
Report to West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board

25 January 2024

West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership – annual report 2022-23

Report by, Sally Kendal, West Sussex Local Safeguarding Children Board Manager

Summary

The West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership's (WSSCP) annual report, 2022-23 was completed in accordance with statutory guidance available at the time¹ which stipulated:

"In order to bring transparency for children, families and all practitioners about the activity undertaken, the safeguarding partners must publish a report at least once in every 12-month period. The report must set out what they have done as a result of the arrangements, including on child safeguarding practice reviews, and how effective these arrangements have been in practice."

The WSSCP is led by three statutory Lead Safeguarding Partners: WSCC Children's Services, Sussex Police and NHS Sussex (Integrated Care Board). It is their equal and joint responsibility to ensure that children are safeguarded in West Sussex by co-ordinating an effective multi-agency approach. The three Lead Partners are accountable to the Department for Education for the WSSCP's performance. The annual report is a means by which assurance is provided about where progress has been made, whilst also highlighting areas requiring development and/or improvement.

West Sussex County Council's Health and Wellbeing Board (WSCC HWB) no longer has a statutory function in terms of sign off the WSSCP's annual report. Nevertheless the report is shared for scrutiny and under the terms of the Collaborative Working Agreement (CWA) enables the WSCC HWB to be sighted on the WSSCP's work. It also allows the Partnership and Board to reflect upon and align their activities to ensure focus of collective resources on priority work areas.

Recommendation(s) to the Board

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to;

- (1) Note the contents of this report.
- (2) Note the forthcoming legislative changes under revised statutory guidance – Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 (issued by the Department for Education in December 2023). This means that the WSSCP will be required under the revised statutory guidance to report to the DfE by 30 September

¹ Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (Department for Education – published July 2018).

2024 on the preceding business year (April 2023-March 2024) on several new criteria such as providing “evidence of how safeguarding partners are ensuring the adequate representation and input of education at both the operational and strategic levels of the arrangements”.

Relevance to [Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)

The WSSCP’s priority work areas are aligned to three key Starting well’ priorities:

- **‘Improved mother and baby wellbeing’** – the WSSCP worked closely with WSCC Public Health and across Sussex to promote safer sleeping and baby care (ICON) messages. The WSSCP reinvested in the DadPad ‘app’ complemented by co-ParentPad to provide resources to support new parents living in West Sussex for a further four calendar years (2023-26).
- **‘Children growing in a safe & healthy home environment with supporting and nurturing parents and carers’** – a refresh of the WSSCP’s neglect strategy commenced, the work driven through the Improvement and Assurance Group during 2023-24 and includes e.g. an ongoing neglect champions forum and toolkits to support practitioners to identify and monitor neglect. It also supported roll out of WSCC’s relationship based working with families training to help embed the Family Safeguarding Model.
- **‘Good mental health for all children’** – significant learning focussed on suicide prevention was commissioned by the WSSCP’s Case Review Group (CRG) during this year with the ambition to take forward learning to improve outcomes for children and support families in these circumstances. The WSSCP delivered its annual conference about online safety in collaboration with the WSCC Community Safety Partnership. The key note speaker from Grassroots Suicide Prevention charity, explored the impacts of on line abuse and exploitation on children’s emotional health and wellbeing.
- **‘Children and young people leaving care are healthy and independent’**
In addition to learning around suicide prevention the WSSCP also identified learning around transitions work in the context of concerns around exploitation and substance misuse. As a result the WSSCP commissioned training for multi-agency professionals around suicide prevention ‘adulthood’ of children approaching adulthood and exploitation.

1 Background and context

The WSSCP’s annual report is retrospective and covers the period April 2022 to March 2023.

The WSSCP is an independent body, its business support functions are currently hosted by the local authority. Statutory partnerships are required to work together as joint and equal partners to shape bespoke arrangements which respond to local need.

The West Sussex Collaborative Working Agreement (CWA) provides a means to effect strategic join up/alignment across four Boards/Partnerships: Health and Wellbeing Board, Safeguarding Adults Board, Safer West Sussex Partnership and the WSSCP. Strategic Leads met twice during the year to focus on joining up across four common areas:

- Emotional health and Wellbeing of Children: Mental Health
- Exploitation
- Transitions to Adulthood
- Shared learning

2 Proposal details

2.1 The WSSCP continued to focus on Neglect, Exploitation and improving multi-agency working priority themes as part of its business plan delivery. This report provides a detailed overview of individual partner agencies and organisations contributions to these priority areas including raising awareness, embedding learning and improving practice.

2.2 Key achievements include:

- Developing a multi-agency approach for children who are deemed to be at high risk of self-harm or suicide, including a 'triage' approach. It provides management support and oversight of emerging risks involving specific children - allowing for early review and safety plans to be put into place. Schools can refer children of concern directly into this team for a rapid, multi-agency response. This innovative work led to a nomination at the HSJ patient safety awards in September 2022 and subsequently winning the 'Mental Health Initiative of the Year' award. The judges described the new process as 'innovative, partnership working at its best, and ultimately saving lives'. This approach has been shared with partner agencies in the region and beyond.
- ICON and DadPad: roll out of Dad Pad, which also included ICON messaging continues to be successful, with at least 50% of new fathers accessing the DadPad app in West Sussex. West Sussex will also benefit in 2023-24 from the introduction of the new 'Co-ParentPad' resource. There is a continued focus on key safer sleeping and abusive head trauma messages to ensure they are embedded across the entire Partnership, (i.e. not just midwifery and health visiting).
- Learning and Development (L&D) activity included a revised training offer centred on learning from audit and reviews, e.g. suicide prevention, child exploitation, trauma informed practice and adultification. Another L&D highlight saw the WSSCP host a face-to-face Conference about Online Safety.
- Pan Sussex work included a Pan-Sussex Neglect and Poverty Task and Finish Group, chaired by the East Sussex Principal Social Worker; the group completed a review of the neglect matrix used across East Sussex. The Pan-Sussex group considered best practice and learning across all

three areas and the application of shared language and tools to complement existing processes.

2.3 The Partnership continued to address challenges and areas for development to ensure effective partnership working, including:

- An increased referral rate and demand for services with rising numbers of children on waiting lists with unmet mental health needs. There is a national shortage of Tier 4² provision and also appropriate social care placements.
- Evidencing impact of the Partnership's learning and improvement work on outcomes for children continues to be a key challenge. The Partnership has commissioned an independent reviewer to facilitate an impact of learning event for practitioners and managers in 2023-24 to help the WSSCP to understand whether it has successfully embedded learning from reviews into practice. The Partnership needs to identify and utilise the most effective ways to extract, disseminate and embed learning to make a measurable difference to children and families.
- Capacity to deliver – a large case review workload placed pressures on (finite) partner agency/organisation resources and the WSSCP business support team, meaning that there was reduced activity across other delivery areas.
- The need for improved join up of working with schools as well as the voluntary and community sector.

3 Consultation, engagement and advice

3.1 The annual report was produced using data and narrative text provided by agencies and organisations including the local authority, Districts and Boroughs, Sussex Police, NHS Sussex and local 'health' service providers.

3.2 Governance – the WSSCP subgroup – Improvement and Assurance Group led on delivery of the annual report, which received final sign off by statutory Lead Partners at the WSSCP Steering Group in September 2023.

Contact: Sally Kendal, Strategic Partnership Manager, West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership. Tel: 0330 222 5241

Appendices Presentation Papers

Link to the [West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership's \(WSSCP\) annual report](#), published on the WSSCP's website.

Background papers

- Link to [DadPad/Co-ParentPad](#)
- [Link to ICON](#)

Link to [Multi-Agency Mental Health Education Triage \(MAMHET\)](#) guidance

² Provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) Tier 4 inpatient services.