

**OLDHAM
SAFEGUARDING
CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP
ANNUAL REPORT**



1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022



This report is a public document.

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Approved by Oldham Safeguarding Children Partners on

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Message from the Independent Chair

The business year 2021-22 continued to be a challenging one for the Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership in the light of the continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic. As with the previous year 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, mindful of its need to develop more responsive strategies for safeguarding children and young people in the borough, engaged in:

Improving the offer to children and families facing domestic abuse

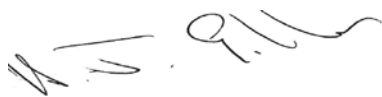
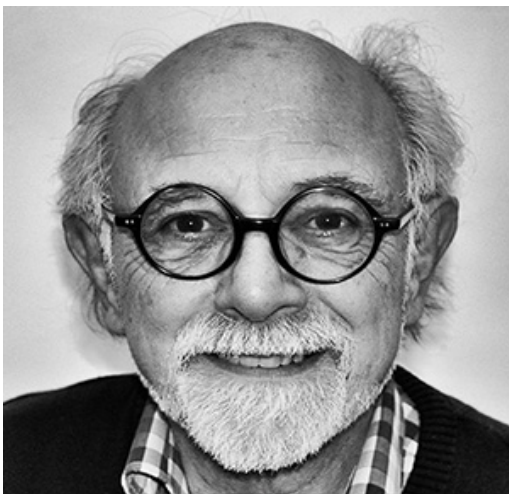
Prioritising the identification and response to abuse caused by parental neglect

Improving agency responses to complex and contextual safeguarding, including criminal and sexual exploitation

Seeking the views of young people on access to and the effectiveness of current mental health services and how they might be improved

The Partnership is committed to change and improvement in safeguarding in the light of the lessons of the past two years.

Aside from the legacy of the pandemic, the Partnership also commissioned in this period an independent review into historic allegations of sexual abuse in the borough and learning from this will be picked up once the report has been produced in the forthcoming year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Giller'.

Dr Henri Giller, Independent Chair of the Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership

Reflections from our Statutory Partners

The year 2021/22 saw us through a period when the pandemic hit our community in Oldham hardest through to the transition back to something approximating 'normality' as children returned to school and many restrictions on movement and contact came to an end. It would be incredibly hard to really explain the impact of the pandemic to anyone who didn't live and work through this time. Health provision, education and care and support to families was disrupted in so many ways. We do not know the long-term impact of the experience on all of us but particularly upon the education, welfare and development of children. What we do know is that the immediate legacy of the COVID Pandemic was a significant increase in the need for support for vulnerable children, particularly those subject to safeguarding concerns. I am very proud at how the Safeguarding Partners worked together through this challenging year. I am particularly proud of the outcome of our OFSTED Focus Visit which recognised that as a partnership not only had we kept children safe, and families supported through the height of the pandemic but had also improved the effectiveness of our work to safeguard children from harm. It is in the darkest nights that the brightest lights shine. Thank you, colleagues.

Gerard Jones, Managing Director, Children's Services



During 2021-2022 the Covid-19 pandemic has continued to affect business as usual. Despite this the Safeguarding Children Partnership have continued to deliver statutory duties and have worked tirelessly to ensure that the most vulnerable young people in our community are protected, safe and well.

This year has seen a strong focus on early intervention, developing the strategy to strengthen preventative measures and reduce inequalities for children and young people in the borough. However there has, in parallel, been a significant focus on existing priorities – in particular, the work done in response to complex and contextual safeguarding on both a case by case and a strategic level has been key to progressing the work of the partnership and continues into the coming year.

For NHS services in particular, 2021-2022 has been a time of change and uncertainty. The service redesign following the publication of the White Paper *Working Together to improve Health & Social Care for all* has brought about significant change particularly for the Designated Professionals and those working in the Clinical Commissioning Group. This has not, however, affected business as usual for the teams and they continue to deliver on the NHS statutory safeguarding duties and support NHS commissioned services across the borough.

Claire Smith – Director of Nursing and Quality, GM Integrated Care



During 2021/22 COVID continued to impact on the service provided to the communities of Oldham, this period was further complicated the urgent service improvements required by GMP having been put into 'Enhanced Scrutiny/Special Measures' by the HMICFRS. Whilst the majority of improvements required within GMP were not linked directly to Safeguarding, general improvements around how we investigated crimes and the service we provided to our communities pan all areas of business.

Under the new Chief Constable Greater Manchester Police invested heavily in additional re-focussed leadership and a 'Back to Basics' approach which was detailed in the 'Plan on a Page', this meant that the whole Senior Leadership Team in Oldham District changed during this period. The new Senior Leadership invested a significant amount of time and energy engaging with the partnership, to build a strong foundation to drive forward with partnership working and ensure that Safeguarding was at the heart of everything we do.

The Team have prioritised the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) agenda and re-introducing regular use of civil orders such as Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPO) during this period. By this pro-active approach and officers increasing the use of their powers of arrest, we have been able to create the time and space to build relationships with victims, in order to protect them and their children. The job is far from complete, the Oldham Partnership is a priority for me and my team, and I very much look forward to further enhancing our multi-agency offer over the coming months.

Chris Bowen, Chief Superintendent, 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.

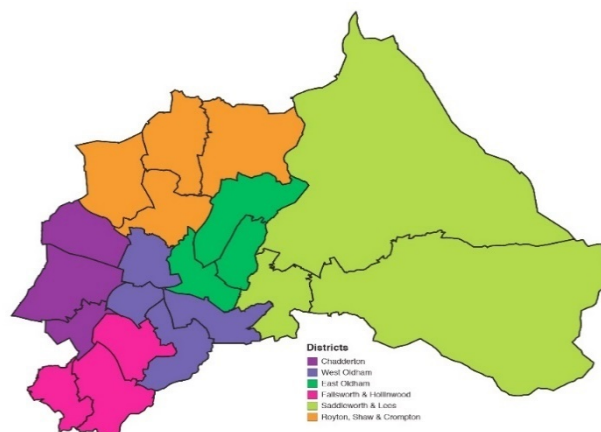
The Partnership provides leadership and accountability for the promotion of children and young peoples' well-being and the prevention and protection from harm.

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 6th 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 19th 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

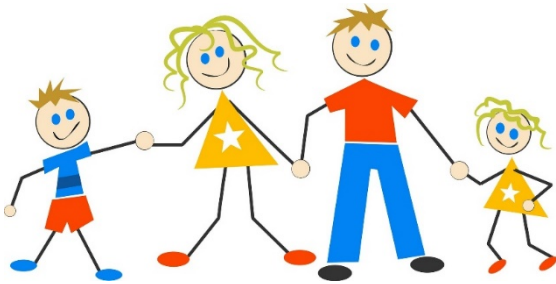
Quarterly performance continues to be monitored and scrutinised by the Partnership's Performance Management Group, before being presented by exception to the Strategic Safeguarding Partnership.

Contacts to MASH

20,290

Contacts converted to Referrals

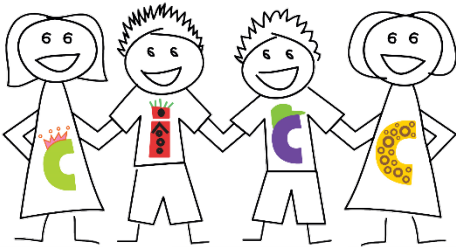
4,278



3,825 referrals made to Targeted Early Help



1502 S47 enquiries initiated



540 children looked after as of March 2022



430 children on child protection plans as of March 2022



238 children electively home educated



4,024 children or young people receiving a level of intervention above universal health level

Safeguarding Priorities for 2021-2022

Partnership Development Session – January 2021

Reflection on the previous 12 months

Partners reflected throughout the session on the significant amount of work that had been undertaken across the Partnership in the last 12 months, in the face of unprecedented pressures and how this strongly evidenced the way in which the Partnership had pulled together and supported each other in very difficult circumstances.

Progress in areas such as complex safeguarding were particularly highlighted as an achievement during this period with Partners acknowledging a collective drive from the Partnership in moving this area of business forwards and this had been reflected in recent audits.

Concerns remained regarding the levels of domestic violence and abuse affecting families in Oldham and Partners agreed that a full review of the current offer was required in order to ensure families are able to access the right support at the right time.

Partners agreed that retaining the same priorities for 2021-2022 was right but that this also needed to be done in the context of Covid recovery.

Learning Hub Model

Following the pilot of the Learning Hub model throughout 2021 the Partnership reflected on the effectiveness of the model to date.

Feedback from members of the Partnership told us that the new model:

- Ensures a focus on learning utilising positive examples
- Gives professionals the ability to have honest conversations and healthy challenge
- Has better focus on practice rather than bureaucracy
- Provides access to shared learning across all stakeholders
- Provides clearer governance and supports

sharing of accountability between key partners.

There are ways in which the new model could be improved further. These include:

- Ensuring connectivity with single agency quality assurance activity
- Greater connection with the community and voluntary sector
- Continue to focus on a limited number of crucial issues for the Partnership and avoid mission creep.

Feedback from children and young people

Three representatives from Oldham Youth Voice Family attended the development session to feedback on the work they'd been doing over the last 12 months.

This work included:

- The first Oldham Youth Summit held in February 2020.
- Engagement and consultations with professionals on mental health, weapon related crime, bullying, complex and contextual safeguarding, and early help.
- Involvement with the commissioning of Oldham's integrated sexual health and substance misuse service.
- Delivered Make Your Mark.

The priorities of Oldham Youth Voice Family for 2021-2022 include:

- Over to YOUth Summit focusing on priorities issues arising from Make Your Mark.
- Working with the OSCP on tackling domestic violence and abuse via consultation, development of resources and mapping support for children and young people.
- Working with professionals and services to ensure young people are helping to shape how we recover from the Covid Pandemic.

A Hive of Activity – I-Thrive Bees

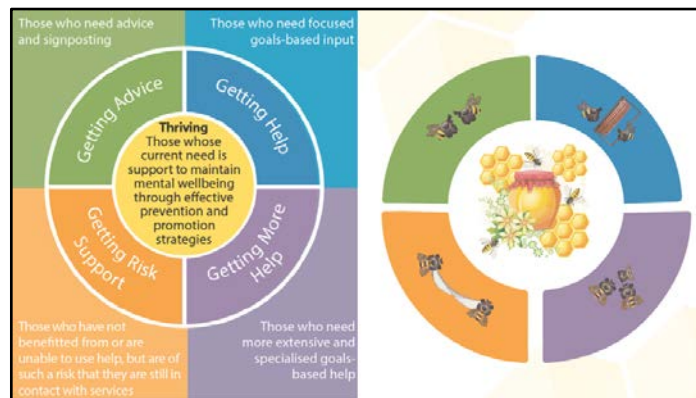
On 23rd June 2021 Oldham Safeguarding Partnership held a launch event for our I-Thrive Bees resources. Aligned to the I-Thrive framework for children and young people’s mental health, key professionals from the Safeguarding Partnership, CAMHS and Oldham Youth Service came together with children and young people to design a young person friendly way to navigate mental health services.

Divided into two categories between tweens and teens, I Thrive Bees as a concept was born.

Tween Bees:



Teen Bees:



Bella/Bertie Bee (poem for Tweens):

Once upon a buzzy time, Bella Bee did not feel fine
Her wings were droopy, she felt heavy inside
She couldn't feel better, no matter how hard she tried
It started with a worry, something quite small
but the more she worried, her worries did sprawl.

Bella talked to her dad, she talked to her mum
About the worries, thoughts, and feelings, in her head and her tum
Mum and dad tried their best, But Bella's head and tummy they could not rest
Feeling unhappy was so much like riding a broken-down wobbly bike

I think we need more help, a helping hand
Someone else who will understand?
So off they went to see what help they could find
They met new worker bees and bugs, who were helpful and kind

Bella wanted help, she had important things to say
So, the workers bees got buzzy to help her find her way
Sometimes Bella needed lots of help and sometimes she just needed hugs
But it was good for her and mum and dad to know about the workers bees and the bugs

Her worries might have got the best of her, your worried might get the best of you
But worries find it very hard, to get the best of two Or three or four

Written by Catherine Lawler, OSCP Training Consultant

I-Thrive Rap (for Teens):

I want to be involved in decision making
in the options for my mental health and well-being
You can give me all of your advice
Or signposting to others will suffice
maybe one-off contacts for support
maybe self-management with the ball in my court
just don't leave me to try and survive
but do all we can to make sure that I...Thrive

Or maybe I am someone who needs focused goals
Someone with a specific intervention role
Getting help to be transformed
but only interventions, evidence informed
It doesn't even have to be a nurse
any trained professional can help reverse
My mental health and well-being will revive
if we do all we can to make sure that I...Thrive

Maybe I need more help than first thought
extensive treatment so I'm not distraught
Professional help from local services
people in the know with specific purposes
I have needs that require particular attention
it just needs a little local co-ordination
All I need is an intensive session or five
and we can work together making sure that I...Thrive

Everyone working to manage a risk
Any crisis response will need to be brisk
Maybe the help isn't working
Or I maybe I'm still searching
We might even have to resort
to keeping me safe with multi-agency support
Working together not just to keep me alive
but me, you, them, and us making sure that I...Thrive

Written by Oldham Youth Council

National I-Thrive community of practice webinar

On 10th June 2021 OSCP Training Consultant and Operational Manager from CAMHS were invited by the Tavistock Clinic to present the I-Thrive Bees model as a showcase of best practice. The feedback from participants was incredibly positive with the work being described as “Inspiring”.



Questionnaires for young people

As part of the OSCP schools offer the Training Consultant created a questionnaire for young people to enable them to inform us what subjects/issues they would like to receive additional lessons/information. This was piloted with 600 students from Oldham College who told us that healthy relationships, body image and the effects of pornography were their top three priority topics.

Safer Streets – Oldham College

As part of the Greater Manchester Safer Streets campaign students from Oldham College received an input from OSCP training consultant and training officer on sexual violence and harassment, gender-based violence and public sexual harassment. The students were then given the challenge of developing a poster, with the winning poster being displayed across the local transport network.



The winning poster was designed by Sinmi Alli-Balogun and challenges inappropriate behaviour, which can include cat calling, staring and looks, or getting too close, and how these behaviours make women and girls feel unsafe when out and about.



Complex & Contextual Safeguarding

Youth Now

Youth Now project was a two-year pilot



project using contextual approaches to improve responses to increasing levels of youth violence in Oldham. The project was based within the Youth Justice team at Positive Steps and undertaken in partnership with Greater Manchester Police and Oldham Council.

The project was evaluated by the University of Bedfordshire, who are the founders and leading academics in the field of Contextual Safeguarding. The project has now been rolled out as best practice for other areas to replicate: [The Oldham Youth Now Project Toolkit | Contextual Safeguarding](#)



Gang Response and Early Collaborative Intervention Project (GRIP)

The GRIP project was launched in January 2022.

Underpinned by a clear contextualised safeguarding approach, the GRIP project has worked tirelessly to carry out extensive mapping in the area using a variety of methods. This has enabled the project to identify opportunities to support the development sustainable provisions and cement key partnerships working within the community.

Key interventions include:

- Direct work
- Failsworth Friday Night Project
- Limeside Wednesday evening youth provision
- Oasis targeted intervention project: Limeside
- AVRO and Limeside Boxing club targeted youth provision
- Newton Heath afterschool gaming club
- Operation AVRO community engagement day



Oldham's Strategy for Children and Young People who go Missing from Home or Care 2022 – 2025

The strategy was launched in March 2022 and was informed by the outcome of the Children's Society benchmarking tool. Oldham was one of the areas that took part in the pilot of the tool to identify ways to improve our response to children who go missing from home or care.

Our Strategic priorities include:

- Reducing the number of children and young people who go missing from home or care
- Reducing the risk of harm for children and young people who go missing from home or care
- Providing the right support at the right time for children, young people, and their families.

Independent Review of non-recent CSE

The review was requested by Oldham Council and the Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership following concerns that had been highlighted from members of the public.

The review was commissioned by Greater Manchester Combined Authority and led by experts Malcolm Newsam, a former commissioner for social care in Rotherham and Gary Ridgway, a former Detective Superintendent of Cambridgeshire Police.

At the time of this annual report the review is still underway, and it is anticipated that the report will be published in the Summer 2022.

Neglect

Neglect Toolkit

Learning from reviews and recent audits has indicated that the neglect toolkit is not being used by professionals to support and inform assessment and decision making.

In order to understand the barriers, the Partnership undertook some consultation with partners which told us that whilst 76% of respondents were aware of the toolkit, only 36% had attended training on how to use the toolkit and only 33% used it when working with families.

Barriers to using the toolkit included its length, time for practitioners to complete it, the feeling that word neglect in the title immediately creates a barrier for parents and that the toolkit takes away from professional judgement.

With this in mind the Partnership has agreed to commission Graded Care Profile 2 and work is due to begin with NSPCC to embed this within the area.

Educational Neglect

Considering the links between children not in education and vulnerability to exploitation, the Partnership introduced an educational neglect pathway in 2020.

Feedback from the pilot work highlighted:

- Lockdowns over Covid period has hampered progress and the implementation of the protocol.
- Good examples of application of the protocol through dialogue between the LA inclusion Team and MASH i.e., hard to reach parents of primary age children electively home educated
- Use of daily risk management meetings to raise cases
- Positive contact from children's social workers who are discussing the protocol with parents
- Further engagement with schools required regarding their understanding of the protocol

Domestic Abuse

Safe Lives Review – January 2022

The review undertaken by Safe Lives considered the whole system approach in Oldham to addressing Domestic Abuse. The findings from the review include:

Strengths:

- The IDVA service is central to the response, visible and well respected across the partnership
- There is a vibrant voluntary and community sector in Oldham adding value to the service offer for victims
- There is a robust and clear offer within early help to work with families including the step down from the IDVA service
- Operation encompass is in place and effective
- There is a positive healthy relationships programme offered in schools and Further Education settings
- Talk Listen Change are now offering a programme for perpetrators of domestic abuse

Areas for Improvement:

- The IDVA service cannot be considered truly independent as it is provided through the Local Authority
- The IDVA service capacity is too stretched leading to only Marac high risk cases being heard
- Victims describe being held accountable for keeping themselves and children safe rather than perpetrators being held accountable
- There is no formal commissioned offer for victims at standard and medium risk of harm
- The service offer for young people experiencing abuse within their own relationships is minimal
- There is little knowledge, awareness or provision for children and young people using harmful behaviour (e.g., adolescent to parent violence)
- There is a lack of confidence amongst professionals around identification and pathways for perpetrators

The findings from the review will inform the Domestic Abuse strategy moving forwards.

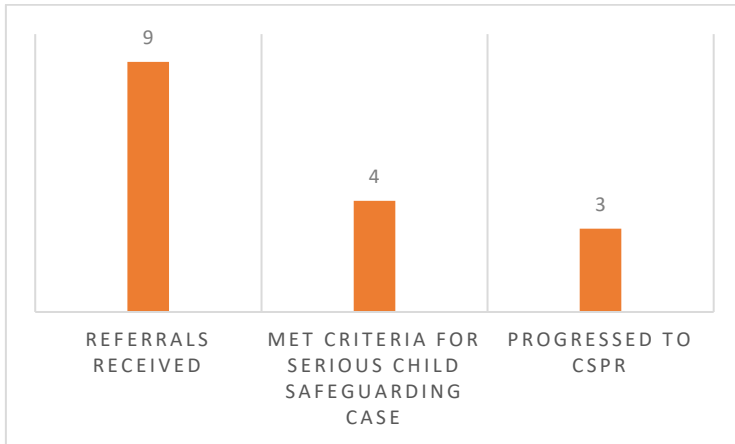
Learning & Quality Assurance Activity

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 2021-22 period the Partnership received nine referrals of cases for consideration by the Child Safeguarding Review Panel. Of these, four met the criteria for serious child safeguarding case and three progressed to a further Child Safeguarding Practice Review. One progressed to a Domestic Homicide Review but with specific terms of reference relating to the young person.

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 two of the cases where the criteria for serious child safeguarding case had not been met the Partnership agreed that the learning could be captured through ongoing work relating to Contextual Safeguarding and Youth Violence.

In a third case the criteria weren't met however the Partnership agreed to undertake a Local Learning Review.

Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Two Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews were concluded within the period of this report.

Child G 2020

Child G is a teenager who has autism and a learning disability. He is non-verbal and communicates through his behaviour. He is the only child of his parents who work alternative shifts so they can care for him at home.

Child G developed Bathmophobia which is a fear of stairs. This phobia prevented him from accessing education and medical care. He suffered from infected ingrowing toenails, there were concerns about his weight and he became socially isolated. His life experiences were severely limited.

The review found:

- Good practice identified in relation to the Learning Disability Nurse and their information sharing with other professionals.
- Evidence of joint working across health and education
- Escalation processes were not resulting in improved outcomes for children.
- There is a lack of connectivity/interaction between frameworks and processes in Oldham. As a result, management of the case was disjointed.
- The CIN forum should have been the right forum in this case. Development and actioning of a CIN plan built on the EHCP and CETR should have been sufficient to bring about change.
- Parents of non-verbal children, and those 16-18 who lack mental capacity, are usually best placed to articulate the needs and likely reactions of their children to any planned intervention. This case has demonstrated that parents' views are not being taken into sufficient account when planning interventions
- Records demonstrate that practitioners were cognisant of the risks however, the risks in this case were not sufficiently explored, articulated, or incorporated into achievable multi-agency plans.

Thematic Review of Harmful Sexual Behaviours

The review considered two separate cases where young people had suffered significant harm, and which had involved Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB).

The review aimed to consider a more coherent and evidence-informed approach for work with children and young people displaying signs of HSB, and to better understand how to improve outcomes for them.

The review explored a range of factors that were similar in each case and reached five key findings against which recommendations were made.

Findings:

- The review considered HSB but also found that basic safeguarding practice was challenged due to the complex factors in both cases
- Where there is HSB there is likely a wider set of complexities and vulnerabilities, this was true of both cases and highlights the need for a coordinated approach
- Changing sexual behaviour and effective risk management and support requires the services of more than one agency, and a coherent and coordinated offer is essential
- There is not a common understanding of the role of "Lead Professional"
- There is a lack of confidence across the workforce in Oldham about pathways for HSB. It was identified that this was in part due to frameworks and pathways not being clear but also an area for development in terms of knowledge and understanding of HSB.
- It is essential for effective communication strategies to be embedded into practice from an early point in case management.
- There is not a sound understanding of the multi-agency response that is commissioned in Oldham, what outcomes this focuses on and

Quality Assurance

Observations

Representatives from the Partnership observed Initial Child Protection Conferences and reviewed them in line with the Partnership's practice standards.

Strengths:

- Good Partnership representation
- Persistent attempts to use interpreter services to support understanding
- Wider issues were considered
- Clear analysis of risk
- Good reflections of the child's lived experience

Areas for improvement:

- Not all agency reports were shared with the family in advance
- The length of the conference was too long
- Too much focus on case management

School Audits

A total of 118 audits were requested from schools, academies, and colleges. The audit tool is a bespoke for schools and based around on the expectations on education establishments of DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020, plus some local questions regarding safeguarding practice.

Main findings:

- Emotional Health & Wellbeing – vast majority of schools have a champion on their leadership team.
- Supervision for Designated Safeguarding Leads is much improved suggesting that most schools have a supervisory arrangement in place or have plans for this.
- Staff awareness of key safeguarding issues such as Private Fostering and Honour Based Abuse have scored higher showing a better understand of the issues.
- Improved evidence of processes to identify and manage incidents of peer-on-peer abuse. Further work is needed on surveys with pupil's experience of bullying outside the school gates.
- Governor Responsibilities – submissions indicate that not all governors are receiving foundation level safeguarding training and the training offer needs to be more flexible to capture all.

Training Opportunities

There have been 38 training opportunities made available with 1031 attendees from across the Partnership. Feedback from participants during the covid period echoed the preference for face-to-face training. We have returned to face to face in the main but continue to offer briefings, webinars, and information highways online to maximise access.

Training Frameworks

In partnership with the complex safeguarding team, we have developed a [training framework](#) work on complex and contextual safeguarding to equip and support professionals across the Partnership to develop and enhance their skills in this area of work.

We have also updated our Domestic Abuse [Training Framework](#) in recognition of the changes arising from the Domestic Abuse Act and to ensure we continue to support staff in developing and cementing skills, knowledge, attitudes, values and behaviours when working with this issue.

GM trauma training

In August 2021 Greater Manchester Resilience Hub secured funding for the delivery of trauma training across agencies in GM. The Partnership supported with the identification and co-ordination of this training across Oldham ensuring that the widest multi-agency audience was able to access the different levels of training in a way that supports a longer-term strategic to embed trauma informed practice across the Partnership. In total 167 professionals from a range of agencies across Oldham were able to access levels of trauma training to support their practice.

As a Partnership we are currently updated our mapping activity to help us understand what training our partners have undertaken and what training needs to take place to fill identified gaps. OSCP training calendar continues to offer a variety of training on trauma, children's mental health and Making Every Contact Count.

Cut it Out

This campaign aims to skill up hairdressers and beauty staff to spot the signs of domestic abuse/coercive control and have simple conversations with clients about this. The OSCP Training Consultant has devised and delivered training on domestic abuse and coercive control

in partnership with Oldham College to salons and apprentices.

Homicide timeline training

The domestic homicide timeline is a model which transforms the way we think about domestic homicide, coercive control and stalking and the risks in these situations. This is the first time these behaviours have been organised in this way. Funding was secured that enabled 302 licences to be allocated to staff from across the Partnership. Oldham is the first Safeguarding Children Partnership to offer this training to partners.

Training in Schools

During the period April 21 to March 22 the Safeguarding Advisor for Education delivered:

- Whole school foundation training sessions to 25 primary school and academies, 3 secondary school (including one independent faith School) and one bespoke session on peer-on-peer abuse.
- Four training sessions to school governors on their specific responsibilities as strategic responsibility for safeguarding in education establishments as part of the governor support programme.
- Additional safeguarding training sessions delivered to trustees at two primary academies.
- A small number of sessions to schools and to governors were delivered remotely because of Covid restrictions.
- Three Designated Safeguarding Lead network session with topics including the work of the Youth Justice Service, Project Choice, Early Break Service, IDVA Service and domestic abuse resources, the Principal Social Worker role, and the Safeguarding Unit on best practice at child protection conferences.

The OSCP Training Officer for schools has delivered sessions on Healthy Relationships, Consent and Online Safety to:

- 1440 primary school pupils
- 6860 secondary school pupils
- 1105 further education students

The Training Officer and Police colleagues have also been piloting the Alice Ruggles Trust Relationship Safety Resource curriculum at a local high school. It's a package of quality assured teaching materials and lesson plans on stalking and coercive control. Evaluation is due to take place in 2022-2023.

SCRUTINIZING THE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP IN OLDHAM (APRIL 2021 TO MARCH 2022) – Dr Henri Giller, Independent Chair of the Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership

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 third working year of the new partnership arrangements. The criteria for scrutiny is that contained in the report “Six Steps for Independent Scrutiny” as updated by the national survey of what is currently being scrutinised, by who and how (Pearce, Stratton, Parker & Thorpe, 2022).

LSCP Leadership

LSCP Partner Leads are clearly identified and accountable for LSCP activities safeguarding children. In addition to their participation in the Partnership Executive meetings, the Partner leads meet as a leadership group with the Independent Chair and the Partnership business manager, to consider on-going strategic safeguarding priorities and operational matters arising that may impact upon those priorities. While in the original partnership initiation document this was scheduled as a monthly meeting since the commencement of the Covid pandemic it has moved to a fortnightly schedule. The leadership group also oversees the development of the agenda for quarterly Executive meetings. The Partnership leads are represented at allied partnerships (the safeguarding adult board, community safety partnership and the health and wellbeing board) and attend quarterly accountability meetings with the local authority chief executive and key elected members. Delegated representatives of the three statutory partners participate in relevant sub-groups and working groups of the Partnership.

Engagement of Relevant Agencies

All relevant agencies are engaged with the safeguarding children partnership, are aware of local information sharing protocols and training initiatives and participate in partnership development events and reviews of strategic priorities. New members to the partnership are provided with induction materials by the business manager and a safeguarding newsletter is regularly circulated to representatives of relevant agencies informing them of local and national reviews and research and training and workforce development opportunities.

The level of engagement of agency staff during this period was critically affected by the on-going Covid 19 pandemic. This had significant impact with respect to staffing levels in the police and with NHS providers and impacted on the quorum of safeguarding meetings, the timeliness of reviews and the delivery of appointments for safeguarding services. The statutory partners continued to meet fortnightly (as they had since the start of the pandemic) to oversee the pattern of disruption caused by the pandemic in safeguarding agencies and to initiate preventive or remedial actions as appropriate. As lockdown restrictions eased so the evolving local patterns of pressure on safeguarding demand were responded to with increasing agility (eg supporting vulnerable children back into schools).

In two instances major reviews of the existing engagement arrangements of agencies were on-going in the period. With respect to NHS staff, the impending introduction of the integrated care system (ICS) initiated a review of the roles and responsibilities of health staff with a safeguarding responsibility in the clinical commissioning group (CCG). This review continued into 2021-22. With respect to the police, a critical review of the GMP's functioning by HMICFRS led to a review of the deployment of safeguarding officers across the force. As a consequence, an increase in the number of designated police officers with safeguarding responsibilities deployed in Oldham was commenced in this period.

Outcomes for Children and Young People

Significant consultation events involving children and young people were undertaken during the course of this year providing substantial opportunities for their views to influence the development of service priorities. Safeguarding concerns around mental health, weapon crimes, bullying, complex safeguarding and early help were identified, and proposals developed for service enhancements. Presentation of the findings from this work by young people are scheduled to be shared with the partnership executive later in 2022. Work on enhancing the experience of young people transitioning from children's services to adult services has commenced.

Quality Assurance & Information Sharing

Performance data on safeguarding activity continues to be gathered and shared across the partnership with initiatives ongoing to ensure a better representation of data from a wider range of relevant agencies. This year has been one in which the learning hub model has been used to improve the engagement of partners in quality assurance and accountability initiatives. A notable example was the deep dive in the reasons for the increase in safeguarding referrals for those of two years or younger and resulting strategy to impact on the risks to such children in vulnerable families. The model has had positive buy in from those it has engaged and will continue to be used in 2021-22. It is proposed that the model be adopted by the adult safeguarding board.

Learning from Local & National Reviews & Research

Local reviews of critical cases were undertaken in the period, both on an individual case-specific basis and thematically. Significant findings on the need for improved cross-agency case management, information sharing and case co-ordination were identified by both methods. These

findings would be taken forward into 2021-22 to undertake further work on these requirements for effective inter-agency working in complex cases.

The period also saw the initiation of the independent review of cases of non-recent child sexual exploitation (CSE). The initiation of that review facilitated a reflection on current practice in CSE and the approach to complex safeguarding emergent in the borough.

National research findings continue to be circulated and promoted through the partnership news letter and inform the content of the partnership training programme.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Training & Workforce Development

The commitment to a multi-agency training strategy continues to be a strength of the Oldham partnership. A substantial number of staff from across relevant agencies have engaged with the training opportunities available in the period and, as the pandemic eased, so the take up of face-to-face training increased. The availability of a variety of training delivery mechanisms was sustained in the period and is planned to continue into 2021-22.

The training programme is very closely linked to the priority safeguarding concerns identified in the partnership annual

business plan. This year the programme reflects the themes of complex safeguarding, trauma training, the assessment of neglect and the exercising of professional curiosity

The challenge of having an adequate workforce to undertake safeguarding activities continues across all relevant agencies, and Oldham inevitably competes with the nine other GM boroughs to fill staffing vacancies. Consideration of how to “grow one’s own” skilled workforce increasingly comes to the fore.

The engagement of local schools in safeguarding training initiatives continues to be a hallmark of the Oldham partnership with substantial numbers of pupils and students being engaged by dedicated staff from the partnership business unit.

Dr Henri Giller – Independent Chair

Our plan for 2022-2023

Domestic Abuse	Complex and Contextual Safeguarding	Transitions	Children's Mental Health and the impact of trauma	Neglect
<p>Strategic Objectives</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>Strategic Objectives</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>Strategic Objective</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>Strategic Objectives</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>Strategic Objectives</p> <p>A clear and robust offer of support will be available to families at the earliest possible point, reducing the risks of children experiencing neglect.</p> <p>A confident and competent workforce who are able to recognise and respond to neglect at the earliest opportunity.</p>
<p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Domestic Abuse Partnership to develop a multi-agency response to standard and medium risk domestic abuse and children experiencing domestic abuse. • Develop an understanding of support and intervention across the Continuum of Need • Provide training on domestic abuse across the Partnership. 	<p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a clear Partnership response to cases where there are concerns of exploitation. • Develop a Partnership focus on a prevention and early intervention response. • Progress the actions identified within the Missing from Home and Care strategy to improve the multi-agency response to children who go missing. 	<p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a clear pathway and response for children with complex needs including autism and mental health concerns. • Ensure the Transitions group has wide Partnership representation and is linked to other relevant areas of work including mental health and complex safeguarding. 	<p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a clear response for children and young people in crisis, engaging with GM work to adapt local pathways. • Develop clear guidance and pathways for professionals and families to enable navigation of support from early intervention to crisis. • Support the work of the early year partnership to support the response to infant mental health. 	<p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Graded Care Profile 2 across the Partnership. • Work with Poverty Steering Group to understand the impact of poverty on the ability of Oldham families to meet the needs of children. • Develop data profile and needs assessment related to universal and universal plus levels of need and intervention.

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