**



This report is a public document.

It can be accessed on the website of Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership:

<https://www.olscb.org/about/publications/>

Approved by Oldham Safeguarding Children Partners on 14 October 2021

**Independent Chair:** Dr Henri Giller

**Report compiled and written by** Lisa Morris (OSCP Business Manager)

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**Contact details:**

Lisa Morris  
Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Manager  
Rock Street Resource Centre  
Rock St  
Oldham  
OL1 3UJ  
0161 770 1524

**Availability and accessibility:** if you would like to receive this report in any other format please contact Lisa Morris - address above.

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## Message from the Independent Chair

The business year 2020-21 has proven to be a challenging one for the Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership. In particular, the challenge of Covid-19 has tested the strength of Partnership bonds in what was only the second year of their reformulation.

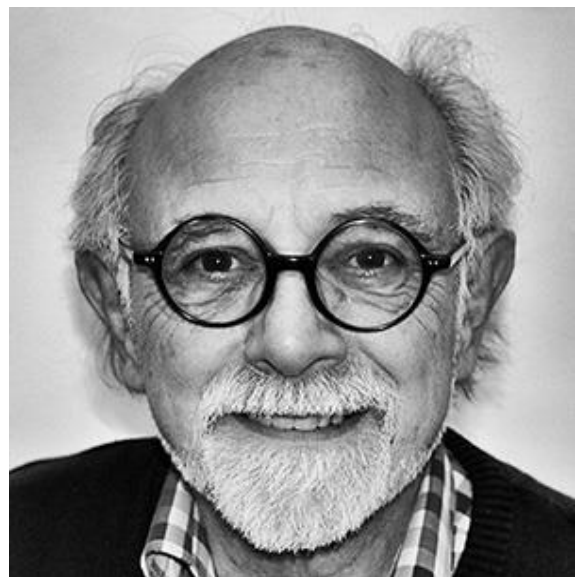
The impact of Covid on children and families in Oldham has been disproportionate due to the levels of poverty and inequality that affect the borough.

The Partnership has responded well to the challenge of the pandemic by:

- Identifying and responding to new levels of safeguarding demand – particularly with respect to harm to infants, increases in levels of domestic abuse affecting children and meeting children’s mental health and well-being needs.
- Enhancing the arrangements to enable reflection and learning of good safeguarding practice on a co-ordinated cross-agency basis
- Examining current safeguarding processes and asking how they can better meet the needs of children and young people – the arena of transitioning from children’s services to adult services being a particular point of focus in this
- Engaging with children and young people so to ensure that the Partnership identifies and responds to their priorities and concerns.

The legacy of the pandemic is one which has enabled the Partners to re-examine established practice and adapt and refine ways of working which better meet the needs of children and young people of Oldham. The implementation of this learning will be a major theme for the forthcoming year.

The pandemic also underlines the fact that if we are to have an enduring impact on safeguarding need in Oldham, we must systematically address the levels of inequality and poverty that affect children and young people. The Safeguarding Partnership must have a key role in the implementation of the emergent blueprint for change for children and families which seeks to address these issues.



Dr Henri Giller  
Independent Chair

## Reflections from our Statutory Partners

The impact of the Covid Pandemic in Oldham has been intense, with children missing education, and the increased demand placed on safeguarding services across the borough. The Partnership has had to adapt quickly and accordingly, and I am proud of our response. We swiftly identified emerging areas of safeguarding concern related to the pandemic, including injuries to under two-year-olds, increases in high-risk domestic abuse and the damaging effect of the mental health of our children and young people, and introduced a strong multi-agency plan and response to each. Despite these challenges we have continued forward with our strategic priorities, launching the new complex safeguarding hub, restructuring the Partnership to ensure maximum effectiveness, and introducing a new model of quality assurance in the form of a learning hub. We are well aware of the continued challenges to safeguarding children in Oldham, particularly in the context of such high levels of poverty and deprivation. In this adversity the Safeguarding Partnership is as important as ever, if not more so, and I look forward to further developing our Multi Agency Safeguarding response with you over the coming years.

**Gerard Jones - Managing Director, Children's Services**

The challenges of the last 12 months are well documented, and we have all lived through the experience of the pandemic in so many ways. I am extremely proud of how the safeguarding partnership has remained strong throughout these difficult months and faced head on the challenges of safeguarding our vulnerable children and young people, supporting families, and focusing on continuous improvement. The activity and outcomes documented in this report are testament to the unwavering focus of the teams across the partnership and to do this against the backdrop of a global pandemic and a fatigued workforce is remarkable. The pressures facing the NHS are immense and it is vital that as services go through the current restoration phase alongside a national restructure that safeguarding practice remains front and centre with everything that we do. This report highlights some of the good practice that we have seen over the last 12 months however the focus on current challenges remains clear as we see the growing complexity of transitions, complex and contextual safeguarding and children and adolescent mental health. The partnership arrangements continue to develop, and the commitment is evident across all our statutory and key partner agencies to meet these challenges and improve outcomes for our children and young people. **Claire Smith – Director of Nursing and Quality, Oldham CCG**

As we have moved out of the lockdown restrictions with a return to more normal levels of social interaction, education, and work, we have seen a significant increase in high-risk Domestic Abuse and also more incidents relating to concern for welfare, both for children and adults. I have been impressed at how the Safeguarding Partnership has picked up on these trends, promptly responding to understand and instigate improvements to better support victims and vulnerable people. The Safeguarding Partnership adapted its own practices to reduce risks during covid, but we are pleased to have growing face to face participation, on-line is often no substitute when developing strategies and dealing with complex issues. There is a greater sense of working together at all levels of safeguarding delivery, which is good for the people who need our help and particularly so for those with circumstances that do not fit defined criteria, for example children transitioning to adults. In relation to the Independent Chair's observations relating to measurement of outcomes of multi-agency practice, great progress has been made which we look forward to building upon, particularly in our plans to develop the Complex Safeguarding offering. Setting effective objectives that are measurable and deliver assurance is essential to our being as a tripartite partnership group. **Chief Superintendent Rachael Harrison, Oldham Police**

# Introduction

## Safeguarding Partnership

The Oldham Strategic Safeguarding Partnership has been developed by Oldham Council, Greater Manchester Police, and the Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group to ensure that all children and young people in the area get the safeguarding and protection they need in order to help them to thrive.

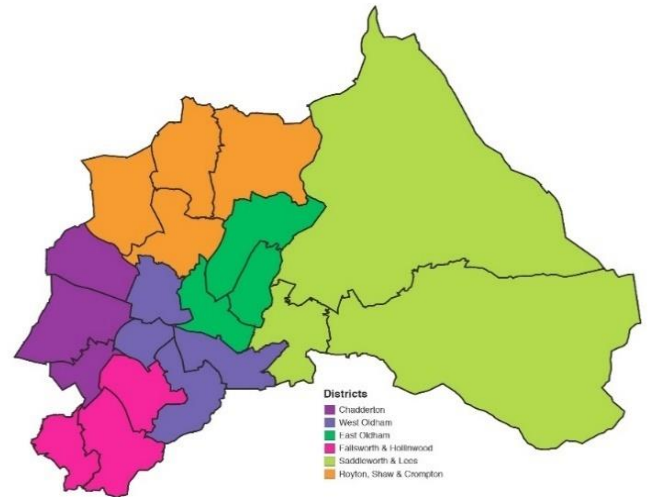
The Partnership provides leadership and accountability for the promotion of children and young peoples' well-being and the prevention and protection from harm.

Partners work together to promote a child-centred approach to safeguarding, listening to children, empowering families and, where needed, providing services that are professional, evidenced-based, and effective. The partners will continuously strive to improve and challenge each other to learn the lessons from daily practice.

Safeguarding is everyone's business, and the Oldham Safeguarding Partnership will provide lead responsibility in demonstrating what this means for all people and professionals living and working in the local community.

### Our strategic aims include:

- Excellent practice is the norm across all practitioners in Oldham
- Partner agencies hold one another to account effectively
- There is early identification of new safeguarding issues
- Learning is promoted and embedded
- Information is shared effectively
- The public feel confident that children are protected



Oldham has a population of 224,900 people making it the 6<sup>th</sup> largest borough in Greater Manchester.

There is a high proportion of Oldham residents under the age of 16 years (22.5%) compared with 15.7% over the age of 65 years.

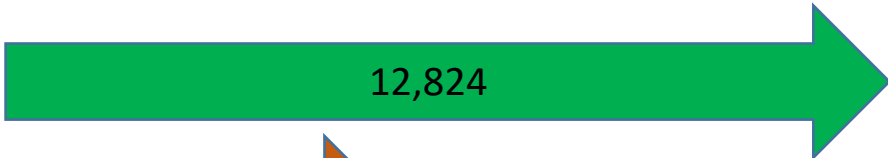
Oldham has a diverse population with 22.5% of residents and 46% of school pupils from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.

38% of children in Oldham are living in poverty – this is the highest figure in the UK

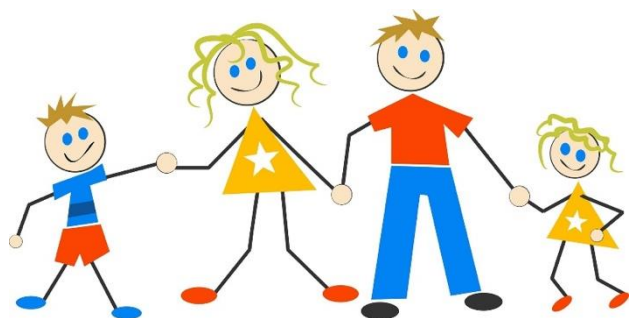
Oldham is ranked 19<sup>th</sup> worst out of 317 local authority areas on the indices of deprivation. Five areas within Oldham are ranked amongst the top 1% of the nation's most deprived areas.

# Profile of Safeguarding in Oldham

Contacts to MASH



Referrals to Targeted Early Help or Children's Social Care



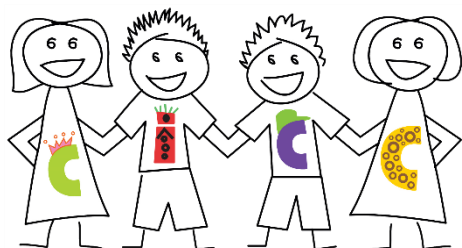
1344 S47 enquiries initiated

Of those referred:

696 were under the age of 2 years

2043 were between 3 years and 11 years

1484 were between 12 years and 19 years



448 children on child protection plans as of March 2021

532 children looked after as of March 2021



1258 incidents of children missing from home or care

227 children electively home educated



# Safeguarding Priorities for 2020-2021

## Recap on the Partnership Development day – March 2020

### Governance and structure

A key focus of the Partnership development day in March 2020 was an evaluation of the new arrangements thus far. The feedback from members of the Partnership suggested that the new arrangements had made statutory partners more visible, and communication was strong. However, there was still a feeling that our current model wasn't ambitious enough to support effective learning and that the high number of subgroups was a key factor in this.

With the support of Jane Shuttleworth and the learning from Bexley the Partnership agreed a move towards a "learning hub model" as a mechanism to improve and change partnership practice. The Partnership committed to introducing a new structure with a learning hub at its centre by September 2020, followed by six months of evaluation.

### Complex Safeguarding

Partners also considered Oldham's approach to complex safeguarding and reflected on the feedback and learning that had arisen from a complex safeguarding operational development day in February 2020 and the recent Greater Manchester Complex Safeguarding peer review.

Five key areas of focus were identified:

**Culture:** considering attitudes, language, understanding of exploitation, a shared value base of what we are trying to achieve

**Pathways** - identification and pathway to intervention, advice, and guidance versus intervention, having clarity of the offer

**Practice Model** – identifying the 'best' person (as per Relational Model), right service at the right time and the right person, clarity around roles of partners

**Skills and Training** – through all service areas, valuable induction for all services/new starters

**Mapping of Services** – understanding what else is out there (e.g., Sports Development,

### Covid 19 Pandemic

In response to the global Covid-19 pandemic the Safeguarding Partnership quickly established weekly assurance meetings with the three statutory safeguarding partners to ensure that children remained visible and that safeguarding concerns continue to be responded to quickly and

Mentoring Scheme), consider how we measure impact, building and strengthening of professional relationships

### Learning from Case Reviews

During the period 2019-20 the Partnership had concluded four serious case reviews, two multi-agency concise reviews and two rapid reviews. An overview of themes arising from these reviews highlighted recurrent learning points in relation to the following areas of practice:

- Partnership response to domestic abuse and neglect
- Professional challenge and escalation
- Child's lived experience
- Transitions
- Early identification of risk, particularly risks relating to exploitation
- Understanding and responding to children's mental health and emotional wellbeing.

### Feedback from children and young people

Representatives from Oldham Youth Voice family were part of the Partnership development day and reflected positively on the progress made over the previous 12 months. They set the Partnership a new challenge for the coming year which focused on embedding children and young people's involvement across all our work.

### Priorities for 2020-2021

Following on from the development the Safeguarding Partnership agreed key priority areas of focus for 2020-2021 period:

- Strengthening the governance arrangements for the Partnership
- Complex and Contextual Safeguarding
- Transitional Safeguarding
- Neglect
- Communications

effectively. This was supported by a twice weekly Partnership Management Team meeting involving senior leaders from across the Partnership to identify and review operational safeguarding concerns and trends arising as a result of the pandemic.



**Vulnerable 0–2-year-olds:** a sudden increase in the number of serious injuries to children under two years prompted a swift partnership response. Audits of the cases indicated that many of the injuries were occurring as a result of lack of supervision in the home. Recognising that families were experiencing increased pressure during the periods of lockdown with children not in school and the inability to access usual support networks, the Partnership focused on working together to support families by providing funded places for vulnerable 1–2-year-olds in an education setting, delivering key messages to families about accident prevention and supporting increased professional curiosity about family living situations and changes that may increase risk.

**Domestic Abuse:** Whilst data suggested that the number of domestic abuse incidents had remained consistent during lock down periods the Partnership were very concerned about a sizeable increase in the number of high-risk domestic abuse cases being identified. This suggested that the levels of abuse and coercion were escalating much quicker. In order to support victims and families, additional specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) capacity was agreed, and the Domestic Abuse Partnership introduced a series of live, online question and answer sessions with the aim of helping to raise awareness, inform people of the support that is available and answer their questions.

**Children's Mental health:** Oldham CAMHS saw a large reduction in referrals in Q1 and Q2 as we entered the first COVID-19 lockdown. Despite the reduction in routine referrals there was an increase in crisis referrals. Over Q3 and Q4 the number of referrals increased by 78.6%.

During the pandemic CAMHS continued to see children face to face including those who were testing positive if risk suggested it was needed.

The service also developed an online medium to review people as well as run groups and individual therapy. We supported Oldham's mental health ward with some of our nurses being redeployed to work on our wards and the service's emotional wellbeing practitioner offered extra advice and consultation support to schools.

The all-age liaison team in A&E assessed children on the paediatric ward out of hours to try and keep beds free and CAMHS assessed on the ward during work hours and every case was risk assessed on a regular basis to make sure the right level of support was offered especially to vulnerable children.

The increasing concerns regarding children's mental health has prompted a strategic partnership review.

### Impact on progress

Unfortunately, some of the Partnership activity has been stalled either as direct or indirect result of the Pandemic.

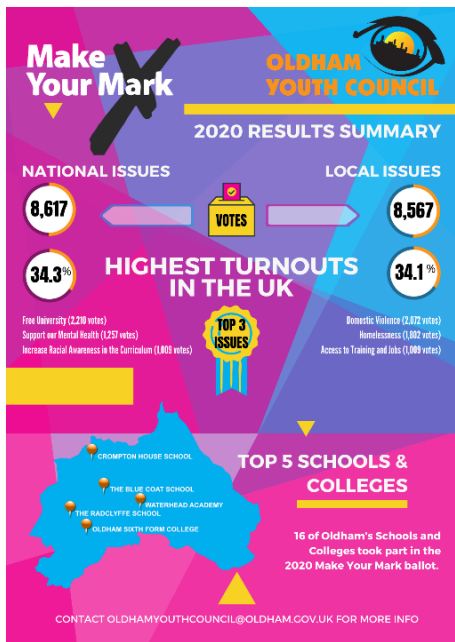
Our Young Person's Safeguarding Forum has been unable to launch in the way that we intended however some consultation work has taken place via online means and we're working closely with Oldham Youth Voice Family to engage more young people in Safeguarding issues.

The commissioning of cultural competency training was halted as the provider was keen for the training to take place face to face. In the interim we shared written briefings with professionals on cultural competency and hope to pick this up as a priority as soon as face to face training resumes.

# Voice of children and young people

## Make your Mark 2020

Make your mark is the largest annual youth consultation. In 2020 over 8,600 young people from Oldham took part in the consultation which was the highest turn out of young people in the UK.



The national priorities that young people identified were:

- Free university
- Support with mental health
- Increase racial awareness in the curriculum

Locally the following additional priorities were also identified:

- Domestic abuse
- Homelessness
- Access to training and jobs

The findings from the consultation were presented to the Safeguarding Partnership by the Chair of the Youth Council in January 2021.

## Work of the Youth Council in 2020/21

Members of the Youth Council are working with members of the partnership around tackling domestic violence with consultation work, development of resources and mapping what

support currently exists for children and young people.

Young people are currently planning on how they can further build on the work around mental health and support the work already happening in Oldham to provide support for young people.

The service wants to build on engagement work they are doing ensuring a wider range of children and young people are involved and that they capture the voices, views, and ideas of a diverse range of children and young people.

Covid recovery – the youth council are working with professionals and services to ensure young people are helping to shape how we recover from the Covid pandemic.

Young people want to continue to work with the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership to further embed youth voice and involvement in the work you do.



# Activity and Impact

## Restructure of the Partnership

In response to the feedback from partners the structure of the Partnership was reviewed, and a number of subgroups were disbanded. The child safeguarding practice review, learning and improvement and training groups were merged to form the new safeguarding review and learning hub. Thematic subgroups were replaced with time focused task and finish groups where appropriate.

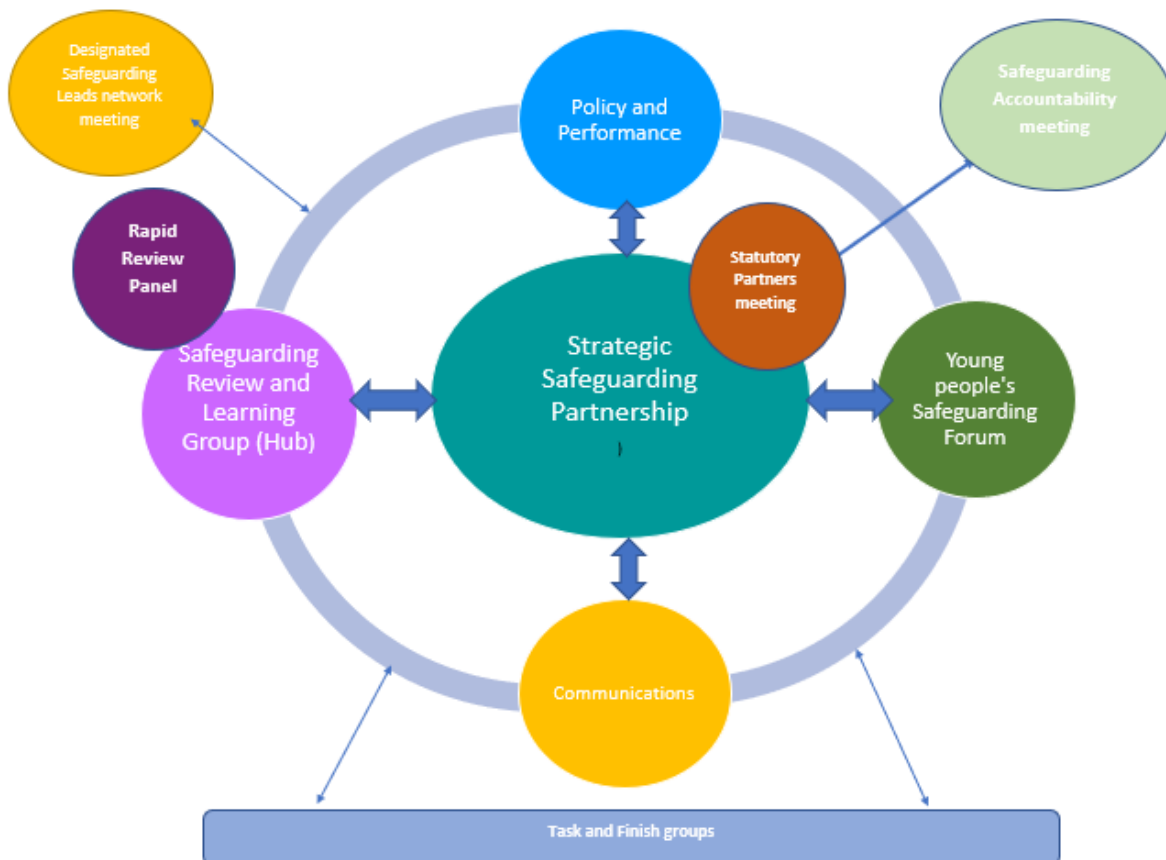
The young people’s safeguarding forum is being formalised and is led by the Youth Council and a named link Partnership representative.

A new communication group has been introduced, this is a joint subgroup with the Safeguarding Adult Board with the aim of aligning and joining branding and messages across partners. The three designated statutory partners hold a separate monthly meeting with the Independent Chair to

ensure their duties are being met although the Strategic Partnership has retained overall to ensure all relevant agencies are involved in decision making and accountability for safeguarding in Oldham.

In order to ensure clear links to schools and colleges the named education representatives on the Partnership will attend the designated safeguarding leads network on a termly basis.

For the purposes of assurance and scrutiny a safeguarding accountability meeting has been introduced between the designated statutory safeguarding leads, independent chair and the Chief Executive, Accountable Officer, Assistant Chief Constable, Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Children



## Complex Safeguarding Hub

Oldham's Complex Safeguarding Hub went live on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. The Complex Safeguarding Hub has functions for Phoenix (Child Sexual Exploitation), Child Criminal Exploitation, Organised Crime and Gangs, Modern Slavery and Trafficking within one service. The Hub combines the three key partners for safeguarding as an integrated service for response, consultation, and intervention. There is also a Clinical Psychologist linked to the Hub to provide consultation and support.

The Oldham Complex Safeguarding Hub will work with any child up to the age of 18 years (or up to the age of 25 years for any young adult currently open to the After Care Service for Oldham) who are open for assessment, intervention or planning to Children's Social Care, where there is an identified high risk of, or current experience of exploitation.

The Hub proposes a Phase 2 development by summer 2021 which incorporates advice and guidance in relation to professionals working with young people and adults where there is increasing concern regarding exploitation.

## Youth Now

Youth Now, delivered by Positive Steps, in partnership with Oldham Council, The University of Bedfordshire and Greater Manchester Police is aimed at young people and families identified as at risk of involvement in youth violence.

This project explores the use of family, peer, school, and community interventions as part of Oldham's response to serious youth violence. Through embedded research, the University of Bedfordshire team works alongside practitioners in Oldham to understand how their interventions engage with contextual dynamics of harm, capture, and disseminate this learning, and support the service to identify its impact on the lives of young people and the contexts in which they spend their time.

After the first eighteen months of the project there has been a significant amount of progress made against the outcome measures, in particularly when focusing on community interventions, which are already yielding positive results linked to

positive attachment to neighbourhoods. Key to this has been the introduction of the Friday Night Youth Provision in Failsworth. In addition to constructive pursuits young people and their families are supported by the Youth Now Team with targeted support depending upon need. A significant amount of time is spent ensuring young people are attending and engaging in school.

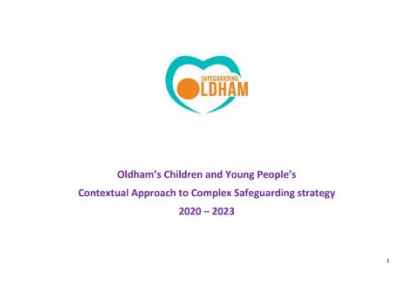
The programme closed in March 2021, although work is continuing through Positive Steps within the pilot site areas. Specific resources will be available for the Partnership to use to improve responses to Contextual and Complex Safeguarding.

## Oldham's Contextual Approach to Complex Safeguarding Strategy

In March 2021 the Partnership launched its Contextual Approach to Complex Safeguarding strategy 2021-2023. Within the strategy the Partnership recognises the differences in context and influence that children and young people face when vulnerable to exploitation and as such is keen to introduce a Contextual Safeguarding Approach across the Partnership.

### Priorities:

- Raise awareness, confidence, and skills to ensure the earliest identification of complex safeguarding, by professionals, carers, and the wider community
- To ensure victims and their families receive good quality support
- Hold perpetrators to account through improved disruption and prosecution and build our knowledge by understanding from perpetrators how they exploit children and adults at risk.



## Refreshed Continuum of Need

The Safeguarding Partnership recognises that the earliest possible help and support is likely to engage families to enable change. However, we are also clear regarding our collaborative responsibility to highlight increasing risk or significant unmet need for targeted support or intervention where earliest possible help has not achieved change. In order to assist professionals in making decisions about appropriate support for children, young people, and their families the Continuum of Need was reviewed, refreshed, and relaunched in January 2021.

A series of briefing sessions with professionals were held throughout February and March 2021.

**91%** of respondents told us that the refreshed continuum of need has assisted them in making decisions about the most appropriate support for children, young people, and families.

**91%** of respondents told us that the refreshed continuum of need had supported them to evidence the level of need when making a referral to services.

One respondent felt that *“whilst they were able to identify need using the continuum of need, the relevant support services were not always available. This has been compounded by current levels of demand leaving services feeling overwhelmed.”*

## A strategy for prevention and reduction of neglect in Oldham 2021-2023

We want Oldham to be a borough where the conditions are right for children to be able to

thrive. Experiencing neglect can significantly compromise a child’s development, therefore, early identification and timely intervention are extremely important to ensure the safety, wellbeing and development of children and young people. As well as identifying neglect effectively and providing the right support to tackle it, we need to address contributory factors such as parental substance misuse, and domestic abuse, as well as

poverty. This strategy sits in the wider context of work across Oldham to tackle the wider determinants of neglect.

### Our ambition:

- **Prevention** of the causes that lead to child neglect rather than only responding to the symptoms by understanding the scale of neglect in Oldham and how it’s affecting our families.
- **Protection** by ensuring a strong Partnership response with a common understanding of the spectrum of neglect and a recognition of the need to work with families at the earliest opportunity to prevent harm.
- **Provision** of strengths-based support for families from voluntary and statutory organisations in Oldham
- **Participation** by providing opportunities for children, young people, and families to share their experiences in order to shape and develop our multi - agency response to neglect.

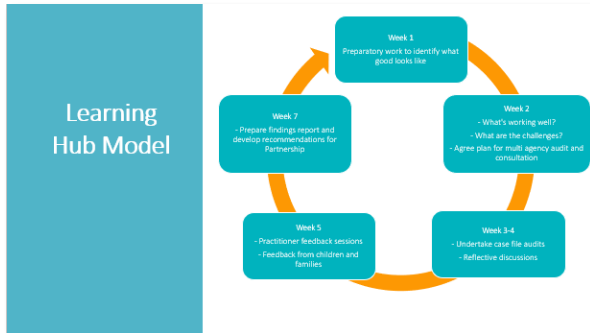




# Learning activity

## Learning Hub

The learning hub is a “back to practice” approach which creates a space for professionals from different agencies to have different types of conversations about improving and changing partnership practice.



The model works on cyclic approach to engaging partners at both a strategic and operational level in developing effective multi-agency collaboration. Leading with the establishment of “what good looks like” the model promotes a strength-based approach to improving practice.

Our first learning hub focused on Initial Child Protection Conferences.

**Participant packs:** Based on statutory guidance, policy, and procedure, and learning from case reviews and inspections Oldham Learning Hub identified “what good looks like” based on the following key points that set out what a good initial child protection conference looks like against the following areas:

- Preparation
- Lived experience/engagement
- Transparency
- Planning and Impact
- Accountability
- Timeliness

**Practitioner event:** held on 2 December 2020 with a range of multi-agency professionals. Ahead of the event professionals were provided with two documents: What good looks like and Oldham picture. Using the information contained within the document alongside their professional knowledge and experience professionals were asked to

consider what’s working well, what are we worried about and what action do we need to take to get to good.

**Outcome:** Multi-Agency sessions were delivered across the Partnership to support professionals understanding of thresholds, thus ensuring that the right cases are brought to child protection conference.

A set of multi-agency practice standards have been developed in relation to Initial Child Protection Conferences and have supported the development of wider practice standards for other multi-agency safeguarding activity.

A toolkit has been developed to support professionals to reflect the child’s lived experience within reports and assessments.

Easy read tools are being developed to support parents and young people’s understanding of the child protection process.

Contextual Safeguarding plans are being explored for older children where risks relate to exploitation.

## Independent Review of non-recent CSE

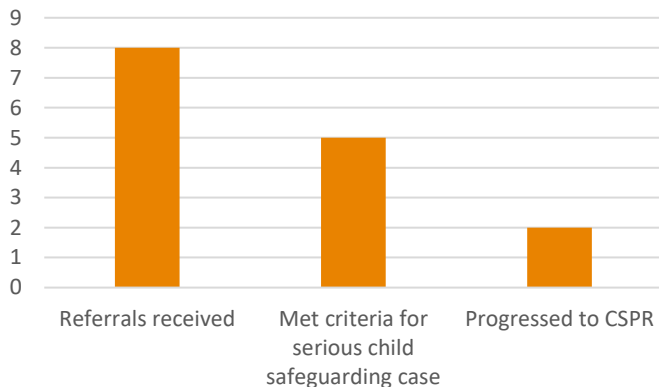
Oldham Safeguarding Partnership, together with the Leader of the Council jointly requested that a review into safeguarding practices in the borough of Oldham be combined into the ongoing independent review work commissioned by the Mayor’s office. The remit of this aspect of the review focuses on historical allegations relating to child sexual exploitation and consider whether the council, with its partner agencies provided an appropriate response to protect children vulnerable to or known to be victims of child sexual exploitation. The outcome of the review is due to be published later in 2021.



## Case Reviews

The Safeguarding Partnership has a statutory duty to review serious child safeguarding cases with the aim of identifying learning, improvements in practice and protecting children from harm.

A serious child safeguarding case is one in which, “abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected, **and** the child has died or been seriously harmed.” (WT 2018)



During the 2020-21 period the Partnership received eight referrals of cases for consideration by the Child Safeguarding Review Panel. Of these, five met the criteria for serious child safeguarding case and two progressed to a further Child Safeguarding Practice Review.

Of the cases that didn't progress to a Child Safeguarding Review the learning identified in the Rapid Review was shared across the Partnership to support practice development.

In three of the cases where the criteria for serious child safeguarding case had not been met the Partnership agreed that multi-agency learning could be obtained from reviewing these cases and thus local learning activity was commenced.

Learning themes identified included:

- Professional curiosity and challenge
- Cultural competency and use of interpreters
- Identifying and assessing neglect
- Stronger pathways and services for transitions
- Importance of holistic chronologies

### RR Child E 2020 – his story

RR Child E 2020 was a young baby who sadly died, unexpectedly in 2020.

His family were known to services following concerns around the family's living environment, appropriate supervision, home safety and possible neglect.

The family were not of British heritage and English was not their first language.

Baby was described by professionals as happy and clean with no signs of neglect.

During professional visits to the home, concerns were highlighted regarding baby's sleeping arrangements which were observed to be unsafe. It is unclear how much parents understood the safe sleep messages from health professionals despite the use of interpreters.

The family's living arrangements were sparse and there was cockroach infestation which due to the restrictions of Covid 19 was not managed by the landlord in a timely way. Agency professionals differed in their assessment of the home conditions with some stating that they were neglectful whilst others deemed them basic but suitable.

The siblings within the family were not accessing education and parents were being supported by agencies with the enrolment process.

The children were on a child protection plan for neglect at the time of baby's death, but professionals noted that parents were engaging well and working together with agencies to make the necessary changes.

# Training and Communication

## Baby Week

As a result of the learning gained from RR Child E 2020 alongside the learning from the national review of sudden and unexpected deaths in infancy, the Partnership delivered a themed week of training to professionals in October 2020.

Four sessions took place over the course of the week focusing on:

- Learning from RR Child E 2020 and messages regarding safe sleep
- Messages from ICON – abusive head trauma
- Emotional wellbeing of babies
- Learning from national review of sudden and unexpected deaths in infancy

In total 78 professionals attended the sessions.

**“100% of participants learned something and would recommend the sessions to colleagues”**

## Key areas of learning that professionals fed back on were:

- Understanding the importance of multi-agency communication
- Consistent delivery of safe sleep advice
- How to use ICON tools with families
- Understanding how babies communicate and the impacts of poor attachment
- Communicating with parents in a meaningful way

## Online training and webinars

As a result of the Pandemic the Partnership's usual comprehensive calendar of training was paused. Very quickly the Partnership's training consultant sought to adapt key training sessions to be delivered online via webinar sessions.

Throughout 2020-21 the Partnership has delivered:

**58 training opportunities to 1,114 participants**

## MARAC training evaluation

- 40 evaluations were received out of 64 attendees.
- Of those 51% had worked with a client experiencing domestic abuse since the training.
- Out of these, 95% had completed a DASH risk assessment with the client. Of which 92% resulted in a referral to MARAC.

*“It was really beneficial to have the line of questioning role played and was a brilliant example of how the questionnaire process plays out, found this very informative.”*

## Information Highway Fridays

Building on good practice from other areas, in January 2021 the Partnership introduced regular lunchtime briefing sessions.

Delivered on a Friday by Partnership professionals the “Information Highway Friday” sessions provide an opportunity for key messages and learning on a range of safeguarding topics to be delivered to a large group of professionals.

To date topics have included:

- Learning from case reviews
- Launch of the neglect strategy
- Refreshed continuum of need
- Learning from adult reviews

## Oldham Safeguarding bulletin

In September 2020 the Partnership, together with the Safeguarding Adult’s Board launched a children’s and adults Safeguarding Bulletin to keep practitioners and managers up to date with resources and training opportunities.

The bulletin goes out to over 260 multi-agency professionals on a fortnightly basis.

## Oldham Safeguarding Twitter

In April 2020 we launched our joint Twitter account with Safeguarding Adult Board.

To date we have 391 followers and regularly tweet information about our activities, key messages, and local and national campaigns.

# Our plan for 2021-2022



## Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership Plan on a Page: Annual Business Plan April 2021 to March 2022

Our Vision is for everyone to work together to ensure that all children and young people are safe and feel safe within their homes, schools and communities.

Domestic Abuse	Complex and Contextual Safeguarding	Transitions	Children's Mental Health and the impact of trauma
<p><b>Strategic Objectives</b></p> <p>A clear and robust offer of support will be available in the local area for all victims and children who are experiencing or at risk of domestic abuse</p> <p>A confident and competent workforce who are able to recognise and respond to domestic abuse.</p>	<p><b>Strategic Objectives</b></p> <p>Children and young people at risk of or experiencing all forms of exploitation will receive the right support at the right time in order to keep them safe.</p> <p>A confident and competent workforce who are able to recognise and respond to exploitation at the earliest opportunity.</p>	<p><b>Strategic Objective</b></p> <p>Young people will have clear and robust and timely transition plans across all areas of safeguarding need to ensure appropriate support as they move into adulthood.</p> <p>Specific pathways for transitions in relation to complex safeguarding and mental health.</p>	<p><b>Strategic Objectives</b></p> <p>Children and young people living with mental ill health and/or the impact of trauma are able to access the right level of support at the right time.</p> <p>A confident and competent workforce who are able to work with children and families in a trauma informed way.</p>
<p><b>Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in partnership with the Domestic Abuse Partnership and the Safeguarding Adults Board to review and implement the recommendations of the <a href="#">Safe Lives review</a>.</li> <li>• Evaluate workforce development against the domestic abuse training framework</li> </ul>	<p><b>Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define and shape our local response to gangs, knife crime and criminal exploitation.</li> <li>• Map and clearly define the pathways for early possible support and intervention.</li> <li>• Develop specific multi-agency training in relation to criminal exploitation, gang and knife crime.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a multi-agency Transitions strategy across the Partnership.</li> <li>• Develop specific transitions pathways for complex safeguarding and children’s mental health.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold a multi-agency summit to identify good practice and areas for improvement in relation to the partnership response to children’s mental health.</li> <li>• Develop clear lines of governance and accountability for children’s mental health</li> <li>• Map the trauma training offer across the Partnership.</li> </ul>

Website: [www.oldhamsafeguarding.org](http://www.oldhamsafeguarding.org)  
Email: [OSCP.Group@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:OSCP.Group@oldham.gov.uk)

# An assessment from the Independent Chair

The new safeguarding arrangements, introduced by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, require that they include provision for the scrutiny by an independent person of the effectiveness of the arrangements. This section of the report provides the scrutiny of the Independent Chair of the Oldham Partnership of the second working year of the new partnership arrangements. The criteria for scrutiny are those proposed by Sir Alan Wood in his report proposing new safeguarding arrangements (para. 69 Wood report: review of the role and functions of local safeguarding children boards (2016)). These criteria are said to reflect the key strategic issues that need to authorise and underpin effective multi-agency practice.

## **Determining the physical area of operation covered by the multi-agency arrangements**

This issue remained unaltered during the period under review. The issue may need to be revisited during 2022 with the reconfiguration of the NHS into integrated care systems. In particular, the remit and reach of services that will service the Greater Manchester area may require the Oldham Partnership to establish new working arrangements with the newly configured commissioning authority.

**Judgement: Green**

## **The authorising vision for multi-agency arrangements, the partnership commitment**

This issue was re-examined at the partnership development day in March 2020. It was agreed that the vision should be refocussed into one which centred on the partnership being more of a learning hub and from that more effectively implementing change as required from the learning. The period 2020-21 was to be used to test the effectiveness of the learning hub model.

**Judgement: Green**

## **The resource framework, e.g., the cost of the multi-agency strategic decision-making body, the cost of agreed initiatives, e.g., joint training, agreed local research, innovation in service design**

The Covid pandemic effectively constrained any further consideration of reframing the resource framework in the period under review. Initiatives which commenced in 2019-20 – MASH, enhanced team around the school, improved early help offer, enhancing workforce skills, developing a complex safeguarding team – were all consolidated during 2020-21 and became established elements of the Oldham safeguarding architecture.

It remains to be seen to what extent the learning hub model facilitates a “framework approach” to resourcing across the Partnership and whether this is focussed principally on innovation re core funding.

**Judgement: Amber**

## **The method to assess outcomes of multi-agency practice, including how intervention happens if performance falters, and how “independent” external assurance/scrutiny will be utilised.**

The assessment of outcomes, particularly in relation to the strategic priorities of the Partnership, has been a real strength of activity in the period under review, despite the impact of Covid. Multiagency audits have been undertaken with respect to neglect of children under two years of age, domestic violence and children’s mental health and have demonstrated the need to enhance policy and practice in these areas. Oldham’s complex safeguarding team has fully participated in the GM complex safeguarding initiative, including participation in the GM peer review process on the way in which the team has been deployed and has engaged with those with safeguarding risk.

The GM safeguarding alliance did not become operational in the period under review. Oldham will engage with the alliance’s proposed programme of



shared learning when it commences in autumn 2021. Meanwhile Oldham has been in discussion with Tameside on a peer review initiative which should enhance the current scrutiny arrangements in relation to effective practice.

Throughout the period of the Covid pandemic the statutory partners and the independent chair have been meeting regularly (initially weekly, latterly monthly) to monitor the impact of the pandemic on safeguarding demand and agency response to it. This has provided a significant opportunity for the partners to share intelligence and perspectives on the impact of the pandemic, develop a risk register to document the safeguarding risks created by the pandemic and the actions taken to mitigate them and evaluate the effectiveness of modified safeguarding work practices and how these might be built into any new normal ways of working.

External review of the working of the Partnership arrangements continues to be led by the independent Chair. This exercise in the evaluation of the Wood strategic criteria is a further iteration of that function.

**Judgement: Green**

### **The strategy for information and data sharing, including to allow for identification of vulnerable children in need of early help.**

A protocol for information sharing between the statutory partners and between the partnership and key stakeholder organisations was operationalised during this period. This has proven robust and effective and has enabled information to be shared both in the arena of safeguarding need and for the purposes of early help.

The request from Government to report on initiatives in the Borough to combat youth violence demonstrated the need for Partners to share intelligence more readily on critical need issues and on strategies being developed to impact on concerns. Currently there is a resurgence of interest in intelligence-led strategy development and a focus on what effective intervention looks like.

**Judgement: Amber**

### **High level oversight of workforce planning, e.g., gaps in skilled areas.**

Work force planning continues to be primarily undertaken on a partner-specific basis, with limited consideration of the potential for cross-partner work force development. Active strategies to enhance the quality and quantity of the workforce were significantly interrupted by the Covid pandemic, with the primary emphasis on supporting the workforce, thereby enabling staff to continue to provide support and services for those with significant safeguarding risk. The demands created by Covid undoubtedly affected the capacity of the workforce to engage with the strategic agenda of the Partnership, their priority understandably being to discharge the operational imperative of safeguarding.

Multi-agency training initiatives continued to be provided during this period, with virtual learning being the predominant medium. Training initiatives continued to be focussed on Partnership priorities, with the experience of the past 12 months being assimilated into the Partnership's forward planning for training and workforce development.

**Judgement: Amber**

### **A multi-agency communication strategy on protecting children**

As with workforce planning, communicating issues relating to safeguarding has hitherto been addressed on a partner-specific basis. The children's partnership in this period commenced a more strategic approach to communicating key safeguarding messages through the Information Highway Friday initiative and the fortnightly safeguarding bulletin (which simultaneously addresses adult safeguarding issues). Both of these initiatives have secured greater awareness of safeguarding issues and have facilitated communication of important safeguarding messages locally.

**Judgement: Green**

## **Risk strategy, identifying and adapting to challenges including new events, and establishing a core intelligence capacity.**

The Covid pandemic rapidly accelerated the Partnership's understanding and appreciation of risk identification and risk management and the sharing of information and intelligence on these issues. Identification of patterns of safeguarding risk, both on an individual and areal basis, were well documented by the local statutory partners throughout the period and the knowledge and experience gained stored for the development of the next iteration of the local (three year) safeguarding strategy. Strategic risk identification, management and amelioration will be focussed on both priority risk groups and risk settings such as key localities and neighbourhoods, school clusters and estates. Sharing information across the Partnership to facilitate an intelligence-led approach to safeguarding is intended to become a hallmark of the Oldham approach. Key in this will be effective working between the wide variety of Partnerships that operate across the Borough (e.g., Health and Wellbeing, Community Safety etc). Continued efforts will be made to ensure that shared priorities are effectively delivered on and demonstrated to be effective.

**Judgement: Amber**

## **The model of local inquiry into incidents**

The rapid review arrangements have quickly become established as an effective mechanism for responding to serious child safeguarding incidents. A variety of methods for undertaking review and reflection continue to be trialled and tested and active communication with the National Panel has continued to produce positive outcomes from local decisions and support for local initiatives. The development of local arrangements to date has led to a streamlining of the review process and the avoidance of unnecessary duplication. Key initiatives have been undertaken with respect to the safeguarding needs of those children under two years of age and with respect to youth violence.

The Partnership continues to be challenged to ensure that arrangements are in place to deliver effective practice change where required from practice reviews. This remains a priority for the partners, and one that continues to require audit and evaluation.

**Judgement: Green**