



Sandwell Children's
Safeguarding
Partnership

SCSP Annual Report 2020 - 2021



Document Control

Version Control/amendment	Date
Version 1	5 August 2021
Version 2 - additions and amendments	16 September 2021

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Foreword:

During an unprecedented period, partner agencies in Sandwell have continued to work closely together and to operate as a significant leadership body to safeguard Sandwell's children and young people. The unwavering commitment, energy, honesty and true desire to work together to support children and their families during this testing time has been remarkable.

At the beginning of the pandemic, partners met on a bi-weekly basis from the start of the first lockdown until the summer. All agencies shared their Business Continuity Plans, provided assurance, or identified challenges and/or pressures and agreed to ways to address them. These meetings continued as needed during the autumn, and then regular meetings resumed once all children started to return to school through to May 2021.

Ofsted has commented that Sandwell has been able to demonstrate continued and enhanced partnership working during the pandemic, recognising that Covid19 has exacerbated the considerable issues of deprivation across the Borough, with resultant need. The number of serious incidents involving children and young people reflects those needs, however, the Partnership has been commended by the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel for its robust, timely and high quality rapid reviews and this is an indicator of our increased ability to learn and to improve our safeguarding practice.

Our engagement with children and young people has had a heightened focus; of the 509 children and young people that responded to Sandwell's local impact survey we learned that one third were worried, one fifth were lonely, one quarter were stressed, and a smaller number were angry, sad or having trouble sleeping.

Children and young people said the most difficult part of the pandemic was not being able to see family and friends, but half of the young people that responded said they enjoyed spending more time with family during lockdown, and so it's important for us to be proportionate in our understanding

of the impact of Covid19 on our youngest residents. However, there can be no doubt that mounting household debt (the number of children and young people eligible for free school meals has increased by 19% over the past year) and increased individual and social stresses will inevitably have had a significant impact on the lives of children and young people. Our Partnership put in place a range of surge planning activities in the anticipation of an increase in demand for all services post the first lockdown and beyond. The Partnership also focused on suicide prevention and support for young carers.

During the year, we welcomed our new Independent Scrutineer; an important role that can provide an objective view about the quality and impact of our Partnership. These activities have included a deep dive into vulnerable babies born during the pandemic and our child protection procedures and the resultant reports have provided assurance as well as a range of welcomed recommendations for further improvement.

We have also contributed to the Department for Education's focus on safeguarding children at risk of serious violence, the National Police Chief's Council focus on missing and exploited children, and the Department of Health and Social Care rapid survey about the impact of Covid19 on pregnant vulnerable women and vulnerable families with pre-school children. Our two key priorities: neglect and exploitation, have continued to drive the work of the Partnership, and our engagement with regional and national partners has supported our drive for continued opportunities to learn from and share our own good practice.

This report reflects the wide range of work that the Partnership has carried out over the past year, with unceasing pressures from the pandemic, but with an unwavering commitment to ensure that we collectively continue to do everything possible to ensure that Sandwell's children and young people are safeguarded.



Lesley Hagger

**Chair, Sandwell Children's
Safeguarding Partnership and
Sandwell Council Executive
Director of Children's Services**

Introduction & Legal Context

Children Act 2004 as amended by Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 introduces the concept of safeguarding partners which is defined as:

- (a) the local authority,
 - (b) a clinical commissioning group for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area, and
 - (c) the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area.
- Sandwell has a fourth equal Safeguarding partner:
- (d) Sandwell Children's Trust, being the local organisation with responsibility for children social care services in Sandwell since April 2018.

Under the legislation, these four safeguarding partners must set out how they will work together and with any relevant agencies and co-ordinate the local safeguarding services; act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others; and implement arrangements for conducting local and national reviews and learning, including from serious child safeguarding incidents.

Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership (SCSP) was established on 1st April 2019 with the core purpose and objectives defined in primary legislation and regulations, as:

- a. to co-ordinate what is done by each person or body represented for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area of the authority, and
- b. to ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for that purpose.

The scope and remit for the functions of the SCSP's are rooted in the following overarching categories:

- I. to engage in activities that safeguard all children with an aim to identify and prevent maltreatment, or impairment of health or development, and to ensure that children are able to grow

up in circumstances consistent with safe and effective care;

- II. to lead and co-ordinate proactive work that aims to target particularly vulnerable groups; and
- III. to lead and co-ordinate arrangements for responsive work to protect children who are likely to suffer or are suffering significant harm.

The SCSP have agreed and published its Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA), which is underpinned by policies and procedures to ensure all local agencies, as 'relevant partners' are able to take all reasonable measures to ensure that the risks of harm to children's welfare are minimised; and where there are concerns about children or young people's welfare, agencies take timely and appropriate actions to work together according to the agreed local protocols.

Values and vision

As a partnership **'Our vision is for all children to be safe at home and in their communities, where they are loved, cared for and have the stability to grow healthily and to achieve their ambition'**.

The values which underpin the work of the SCSP are captured in the statements as follows:

- *We will put children at the heart of what we do*
- *Together we will make Sandwell safer for children*
- *We will always listen, learn and improve*
- *We will have respect for each other and recognise and respond positively to difference*
- *We will be positive about the future, and have aspirations for Sandwell's children, be solution focused, committed and innovative.*
- *We are going to make a difference!*

Maintaining the SCSP Vision

A key function of the SCSP is to monitor how each agency contributes to the local Multi-Agency Arrangements (MASA) and to

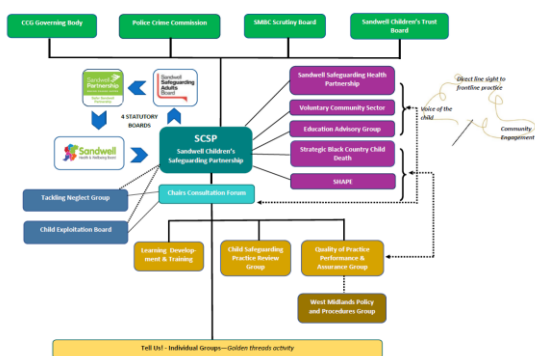
hold organisations individually, and collectively to account for their performance to ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each person or body to promote the safety and welfare of children.

In line with chapter 2 Working Together 2018, the SCSP maintains oversight of service delivery and the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements for those agencies to which Section 11 duties of the Children Act 2004 applies, with an emphasis on how well they are fulfilling their statutory obligations in regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Supporting the SCSP to effectively deliver its functions

SCSP have dedicated business support to undertake the operational duties to ensure they can deliver the required work and achieve all targets. A number of multi-agency sub groups are instituted to lead on specific areas of responsibility of the MASA's. The SCSP have a Business Manager with dedicated officers and admin to support all areas of its portfolio and the bespoke groups to deliver the strategic business plans and respective workplans.

SCSP Structure & Arrangements



Changes in governance are detailed on the website.

The SCSP is not an operational body or one which delivers services directly to children, young people and their families. It contributes to broader planning, commissioning and delivery of services

and holds agencies to account for operational work.

Further details of the construction and functions of the SCSP can be found in their detailed published [MASA](#).

Each local area in England are governed by the same legislation for safeguarding children, however, how MASA's are arranged is largely determined by the local demographics, and the needs and demands of the child /family population.

Sandwell in Context

Located in the West Midlands, Sandwell borders Birmingham, Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton.



Sandwell is a metropolitan borough in the Black Country, and made up of six towns - Oldbury, Rowley Regis, Smethwick, Tipton, Wednesbury and West Bromwich.

Child population profile in Sandwell

With an estimated population of 328,450, of which approximately 86,373 are 0-18, this indicates that Sandwell have a higher proportion of 0-18-year olds (26.3%) than England average (22.5%).

According to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019, this shows Sandwell's average deprivation score ranked 12th most deprived local authority in England out of a total of 317 with high levels of deprivation prevalent in large parts of Sandwell.

Diversity in Sandwell



Sandwell is an ethnically diverse borough with an estimated 37.8% of the population being of black and minority ethnic communities compared to 22.4% for the West Midlands region and 21.3% for England.

Area	White British	All Other White	Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	Asian / Asian British	Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	Other ethnic group	Ethnic minorities
England	78.7%	6.2%	1.8%	8.0%	3.5%	1.9%	21.3%
West Midlands Region	77.6%	4.0%	1.6%	12.1%	3.3%	1.4%	22.4%
Sandwell	62.2%	3.4%	2.5%	22.0%	7.4%	2.5%	37.8%

Sandwell benefits from a vibrant and diverse Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) made up of over 1,000 community groups and not-for-profit organisations, taking many different forms and delivering a huge spectrum of activities and services to the people of Sandwell.

It is important that communities throughout Sandwell are engaged in the safeguarding agenda and have opportunities to influence the strategic direction and priorities set by the SCSP. The Sector's cultural, ethnic, creed, age and need reflects the mix of the borough as a whole and through direct links with the Sandwell Community, Voluntary Organisation (SCVO) as the affiliated umbrella joining these groups together, the SCSP ensures that the views and needs of our diverse groups of children and young people are included within the local arrangements and processes.

The impact of COVID-19 on Safeguarding

This report for 2020/21 covers the entire period where a global pandemic has had a huge impact across the world. This has seen the UK government announcing national restrictions on movement, working

arrangements and the closure of education and early years provision for a number of children and young people as at various points of the year since 23rd March 2020.

The initial restrictions spanned a period of four months with localised restrictions continuing throughout the reporting period.

Within Sandwell localised restrictions were some of the strictest in the country impacting on how children and young people accessed education and how services operated.

These unpredicted enforcements saw all agencies in Sandwell introducing organisational structures and workforce models that has not been fore-planned, on a combined basis of urgent priorities, operational necessities and the constraints of technology, and in many ways have worked. Through the period, the SCSP has worked more closely with partner agencies to maintain clear oversight of the local interim arrangements to ensure service delivery and support is provided to the most 'vulnerable' children and families and remain abreast of how services were adapting to ensure that children, young people and families continued to be safe.

Initially weekly 'Business Continuity' meetings were undertaken with statutory and relevant partner representatives chaired by the SCSP Chair, along with representation at other COVID-19 focused meetings.

Key issues which identified during this period included:

- The huge impact of the pandemic on both human and technology resources.
- A decrease in human contact, this being face-to face visits for children, young people and families, meetings, working environments and training.
- A decrease in contacts to the Social Care Front Door as a result of children and young people not being seen as much.
- Increase in mental health concerns for children and young people including feelings of isolation, worries about the virus and worries about the impact of

the pandemic on families (employment, money and bereavement etc.).

- Increase in requests for support for families including food parcels and support with regards to supporting children's education at home including access to technology.
- Impact on staffing levels (sickness, redeployment, caring for dependents) and overall staff wellbeing.

This period 2020/21 has presented multiple challenges for all partners of SCSP and responses have been met by creative and innovative ways of working which has seen services being adapted to ensure that the most vulnerable children, young people and families remained visible and those needing additional support and statutory interventions receive timely and appropriate responses.

SCSP Response to Covid Pandemic

During the reporting period, the SCSP have:

- ✓ Maintained its role in reviewing policies and procedures, including contributing to the West Midlands Safeguarding Procedures, and coordinating interim procedures in response to operational changes arising from restrictive services during the pandemic.
- ✓ Closely monitored the local arrangements across the Partnership, including convening weekly 'business continuity' meetings during the peak periods of the pandemic.
- ✓ Established a multi-agency 'vulnerable Children's group' to ensure there are lines of communication and visibility for those children identified as 'particularly vulnerable' to receive the right level of support at the right time according to their needs. This includes the partners in Sandwell coming together and working in alternative and innovative ways to ensure coordinated processes are maintained.
- ✓ Postponed all face-to-face multi-agency training, and adapted course materials to suit a virtual audience.
- ✓ Monitored the management of reduced resources across agencies due to staff

shortages arising from the impact of Covid 19.

- ✓ Increased the use of e-communication/website and virtual platforms to maintain open dialogue, including advice guidance and support for children, young people, parents and carers, with a view to that persons and bodies across Sandwell remain abreast of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and how this can best be done during extreme circumstances.
- ✓ Maintained the momentum to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements through joint audits of case files and agencies 'assurance reports; to ensure effectiveness of the service provision to safeguard the most vulnerable young people and families during these difficult periods.
- ✓ Closely monitored all issues that have affected, or likely to affect the safety and welfare of children in Sandwell, including the cases where there have been the need for a rapid review following a serious safeguarding incident, where abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected, a child has died or a child has been seriously harmed, and there is cause for concern as to the way in local agencies have worked together to safeguard the child, and have procedures in place for ensuring that there is a co-ordinated response to unexpected deaths of children.
- ✓ Maintained business as usual for all functions by way of virtual platforms.
- ✓ Continually monitoring the impact of the pandemic on safeguarding functions across the local landscape.
- ✓ Supported SCT who have received a positive outcome from Ofsted Assurance visit of the response the needs of children receiving social care interventions during the pandemic.

The response to the Covid has seen the SCSP increasing its monitoring functions, including connecting directly with practitioners, who have reported the value of new ways of working, including greater involvement in multi-agency meetings due

to these being held online and not having to factor in travel, and family involvement in some instances also increased due to the online approaches.

However, the impact in working in such an intensive, but potentially isolated way has equally been recognised and agencies are considering how to achieve the right balance. There remains a good will to build on the positive ways of engaging with professionals and families which this report will report on next year.

Facts, figures and emerging issues for Sandwell Partners during 2020/21

Along with the challenges experienced in all corners of England and across the world as a result of the global Coronavirus Pandemic, Sandwell was also faced with:

Child Deaths – 0 – 18 years 2020/21

Child Death Arrangements for Sandwell is organised and monitored via a 'Black Country' joint agreement covering 4 Local Authority boundaries. There was a total of 85 deaths reported during 2020/21. Sandwell had the highest number of child deaths for the period with 40% of the total number of deaths.

Child Deaths	2019-20	2020-21
Sandwell	30	34
Child Death's in Black Country	107	85

Source: NCMD Monitoring Report for Black Country CDOPs

Child Death Notifications by Age

Age group	2019-20	2020-21
0 – 27days	46	48
28 – 364 days	27	12
1 - 4 years	9	9
5 – 9 years	9	5
10 – 14 years	11	3
15 – 17 years	5	8
total	107	85

The highest number of child death is for children under 1 year, where 56.5% is attributed to this cohort . CDOP annual report can be accessed [here](#).

Educational Attainment 2019 (Key Stage 4 (Around aged 16) Outcomes)

Key Stage	Sandwell	England (State Funded Schools)	Towns					
			Oldbury	Rowley Regis	Smethwick	Tipton	Wednesbury	West Bromwich
KS4: Attainment 8	42.2	46.7	43.6	41.3	42.3	37.1	42.3	43.5
KS4: Progress 8	-0.19	-0.03	-0.03	-0.17	-0.15	-0.93	-0.20	-0.02

Source: Department for Education statistical release Feb 2020

Attainment 8 (a measure of attainment)

Sandwell (42.2) did not perform as well as England (46.7) and the six Sandwell towns were all lower than England (state funded schools).

Progress 8 (a measure of progress over time)

As in the previous report, Pupils who attended a school in Sandwell still had a worse level of progress (-0.19) than England (state funded schools) -0.03, which means that pupils made less progress, on average, than pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2. A negative progress score does not mean that pupils did not make any progress; rather it means they made less progress than other pupils nationally with similar starting points.

Elected Home Education (EHE)

In April 2020 there were at most 300 children registered as EHE, whereas in March 2021, this figure was just above 600, so effectively the figures have doubled during the pandemic and despite schools returning it is not anticipated that figures will return to pre-pandemic figures so this is a long term impact which is likely to see more vulnerable children being kept at home.

School exclusions

During the period of this report there were 166 fixed-term exclusions for primary school aged children and 0 permanent exclusions for the same cohort. Whereas, there were 679 fixed-term exclusions for secondary school aged pupils and 23 permanent exclusions for the same period.

% of school pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs

In Sandwell in 2020 2.94% of school pupils had social, emotional and mental health needs which was statistically worse than England (2.70%)

Source: Public Health England (PHE) Children & Young People's Mental Health & Wellbeing Profiles

Young Carers in Sandwell

During the reporting period of the COVID-19 pandemic Sandwell Young Carers provided extended activities and support to over 600 children and young people aged 5-18 years whose lives are affected as a result of caring for a disabled or ill family member.

Early Help Assessment in Sandwell

Agency	Apr19 - Mar20	Apr20 - Mar21	Total
Childrens Centre	28	35	63
COG	89	51	140
Front Door/MASH	351	483	834
Health	260	201	461
Local Authority	44	101	145
Police	2	3	5
School	1095	923	2018
Social Care	1315	1322	2637
Vol Org	10	30	40
Grand Total	3194	3149	6343

The table above represents early help assessments completed by agency in Sandwell during the reporting period. From the figures displayed, there is very little difference despite the fact that many services were providing limited support following the national restrictions on movement throughout the year. We can see that in Sandwell, the demands for support early help support to children and families remained consistent.

Contact & Referrals received by MASH

	01.04.19 to 31.03.20	01.04.20 to 31.03.21
Total Contacts	26882	26217
Total Referrals	6377	5402
Conversion Rate	23.7%	20.6%

Despite the national restrictions, including school closures, face-to face visit to children and families, appointments and other events which would routinely heighten the opportunities for raising safeguarding concerns, there was a slight decrease in contacts made to the 'front-door', however, this was not significantly different to the previous year, as illustrated below.

MASH Response to MARF Referrals

Outcome of Referrals	01.04.20 – 30.04.21	%
Advice and Guidance - Contact Completed	2032	31.1%
Advice and Guidance & Link to Existing EH Episode	34	0.5%
Link to Existing Early Help Episode	99	1.5%
MASH Episode	38	0.6%
SPOC	3387	51.8%
Transfer to Children's Social Care	951	14.5%
Grand Total	6541	100.0%

From the above table, all initial contacts made to MASH, the frontdoor, received a response.

Child in Need, Child Protection and Children in Care – 2020/21

Numbers	31 March 2020	31 March 2021
Child in Need (Plans)	807	856
CiN Rates per 10,000	97.9	103.8
Child Protection Plans	662	478
CP Rates per 10,000	80.3	58
Children in Care	865	885
CIC Rates per 10,000	105.5	107.3

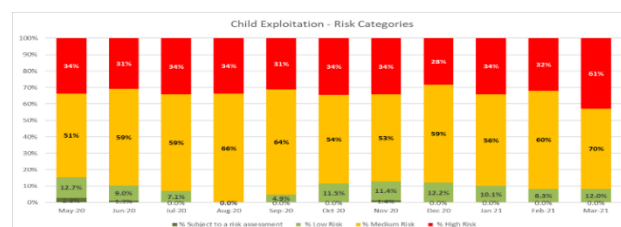
The above table provides a snapshot of the year end figures for children receiving statutory support as required under the Children Act 1989 for statutory interventions. At the end of the reporting year (31st March 2021), there is a rise in children in need, a slight increase in children in Care and a fairly significant decrease in children subjected to child protection plans.

CHILDREN AT RISK OF EXPLOITATION	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Total Number assessed at risk of Child Exploitation	71	78	70	62	61	61	70	74	79	72	83
Number of children who have been assessed low risk of CE after assessment stage	9	7	5	0	3	7	8	9	8	6	10
% Low Risk	12.7%	9.0%	7.1%	0.0%	4.9%	11.5%	11.4%	12.2%	10.1%	8.3%	12.0%
Number of children assessed as being at risk of CE Medium Risk after assessment stage	36	46	41	41	39	33	37	44	44	43	58
% Medium Risk	51%	59%	59%	66%	64%	54%	53%	59%	56%	60%	70%
Number of children assessed as being at risk of CE - High Risk after assessment stage	24	24	24	21	19	21	24	21	27	23	51
% High Risk	34%	31%	34%	34%	31%	34%	34%	28%	34%	32%	61%
CE: Number of Children subject to Risk Assessment	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
% Subject to a risk assessment	2.8%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Newly Assessed CE cases during the month	14	17	8	12	11	13	4	3	3	7	1

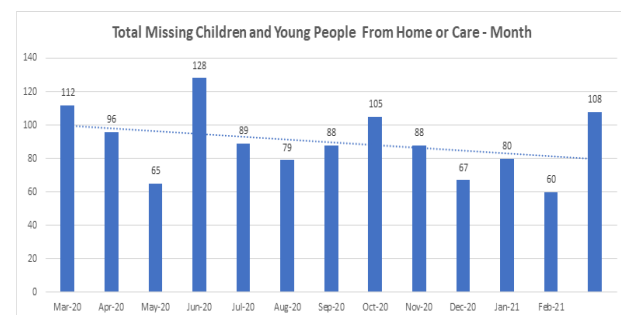
Referrals related to Child Exploitation during 2020/21

The table above represents the number of young people referred to the exploitation team – ‘Horizons’ for assessments where concerns are related to child exploitation. Referrals across the period have remained consistently high in the medium and high ‘risk’ categories, with new (1st time) referrals being received/assessed each month highest being in 17 in June 20, and the least at 1 in March 21.

Categorising Child Exploitation by ‘Risk’ during 2020/21



Children Missing from Home or Care



The table above shows the number of ‘compact received from police pertaining to children and young people reported as ‘missing’ by month during 2020/21. The highest period was in June 2020, when there was lockdown restriction in force, and the lowest in February 2021, when there were some easing on the people movement.

Domestic Abuse in Sandwell

The national concerns and projected rise in cases of domestic abuse is evident and prevalent in Sandwell, where during the year, 2020/21 there was:

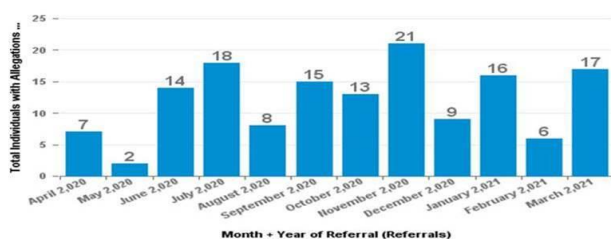
- a 30% increase in the total number of domestic abuse reports to police compared to the previous year –
- There were 6016 domestic abuse contacts reported by Sandwell Children’s Trust, a 4% increase on the previous year.

Private Fostering Arrangements

Living arrangements made privately between parent and carer and for more than 28 day consecutively without the knowledge/involvement of the local authority for a child/ren under 16 (18 with a disability) and care is provided by someone who is not a guardian, or close relative.

For the period, 8 new referrals were received and assessed by Sandwell Children’s Trust.

Local Authority Designated Officer - LADO



In line with legislation Sandwell, through the LADO complies with the statutory duty and manages allegations for people in ‘positions of trust’. The LADO is responsible for managing all child protection allegations made against staff and volunteers who work with children and young people in Sandwell. This includes Council/SCT staff, staff or partner agencies and volunteers. The table above illustrates new referrals received by LADO by month during the report period.

Hospital Attendance 2020/21

Part-year information between Oct 20 and March 21 relating to children and young people (under 18) seen in A& E of relevance to the safeguarding partnership are as follows:

- 10: seen for alcohol /substance misuse

- 16: seen for concerns relating to self-harm
- 82: young people were seen following overdose intake; and
- 20: young people were seen, treated and noted as victims of assaults.

Responding to Serious Safeguarding Incidents during 2020/2021

Sandwell has seen an increase in serious incidents requiring notifications to be made to the DfE, Ofsted and the National Panel during this reporting year. Each have led to a referral being made to the local standing ‘Rapid Review Panel’ for the consideration of national or local child safeguarding practice reviews in line with chapter 4 Working Together to safeguard children (2018).

The Rapid Review Panel received and considered 8 referrals during the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021, with 5 of the referrals being received between May and September 2020.

In recognising the challenges imposed by the Covid crisis, the National Panel extended the timescale from 15 to 20 days to receive the outcome of decisions made by Rapid Review panels between April and September 2020, and although there were increased numbers of referrals received, the Rapid Review Panel were able to maintain the original timescales and maintained the 15 day to alert the National Panel of the decision for all 8 Rapid Reviews undertaken as follows:

1. 9-year-old injured by mother, during a mental health crisis episode. Injuries were superficial, and child spent one night in hospital under observation. Excellent family support. Case was deemed not to meet the threshold for further scrutiny via Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR). The National Panel concurred with the decision reached.
2. Death of a 3-day old baby whilst in the care of mother at maternal

- grandparents' address. Extensive history of concerns regarding neglect, poor parental mental health, substance/alcohol misuse and domestic abuse for both parents in previous relationships. Case identified the need for multi-agency learning, therefore met the criteria for a LCSPR. The National panel agreed with the decision, and LCSPR underway, with much of the learning nearing implemented.
3. 11-month-old child who suffered sepsis and extensive burns caused by extreme nappy rash. Child received significant medical intervention. Case identified further learning in relation to the multi-agency responses with particular reference to poor home conditions and parental mental ill health. The National Panel concurred with the decision made by the Rapid Review Panel the case met criteria for CSPR.
 4. 7-month-old baby received significant head and body injuries perpetrated by father, who also injured mother during the same incident. Family new to the area and were unknown to any local services, although have substantial history in neighbouring local authority. Rapid Review Panel were unable to identify local learning for agencies in Sandwell and deemed the threshold for a LCSPR not to be met. The decision shared with the National Panel was not upheld, and a recommendation was made to undertake a LCSPR in partnership with the neighbouring local authority. this recommendation was reconsidered by the Rapid Review Panel, and a joint CSPR is underway.
 5. 6-year-old child with complex health, developmental and learning needs drowned when left unattended in a bath. Large sibling family known to both universal and statutory services, where concerns relating to support and interventions to families of BAME heritage was of concern and areas for learning for all agencies determined that the threshold was met for a LCSPR. The National Panel were informed and agreed with the decision reach by the Rapid Review Panel.
 6. 8-week-old baby and the subject of a Child in Need Plan who died of non-accidental head injuries whilst in the care of parents. Areas identified for further scrutiny via a LCSPR included the multi-agency response to domestic abuse, mental health, substance misuse and criminal activity. The National Panel concurred with the decision made by the Rapid Review Panel.
 7. 17-year-old not known to statutory services since early 2018 who died by apparent suicide. Young person was seen by GP early in 2020 and referred to CAMHS – service however, refused to engage. Rapid Review Panel concluded that the threshold for LCSPR was not met, this was agreed by the National panel.
 8. 13-year-old known to universal services only, who died by apparent suicide. The Rapid Review Panel were able to identify learning and action owners from the information gathered that would negate the purpose for a further review via CSPR process. The National Panel agreed with the decision that a CSPR was not required, however, did offer some improvement for future rapid reviews to include a chronology of events to aid piecing all the information together more easily.
- Overall, of these 8 cases considered by the Rapid Review Panel during the period, 4 were deemed not to meet the threshold for a further review via a LCSPR. The National Panel concurred with 3 of the decisions made, however, asked for 1 case to be reconsidered, the outcome of which was to commission a joint CSPR with a neighbouring local authority.
- During the period, the SCSP have also finalised 3 SCR's transferred from the former Safeguarding Children's Board, these were completed within the specified timescale of 29th September 2020.
- Learning the lessons from safeguarding incidents is taken very seriously in Sandwell, and the processes to monitor actions arising from such incidents have seen much improvements during this reporting period, this includes the mechanisms to 'hold agencies to account' for timely implementation on actions. The partnership has also reviewed the implementation of action arising from

recommendations, both former (SCR's) and current reviews and have been able to recognise and elevate for attention those where actions taken show little or no impact and therefore the same issues are being seen. These have been identified as:

- **Engaging with fathers/males/ significant others,**
- **Pre-birth and non-accidental injuries in under 1years; and**
- **Standardising culture and diversity in everyday practice.**

These 3 themes have been elevated to the priority areas for improvement in the SCSP Strategic Business Plan for the year ahead.

The SCSP can also take some acknowledgement of improvements made in the CSPR processes which received recognition and the following feedback was received by the SCSP and has been extracted from National Panel's 2020 Annual Report pertaining to Sandwell

"This rapid review was one of the strongest we saw. It makes good use of a template, which means that no relevant information is missed."

"The summaries are concise and relevant to the case, providing all the context necessary to understand the incident and the circumstances leading to it. Furthermore, there is clear evidence of analysis and reflection, rather than simply a description of involvement."

"It is worth noting that we could have chosen one of two reviews from the same safeguarding partnership, both of which were excellent."

Joining the Safeguarding dots'

The SCSP works in-tandem with other local Statutory/Strategic Partnership Board's, including Sandwell Safeguarding Adult Board Health and Well-being Board and Sandwell Safer Partnership, and Domestic Abuse Partnership and the Children and Young People's Commissioning Partnership. During the period of the pandemic, meetings between

the 'Chairs from each strategic forum has been put on hold, however have continued through fortnightly meetings of the respective business managers sharing cross-cutting themes linked to safeguarding.

The year 20/21 have seen this group successfully:

- Consolidate strategic plans and aligned leads and actions to the most appropriate board.
 - Developed joint partnership proposals to support the development for Early Help, Communication and Engagement and bridging the gap for 18 to 25's who may require Care and Support.
 - Connected Children and Young People's voice to work programmes.
 - Explored opportunities to work together more efficiently including consolidation of training and learning.
 - Identified a coordinate approach to learn from child Safeguarding practice Review's, Domestic Homicide Reviews, and Safeguarding Adult Reviews;
- Joining coordinate an event to strengthen the awareness, local response and need around transition from child to adult services, with particular reference and emphasis to reduce/tackle exploitation, From a DHR, initiate a local joint procedure for child to parent abuse.

Monitoring the Improvement Journey of Sandwell's Children's Trust

Sandwell Children's Trust's was set up in April 2018 following a series of inadequate Ofsted judgements to improve services for the most vulnerable children and families in Sandwell. The Children's Trust has reported year on year improvements since its inception, and particularly during this reporting year (20/21) in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ultimately, the purpose of The Trust is to provide better services to the children and families of Sandwell, however, whilst some of the pre-planned improvement activities for 20/21 were affected to respond to the pandemic, improvements made due to necessity has resulted in visible improvements in terms of strengthened partnership working, the

Trust's infrastructure and resilience amongst the leader in Sandwell.

Some of the key, specific achievements evident in the Trust improvement programme have been:

- Continued practice improvement in all areas are visible in audits
- Continued strengthening of performance analysis
- Infrastructure to strengthen permanence and matching
- Improved oversight and challenge by Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Conference Chairs (through midpoint reviews and threshold discussions)
- Continued development of services for exploited children
- Development of relationships across the partnership, for example housing, to put into place joint working protocols for homeless children
- Life story officers are in place to promote best practice in this area; and
- Increase in the interface between the work of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership and the Improvement Board.

At the start of the reporting year, and height of the restrictions, decisions on how to maintain visits to children and families and the need to ensure the safety of staff, resulted in the creation of a pre-visit risk assessment for social workers to use prior to any visits. This has remained an evolving document taking into account legislation and national advice and guidance. In addition, a Brief Intervention Team was formed to swiftly progress timely intervention and the safe closure of some of our children in need.

In addition to the above, a COVID-19 dashboard was created, which brought together information to identify which children were flagged as highest risk, being visited face to face or virtually, which children had a recent management oversight, and which children had a recent pre-visit risk assessment or education

status form. This has been invaluable in identifying those teams that are performing well and those who required additional support, it also allowed managers to identify those children who were most vulnerable and required more immediate actions.

An area where we are seeking consistently improvement is in relation to the new DfE returns, this demonstrates that the Trust is doing well, when compared to statistical neighbours, regionally and nationally, in relation to children being seen or contacted by their SW within a 4-week period. Some of the challenges and barriers experienced have been:

- Multi-agency working has been more restrictive, services only working virtually, professionals not completing home visits and children not attending school
- Due to the lack of services completing direct work, this impacted upon plans for children moving forward and at times, Social Workers have been the only professional visiting the home
- Reduced the access of the Local Offer to families in Sandwell. Many provider agencies are having difficulty recruiting staff to provide social activities in the local community. This has resulted in families struggling to access resources via the Local Offer making referrals to social care for an assessment for support services, therefore, having an impact on the Trust considering paying for services outside of the Local Offer
- The overnight short breaks unit closed December 2020, leaving 10 children and families without short breaks for several months. To address this, the team identified and sourced other short breaks units to cover the children without a resource.

Despite the challenges faced, the Trust have prioritised children at highest risk, ensuring all children have had the intervention they need based on their level

of risk; and have progressed care planning to ensure safeguarding needs are met, including identifying good support to families in other services – enabling us to work with only those who meet our threshold.

In always seeking innovative ways to qualify our support to children and families, against the difficult backdrop of the pandemic, the 'Trust have been able to establish a new communication route to gain the feedback from our children, young people, family and carers, and partners allows us to measure how well we are doing. During quarter 3 of 20/21 we introduced 'Feedback fortnight', reaching out to all children, young people, families, carers and professionals using snap surveys to gather feedback. We used a variety of mechanisms to engage our stakeholders, and a total of 169 surveys were completed by stakeholders during the fortnight. The analysis was very positive, and both children and families, and professionals have confirmed that our services are child centred and are supporting children and families in Sandwell effectively.

External Inspections

The 'Trust' currently remains under DfE intervention of 'Inadequate'. They did not have formal monitoring visits or a full inspection from Ofsted during the year, however, they did receive inspectors in November 2020 for a fostering assurance visit, and then in March 2021 for a wider assurance visit. Both visits were positive, praising our approach to managing services during the pandemic, and confirmed the areas they know required increase focus as they continue with their journey to provide improved services to the children and families of Sandwell.

The effectiveness of the SCSP Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

Throughout the unprecedented period of this annual report, partners in Sandwell have demonstrated shared commitment to Keeping staff and children safe and maintaining continuity of services during the pandemic, but equally recognised the

crucial role of having independent scrutiny to consistently monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the MASA. With this, the SCSP appointed an Independent Scrutineer with a dual role to also Chair the 'Quality of Practice, Performance and Assurance subgroup. The appointed, Liz Murphy started mild period, and was able to offer a 'reflection' on the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements and the associating activities covered in this report.

What does our Independent Scrutineer tell us about the strengths and areas for development and improvement in the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in Sandwell. The section below has been written by the independent scrutineer, Liz Murphy, took up the post in September 2020.

My initial task was to scrutinise child protection planning arrangements in the borough; the decision to commission this work was made in consultation with the Children's Services Improvement Board, due to the higher rate of child protection plans in Sandwell compared to statistical neighbours. The findings were presented to both SCSP and the Children's Services Improvement Board and are summarised below:

Working Well:

- Consistent application of the Signs of Safety framework in Child Protection Conferences
- A new approach to coordinating support to children and their families where the source of risk is outside the family home
- Maintenance of core child protection activity during the pandemic (This finding is reinforced by the findings of the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services that took place in March 2021:

<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80549>

Areas for Development:

- Increased knowledge of the child in need and significant harm definitions resulting in more appropriate

application of the significant harm “threshold” to inform the multi-agency decision to make a child subject of a child protection plan.

- Securing the contribution through provision of reports and attendance at Child Protection Conferences, of all relevant partners, including primary care and adult focused services
- Improving the quality of child protection plans so that it is clear for parents and professionals what changes are required, by when and how progress/success will be measured.
- Utilising the experiences of parents to inform/co-develop the child protection planning system.

Feedback from parents identified two important messages:

- help is not being provided early enough and/or services are not successfully engaging with parents or children and as a result,
- children are being unnecessarily being made subject of a child protection plan.

This feedback, plus other data, indicates that a priority for SCSP and the Joint Children and Young People’s Strategic Commissioning Partnership should be the further development of the multiagency early help offer/lead professional role to support children and their families when additional needs emerge and to prevent children requiring a statutory social work service.

I have also been invited to attend meetings to conduct a rapid review of serious child safeguarding incidents as required by Working Together 2018. Initially,

- the 4 statutory partners conducted the rapid review and decisions were largely based on the scoping returns from across the partnership.

However, after review, all partners who were involved with the subject child/family are now invited to contribute, thus enabling them to reflect

and identify any learning from their organisation or for the partnership.

I have seen evidence of learning themes from rapid reviews informing the practice theme for multiagency audits and, having reviewed serious case reviews that had been completed or were in progress when I took up post, there is a clear link between the learning identified from serious incidents and the partnership priorities/practice themes that have been agreed.

I have scrutinised an action plan arising from a learning review and as my predecessor identified, there is further work to do to ensure that there is clear evidence of timely implementation of the findings/recommendations and critically evidence of the impact of the actions taken by partners. This is a common challenge for safeguarding partnerships as identified by the National Panel’s review of safeguarding partnership’s yearly reports.

Rapid reviews and audits have consistently identified culturally sensitive practice as a learning theme which positively indicates that ethnicity, culture, race and identity are being addressed in reviews.

In response, cultural competence is reflected in the 2021-22 business plan; what is less clear is what actions will be taken through the partnership to develop practice and services so that the impact of culture, race and ethnicity on parenting, on children’s experiences and on professional responses is an integral feature of service delivery.

In summary and based on the seven months that I have been in post for the period covered by this report, I have seen the following evidence in respect of the effectiveness of the safeguarding partnership:

- Openness and strong commitment to continuous improvement
- Visible leadership from the SCSP

Chairperson and much work to refine and further develop the infra structure and governance arrangements including the establishment of 'reaching out' events to engage with relevant partners and frontline practitioners.

- High regard for the work of and contribution made by the Horizon Team to safeguarding children who are being exploited and the development of an alternative pathway to coordinate support to children and their families who are at risk of harm from outside the home.
- A robust partnership response to understanding and responding to the impact of the global pandemic on vulnerable children and their families.
- Clear link between learning from serious child safeguarding incidents and locally agreed priorities.

Areas that require further development are:

- The coordination of early help support to children and families including the role of the Lead Professional; there is also an opportunity to explore how a community resilience approach can be used to improve the health and wellbeing of children and families particularly in relation to priorities of neglect and child exploitation.
- Shared and consistent understanding of the application of statutory thresholds.
- Partner agency contribution to child protection planning as well as the quality of multi-agency child protection plans. The experiences of parents/carers could helpfully inform this work.
- Further development of the partnership's quality assurance framework
- Gathering evidence and data to illustrate the impact of learning from audit and reviews of serious child safeguarding cases.
- Clarity about the programme of work to be undertaken to further develop

cultural competence.

More from Liz Murphy, together with the contributions from the other subgroup chairs regarding progress made against the SCSP 20/21 business plan is showcase further on in this report, including case studies on the impact of work undertaken during the year of the Covid pandemic and in relation to the local demographics, facts, figure and emerging needs in Sandwell.

The information provided in this report to this stage offers an overview of Sandwell, in terms of demographic, child population, our rich and diverse ethnicity, deprivation and some of the emerging issues and demands pertinent for safeguarding interventions for our children young people and families.

At the start of reporting year, 1st April 2020, in addition to the known local issues being faced by Sandwell partners, the SCSP were faced with a number of new challenges brought about by the COVID:19 pandemic. We have seen all agencies working even more closely together, thinking creatively and pooling resources in response to each new and emerging problem being met by innovative solutions, and proactive messages being communicated in responses to some of the initial concerns and to ensure that safeguarding remain a prominent focus for all and to all in Sandwell.

Prior to publicising the Strategic Business Plan for the period, there was the need to create and issue Safeguarding alerts to children, young people, parents, carers and practitioners to ensure:

1. a consistent message was released to all Partners on the importance of 'keeping in touch' with children and families during the early stages of the national lockdown and restrictions/interference with face to face contact and with service delivery.
2. Weekly 'business continuity meetings were established bringing the most senior strategic leads together to understand, monitor and seek assurance of delivery plans to

maintain frontline /operational activities for the most vulnerable children and families

3. With the overreliance on technology to maintain contact during the period of the national lockdown and restrictions on the movement of people, there undoubtedly was a need to reach out to parents and inform them of some of the dangers on line. communicating the need for be extra vigilant to potential dangers was for parents in the context of being more alert to the increased opportunities for children to be groomed and abused online.

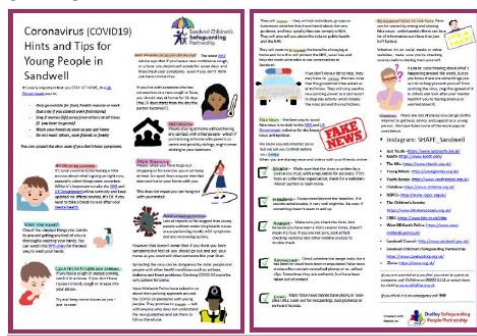
all organisations to ensure that the right response was given to any early indicators that a child may be a risk of abuse and /or neglect.



Evidence and Impact of safeguarding activities 20/21

The year 2020 for the SCSP saw a period where delivering the core functions were undertaken using various approaches, much of this work being completed via the subgroups.

There were no changes in the structures agreed and published in the MASA by the Safeguarding Partner in delivering the required 'core' statutory functions through what has been a difficult and unusual year. All subgroups have continued to progress the objectives of the SCSP Strategic Business Plan driving activities through the individual workplans. Relevant partners have demonstrated their commitment to safeguarding children through innovative ways of reaching and engaging with children, young people and families, and maintaining oversight of the issues that have been pertinent to safeguarding in Sandwell on the basis of local issues and demands.



4. Equally, information including 'hint & tips' to stay safe online were created with young people for young people



5. Sandwell is an area of high deprivation, meaning that many families live financially close to the edge with little/no resources for emergencies. For many families in Sandwell, COVID will impacted on their ability to maintain some of the basic necessities; i.e. rent, groceries bills, etc through the crisis. We saw an increase in 'food bank being opened, and support being offered from small community groups. Through the established relationship with SCVO, a short but empowering leaflet was designed and cascaded to

What has been less evident so far is the 'so what', what activities have been undertaken across the local safeguarding partnership to tackle the local issues, and what difference has been made to children, young people and families in Sandwell, taking into account the impact of the Covid pandemic.

The report will now move on with a view of demonstrating the impact and outcome of the work of across the various partners in Sandwell, including progress made by the subgroups in delivering the strategic

business plans and priorities for the SCSP, what activities have been undertaken in response to the covid crisis, and although it will be too early to show any meaningful impact of the pandemic, what the SCSP are wanting to demonstrate is what we have done to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children young people and families in Sandwell.

The achievements and successes are captured on the following pages and illustrated as 7 minutes briefings.

7 Minute Briefing – SCSP Strategic Business Plan 2020

1 – Leadership & Governance:

Maintain strategic leadership structure & arrangements

Release SCSP COVID 19 Position Statement
 Implement /monitor interim multi-agency safeguarding arrangements to ensure most vulnerable C&YP are safeguarded
 Devise a SCSP Risk Register collating the risk from each agency to be monitored on a weekly basis
 Assurance of interim operational communication pathways between stat partners
 Consider interim amendments to threshold for support.
 Reaching and engaging with wider partners, including community /care establishments.
 arrangements for independent scrutiny of the effectiveness of the arrangements
 Ratify publications, including CSPR's
 Development Event
 Routinely seek assurance of local multi agency activities

2- Mandate to Learning & Development Subgroup – L&D

Drive the core functions according to the requirements as defined in Working Together and the associated L&D Strategy.
 Maintain the L&D functions ensuring minimum interruptions in progressing the activities: specific for the period:
 Explore and implement alternative approaches to replace face to face training postpone in response to COVID 19
 Ensure comms messages, including those received from national regulators are timely, relevant, valid, and available in a range of formats, including website, and disseminated to reach a wide audience, including children, parents and practitioners.
 Development practice updates to be circulated virtually, including any learning lessons briefings arising from reviews/audits conducted/shared at local, regional and national level.
 Disseminate updated /refreshed policy /procedures received from West Midlands Regional Safeguarding Procedure Group.

7 – Strengthening the Role & Functions of the SCSP:

Increasing visibility of Children Voice of Children young People and families – connecting with SHAPE, gaining views of parents/carers in local reviews
 Communicating: “safeguarding is everybody’s responsibility” promoting greater vigilance using a range of approaches/website to communicate emphasise the need to safeguard during COVID crisis.
 Increasing communication channels to ‘relevant partners, including links with Sandwell Community & Voluntary Organisations (SCVO).
 Oversee the arrangements of the providers of health services through Sandwell Safeguarding Health Partnership, led by CCG
 Maintain connectivity with other strategic Boards in respect of cross-cutting themes and sharing updates and impact on joint service delivery across the borough

6. SCSP PRIORITY: Tackling Child Neglect

Task & Finish group mandated to coordinate the implementation of the NSPCC Graded Care Profile (GCP2) assessment tool across Sandwell Partners
 Promote the agreed assessment tool across the partnership,
 Work in partnership with the NSPCC to build a pool of suitable trainers from partner agency to deliver local training to practitioners in all agencies in Sandwell.
 Continually Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the use of GCP2 to support practitioner’s engagement with families.



5 –SCSP PRIORITY: Child Exploitation

Board established with portfolio for:
 Understanding local and national profile in relation to child exploitation Implement a robust multi-agency approach through an overarching strategy for all types of child exploitation in Sandwell.
 Consistently review the multi-agency referral pathways and support at all levels of need for concerns relating to exploitation, including MACE, Horizon Hub, Missing & RHI's
 Maintain strong links with other strategic boards to connect themes and ensure collaborated working, extending reach and remit of work to external networks, and actively responding & representing at national forums and utilising building ‘good practice examples to inform local responses to tackle issues of child exploitation in Sandwell.

3 – Mandate to Sandwell Learning from Practice Reviews Subgroup - SLPR:

Implement the local processes to ensure compliance to chapter 4 Working Together; Operate the level of activities as outline in the Interim COVID 19 release from National Panel – including alternative & virtual platforms to maintain statutory activities;
 Provide updates to SCSP on all serious incidents meeting the criteria for rapid reviews, local, national CSPR's and related messages.
 Implement process to ensure quality and standards and timeliness of all review reports, through to publications.
 Closing the loop, via robust systems to ensure recommendations /action plans are monitored through to completion; lessons from each review is widely shared; directed to L&D to inform learning needs and QPPA to monitor the impact and measure the effectiveness for compliance and assurance

4 – Quality of Practice, Performance & Assurance - QPPA:

Undertake the ‘core Quality assurance functions as defined in Working Together and consideration of COVID crisis through:
 Implementing mechanism for collecting data and intelligence to assess the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families, including early help during the period.
 Use a range of approaches to evaluate and qualify the local multi agency operational activities, connecting with practitioners, children, young people and families through a system and cycle of quality assurances processes.
 Evaluate and assess single agency safeguarding arrangements and the impact on multi-agency working and practice, including testing out the learning arising from through audits, and case reviews for the impact and strengths and areas from improvement in the delivery.

7 Minute Briefing – Learning & Development Subgroup Headlines



1 – Statutory Function of L&D

SCSP has a statutory responsibility to ensure that appropriate training on safeguarding and promoting welfare for children and young people is provided in Sandwell in order to meet local needs. This covers both the training provided by single agencies to their own staff, and multi-agency training where staff from different agencies train together in line with statutory guidance: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

"the three safeguarding partners should consider what training is needed locally and how they will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of any training they commission" WT18

7 – Horizon scanning

Key areas of focus for L&D during 2021 – 2022 are:

Impact evaluation process and increased output.

Seek assurance of single agency training.

Continue offering virtual 'Safeguarding Today events; emotional health and mental wellbeing of young people to be the focus for the second event and adolescent safeguarding identified as the topic for the third.

New sessions and new delivery styles to be planned with closer links to SLPR and QPPA sub groups to ensure learning is translated into training. Gradual return to face to face training with a new 'blended learning catalogue'.

6 – Growing our own Training Pool

We currently have 17 practitioners supporting our training programme (included individual topic-based trainers for CSPR, exploitation and thresholds). At the end of the annual report period we had received 12 expressions of interest from professionals interested in supporting the training pool, 9 were successfully recruited and due to begin their induction from April 2021. This is cost saving but more importantly it has greater value in terms of delegates relating to the anecdotes and case studies from the trainer/facilitator. It enables key messages to come across from those practitioners who understand the challenges faced by frontline workers but also enables the training to be 'Sandwellised'.

2- Alternative approaches to maintain /facilitate training events during Covid

The training offer for SCSP due for launch in 2020 was postponed in April 2020, the following message was uploaded onto the SCSP website and plans began to build some eLearning packages and for sourcing a suitable platform to host virtual training. In the initial stages the L&D group focussed on delivery of the Core Working Together sessions as this is statutory training for many organisations. The Core Working Together Refresher was built as an eLearning module and the full day session was adapted to incorporate an eLearning pre-course module followed by two half day virtual sessions. SCSP was soon able to move its virtual training offer to Microsoft Teams, virtual delivery has been largely well received with many delegates preferring this style of delivery and have found it more accessible.

3 – Training Offer

Virtual delivery has also enabled us to expand our offer, the first Safeguarding Today, What You Need to Know event was launched in January 2021. These half day seminars provide essential updates for managers and practitioners whose roles and responsibilities involve safeguarding children, they have been developed as a 'live newsletter' and a way for us to share information with large groups of practitioners. We have also been able to continue rolling out the GCP2 training for practitioners following the adaptation of the course by the NSPCC. This has enabled us to continue to address the SCSP priority of tackling neglect.

4 – Impact Evaluation Process

Impact of training during the last year has predominantly been through the online learning management system (LMS). However, we have also used the opportunity of engaging with participants attending the "Safeguarding Today; What you need to know" event, whilst the purpose of these sessions is to share up to date information and learning with a large group of professionals, they have also dovetailed as a different approach to gaining impact feedback from training. Through the LMS delegates are required to complete an on the day evaluation following each session to enable them to access their certificate. There are also two follow up stages programmed in the system, the third is focused on impact: **3 months after training delegates are contacted and asked:**

•Following training what has changed with your practice/systems? How has it impacted on performance?

•Please give an example of the difference this training has made to a child or family you are working with:

•Were there any barriers to implementing the learning?



5 – Impact Comments

Some of the impact feedback for training during the annual report year have been:

"if a child is absent from nursery, ring up and find out why they have not attended."

"It has allowed me to consider if a student was struggling from a mental illness which had not been picked up."

"Following the course I accessed the SPOC for a case which, after discussion with the front door and a duty social worker was MARFed. The case was then assessed through triage and acted upon"

"We now have access to the ECAF system and received the training."

"more aware of case conferences, and serious case reviews - had limited knowledge before training"

"It has allowed me to consider different questions to ask myself, student and team following disclosures."

"We are more alert and now have a better understanding of the process of how to submit a marf form or if we have any concerns."

L&D DATA & IMPACT SNAPSHOT

38 TRAINING SESSIONS DELIVERED VIRTUALLY ON 11 DIFFERENT TOPICS

804 DELEGATES ATTENDED VIRTUAL SESSIONS



732 DELEGATES ACCESSED E-LEARNING MODULES



CHILDHOOD REGAINED; EXPLOITATION UPDATE SESSION

"I have recognised a child that could be at risk of exploitation by their parent. CSE screening tool kit completed with all children I have on my caseload."

CHILDHOOD REGAINED; TACKLING CHILD EXPLOITATION

"Highlighted to a family the risks involved when their son is absconding from home and making them aware of his vulnerabilities and risk of exploitation."

CHILDHOOD REGAINED; SAFEGUARDING IN A DIGITAL WORLD

"I have sought to understand parents and childrens understanding of the risks of the internet and apps and taught them what to look out for and who they can report to should there be a concern in the future."

FOUR EXPLOITATION AWARENESS MODULES WERE ALSO WRITTEN AND BUILT DURING THE ANNUAL REPORT PERIOD AS ONE OF THE SCSP PRIORITIES

IMPACT ON PRACTICE - FEEDBACK FROM DELEGATES

BECOMING TRAUMA RESPONSIVE

"I will work with a strength-based process. Start and end each interaction with regulating activities Understanding the brain and body's response to trauma I will also look at connecting with the client rather than trying to get them to talk when they are not in their window of tolerance"

HIDDEN MEN

"Reviewed our Administration procedure for new entries to school requesting birth dads contact details. Previously I had only worked with Mother of a particular family I had concerns about. Once father was made to feel part of the plan significant positive changes have taken place. Booked meetings of an evening so dad was able to attend More involved of what is happening with their child's education and helping to support mum with parenting"

MODERN DAY SLAVERY AND TRAFFICKING AWARENESS

"One particular year 10 student is always raising alarming situations in school and how to deal with these with the use of in school/LA wide systems is a real help to us as a school."

MULTI-AGENCY THRESHOLDS

"Was able to use the threshold recently when discussing a family with management to show that they didn't meet the threshold for a MARF but that support could be given through Early Help and CAMHS. This meant the appropriate referral was done to get the right support in place more quickly"

I have re-evaluated a possible MARF by looking at the Threshold Document and potentially only needing Children's Centre

SIGNS OF SAFETY AWARENESS

"Dad is main caregiver as Mom works nights and long shifts. He has 5 girls to look after, the 3 youngest are under 5 and he suffers from depression, this was a great way of breaking down where he is at right now and what he can achieve and what he is working on next."

CORE WORKING TOGETHER

"Instigated a social worker visit for a child I had concerns about More aware of deliberate deception practised by adults/ families in their dealings with professionals. 2. Better knowledge of terminology associated with safeguarding. 3. Better knowledge of systems/ the referral process/ different levels."

1- QPPA

The focus and remit of the Quality of Practice, Performance and Assurance (QPPA) subgroup is to gain assurance of effective multi agency safeguarding arrangements across the partnership. This is done in a variety of ways and aims to identify and celebrate good practice, areas for improvement and to assess the robustness of joint working across partner agencies. The QPPA subgroup is accountable to and reports to the SCSP Board.

2- Key Reflections from the QPPA Chair

- Openness, challenge and a shared commitment to service improvement as the core behaviours that underpin the work of the subgroup.
- An increased focus on evaluating performance and quality of safeguarding services in QPP meetings
- Partners seeking to understand the impact of the global pandemic on safeguarding outcomes
- A programme of multi-agency auditing that includes engaging with front line staff to explore their perspective and experiences
- Statutory partners and voluntary/community sector (VCS) devising and implementing a plan to evaluate VCS safeguarding arrangements

7 – Priority Areas for Development

- A multiagency dataset that enables oversight of safeguarding systems/practice and what this means for children and families.
 - Evidencing the impact of quality assurance activities on practice/outcomes
 - Further development of opportunities for: 'direct' line of sight on practice; engaging with practitioners; receiving feedback from children and young people; and receiving feedback from parents/carers.
- Partners are reviewing the Quality Assurance Framework, including whether their individual organisation needs to gather additional information for more meaningful quality and performance assurance work.

6 – Adapting to COVID-19

- All subgroups, audit panels and multi agency discussion forums held virtually since March 2020 – this has included successful integration of new representatives and enabled activities to continue/develop despite changes.
- Development of specific groups to ensure clear sight on most vulnerable cohorts including the Vulnerable Children's Group. This group updated QPPA on the findings of a 'Return to School' survey.
 - Findings of Ofsted visit linked to QPPA and independent scrutiny work, including need for improvement in the quality/monitoring of CIN/CP plans and the quality of managerial oversight.



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5 – Impact on children and families

- MACFAs have evidenced that despite COVID-19 agencies have risen to the challenge of supporting families.
- Core Group Guidance for practitioners is being developed by frontline staff from learning from the Q2 MACFA to improve practice in this area and to positively impact on children.
- Joint ongoing work between QAS and CCG on GP attendance at ICPCs.
- A central directory of exploitation resources is being compiled for professionals to help professionals effectively support children at any tier.
- Development of alternative pathway via CEB to improve outcomes for children for whom statutory interventions are not appropriate.
- Revising the group membership has led to increased focus on needs of children and partnership working.
- Increased assurance via development of single agency assurance reports

3 – Progress made

- Independent Chair in post since autumn 2020 to give objective oversight and hold partners to account
- Group membership and Terms of Reference revised and updated
- Development of practitioner discussion forums in MACFAs
- Participating in planned regional approach to complete Section 11
- Increased focus on impact and the difference made to outcomes for children and families

4 – Barriers and Challenges

- Lack of performance data analyst is significantly impacting on the ability to gain a full understanding of partnership safeguarding arrangements and limits the ability to give full assurance to the SCSP.
- Outstanding attendance issues regarding some agencies – meetings have been held to address this which will be monitored moving forwards.
- Section 11 audit overdue and not completed for 2 years in Sandwell.
- MACFA process needs to be owned by the partnership as drift and delay can significantly impact on overall success. Next step to engage families in audit process where possible.
- A piece of work is underway regarding safeguarding arrangements in the voluntary sector to enable agencies to fully contribute to single and multi agency audits which to date has not happened.

1 – SLPR Subgroup ensures that:

- Reviews are conducted regularly, not only on cases which meet statutory criteria but also those providing useful insights into how organisations work together
- Reviews look at what happened and why
- Actions are monitored and result in lasting improvements to safeguard and protect children
- There is transparency about issues arising and the actions taken in response to them
- Reports are published and shared widely

2- Overview 1

- There have been 8 referrals following a Serious Incident which have progressed to Rapid Review. Of these, 5 met the threshold which are currently in progress as 4 CSPRs (1 is examining 2 cases due to similarity in themes). There have been double the amount of referrals for consideration for a CSPR compared with the same period in 2019-2020.
- The CSPR process has been updated and aligned to the CSPR Escalation Process to prevent drift and delay. Author briefings with panel members have been developed to set clear expectations and roles.
- A Communication Strategy has been drafted to outline the publication process, media strategy and effective dissemination of learning. This links to plans to launch a ‘Learning from Reviews’ drop in clinic.

7 – Extracts from National Panel Annual Report 2020 feedback

“This rapid review was one of the strongest we saw. It makes good use of a template, which means that no relevant information is missed.”

“..the summaries are concise and relevant to the case, providing all the context necessary to understand the incident and the circumstances leading to it. Furthermore, there is clear evidence of analysis and reflection, rather than simply a description of involvement.”

“It is worth noting that we could have chosen one of two reviews from the same safeguarding partnership, both of which were excellent.”

6 – Impact for children and families

- Key learning from CSPRs has identified gaps in knowledge and repetitive themes, which has led to the development of sub themes for the SCSP’s priorities, including ‘Engaging with Fathers.’ This has been shared with L&D and has informed the updated multi agency training programme, which has offered ‘Hidden Men: Finding Ways Forward’ training since February 2020.
- The SLPR subgroup has embraced creativity in reviews, enabling reviews to be dynamic, focussed and responsive to the issues arising from the incident. This helps identify learning that is proportionate and measurable.



3 – Overview 2

- Amended action tracker enables clearer line of sight and now includes an ‘Evidence of Impact’ column which continues to develop.
- The TOR and group membership have been updated with attendance and contribution being a strength.
- Developing stronger links with SAR/ DHR processes via planned joint training and CDOP process, with a CDOP rep now on the subgroup. Learning shared with L&D to inform multi agency training offer.

5 – Barriers and Challenges

- Unable to visit families in person to discuss CSPR – has been managed successfully with virtual meetings but would be better face to face due to sensitive nature of discussion.
- Harder to gauge feelings/responses in virtual Learning Events. Panel briefings being further developed to ensure panel members fully brief/ support staff before Learning Events.
- Ensuring full attendance, especially by statutory partners, at Learning Events/panel meetings. This has been addressed via the SLPR Chair and updating the CSPR process.
- Further work needed to evidence the impact of single and multi agency actions. Going forwards single agency work will be monitored via QPPA to enable greater focus on the multi agency response within SLPR.

4 – Adapting to COVID-19

- Despite increased referrals, virtual working has not impacted on progress. All 8 Rapid Reviews (RR) held virtually and returns sent within timescale.
- A RR contingency plan and flowchart was devised and has worked effectively.
- Two additional boxes added to RR template re. domestic abuse and impact (if any) of COVID-19.
- Scoping return authors now invited to present their report to share in depth knowledge and add richness to discussion.
- All panel meetings and Learning Events have taken place virtually.
- Improved links with Child Death process – SCSP now represented at JAR meetings and now have a CDOP rep on the SLPR subgroup.
- The National Panel selected a Sandwell RR for its’ annual report as a good practice example for its’ robust analysis and clear rationale.

The established Child Exploitation Board (CEB)

- Have a clear mandate to support the SCSP in understanding the local and national profile in relation to all forms of child exploitation.
- Implement a robust multi-agency approach through an overarching strategy for all types of child exploitation in Sandwell, contributing to an aspiration to make Sandwell a Borough which is an Exploitation free zone.
- To ensure collaboration and a single multi agency approach to tackle child exploitation in Sandwell
- To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategic and operational multi-agency response to all forms of exploitation,
- To maintain oversight of the local and national areas for learning and development and 'best practice approaches /resources to inform and improve the local processes.

2- Roles and responsibility

- -To ensure the voice of children and young people is evident in all aspect of the activities
- -Develop a workplan and maintain delivery of the Exploitation Strategy, including:
- -Monitoring of partner agencies approach to exploitation for consistency, standards and to evidence the impact of their contribution to multi-agency working.
- Ensuring that current practice and interventions are informed by evidence based and linked and mapped to national policy and developments.
- Regular scrutiny and governance of policy, procedure and best practice guide in relation to child exploitation and disseminate information through the CEB to the workforce
- Consistently review the multi-agency referral pathways and support at all levels of need for concerns relating to all types of child exploitation
- Maintain strong links with other strategic boards to connect themes and ensure collaborated working, extending reach and remit of work to external networks, and actively responding & representing at national forums and utilising building 'good practice examples to inform local responses to tackle issues of child exploitation in

7 – Priority Areas for Development

- CE Performance dataset has been developed to give an insight of data across the partnership and this is continuing to progress
- Sandwell Exploitation Directory to be available across partnership
- Childs Voice is a standard agenda item within meetings and has been extremely informative within meetings to ensure decisions and the CEB workplan/actions are influenced by their experiences.
- Sandwell is now part of LAIN network and with the developmental work and specialist knowledge of Dr Carlene Firmin, Bedfordshire University and the involvement in the LAIN to develop contextual safeguarding borough.



3 – Progress made

- Implementing areas of learning identified from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, this including 'it was hard to escape' published by the National Safeguarding Panel
- Undertaken local multi agency audit through the lens of child exploitation
- Received and cascade learning from a local SCR with a section relating to exploitation of a case subject's sibling. section relating to child exploitation from of a SCR audit, introduce a child voice case study as a standing item at each meeting
- CEB Sandwell are member of LAIN and resources are coordinated via members of the CEB Contextual Safeguarding Champions are in place to champion contextual safeguarding in Sandwell and strengthen the understanding, approaches and responses across borough.
- CEB contributed to the 'Learning from Excellence' summit delivered by the Secretaries of State.
- Influenced the strengthen approach to multi-agency training n relation to child exploitation.
- Introduce a child exploitation dataset to monitor local practice and responses to child exploitation

5 – Impact on children and families

- Effective running of the exploitation HUB which considers all those children at high risk of or experiencing child exploitation and ensure a multi-agency response and shares intelligence to reduce risks to other children and young people.
- Exploitation Directory, which will also include Domestic Abuse, Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health is being developed through SCVO. This will ensure children and young have access and practitioners are fully equipped to support exploitation. Child Voice case study rota has been introduced across the multi-agency members which provides an opportunity for members to listen to their views to shape services and CEB workplan.

6 – Adapting to COVID-19

- All subgroups have taken place and held virtually since March 2020 – this has included successful integration of new representatives and key guests to be present when needed has been successful.
- Services across the partnership have continued to support children, young people and families. Adapting ways of working, whilst continuing face to face contact when possible and needed.

4 – Barriers and Challenges

- Understanding and connectivity across other strategic groups in Sandwell and across border as well as the national picture in relation to exploitation,
- Exploitation services across Sandwell at all levels are not fully known or recognised. Currently a piece of work that is focusing on a creating a 'service directory' that will be available across the partnership.

Annual Report 2020-21

1- Implementing GCP2

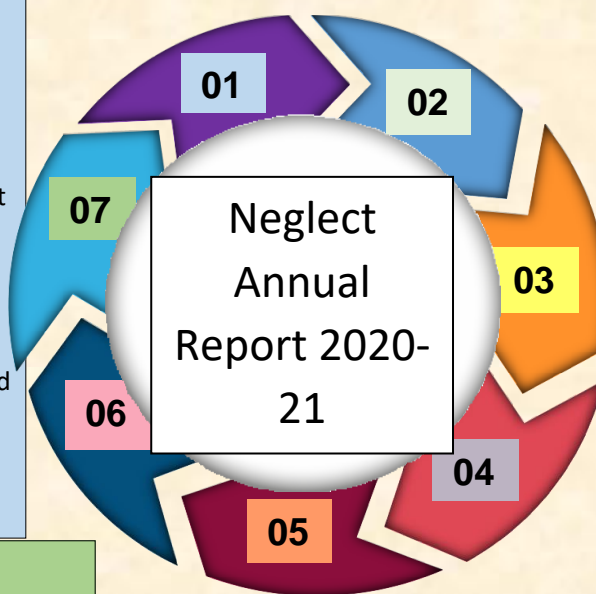
- Following the JS CSPR in Sandwell Neglect has been identified as an area of priority for the Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership (SCSP) with the area focus being the formation of a task & finish group to assist practitioner in assessing the needs of children in families where neglect is a concern.
- With a mandate to take lead and coordinate ownership of and be accountable for the delivery of this area. In March 2021 the GCP2 implementation Group ceased and formed the Tackling Neglect Subgroup. The focus and remit of work for 'Sandwell's Tackling Neglect Subgroup' (STNS) ambition is to reduce levels of neglect and where possible to prevent neglect from the earliest possible opportunity. Ensuring we have robust systems and processes in place for the early identification of neglect and prevent where possible.

2- Roles and responsibility

- To be accountable for the delivery of the Neglect priority of the SCSP business plan and implement GCP2 across the partnership.
- To drive forward the implementation of the Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) assessment tool, including agreeing the content, use and associated training.
- Devise virtual package, materials, plan and coordinate GCP2 training across the partnership. Quality assure training and GCP2 tools
- To monitor and promote training, learning events and work streams relating to subgroup

3 – Progress made-

- GCP2 training in part of the SCSP training offer, with a core group of trained trainers. The training has been in high demand since launching. Due to COVID the training moved to virtual training in September 20 and has continued to run virtually.
- There are currently over 300 practitioners across the partnership trained is GCP2
- Sandwell Trainer won an award at the NSPCC conference for implantation and delivery of GCP2
- Staff briefings for manager events held virtually to engage managers within GCP2
- GCP2 imbedded with Early Help system and social care system
- Good practice case study completed and shared across partnership



7 – Priority Areas for Development

- Devising of GCP2 virtual training across the partnership
- Identifying new trainers for GCP2
- Promoting training and uptake
- Design of basic neglect awareness course as part of pre-course for GCP2
- Regular communication and relationship building with trainers/support
- Building relationships across partner agencies, holding briefings and promoting of GCP2 and importance of neglect.
- Identifying a chair for Neglect Subgroup

5 – Impact on children and families

Thoughts on GCP2 from a practitioner:

- The tool is a fantastic way of managing risk around neglect. Although there are several areas throughout, it allows the worker and family to identify the specific area that needs addressing to make positive change for the children.
- GCP2, training is in high demand and feedback is positive. Sandwell wants to have a consistent approach and gain a consistent understanding across Sandwell to better Safeguard children who are being neglected

4 – Barriers and Challenges

- Neglect is the highest category for children on CP plans and features across 60% of CSPR's nationally.
- GCP2 training is complex and the transition into virtual presented challenges around resources, access and information
- The first cohort of trainers in GCP2 numbers lowered and this led to training dates being cancelled and unable to deliver regular training. This was overcome through a further train the trainer course to build the training pool to meet demand.
- Identifying a chair for the Neglect Subgroup was difficult and this delayed this formation of the subgroup for Neglect.

6 – Adapting to COVID-19

- Subgroup has formed during COVID period and is currently working well virtually.

CASE STUDY ON NEGLECT

REASON IT CAME TO TARGETED SERVICES:

HOUSING COMPLETED AN EHA FOLLOWING POOR HOME CONDITIONS. THE HOUSE WAS UNCLEAN AND UNSAFE FOR THE 3 YOUNG CHILDREN LIVING IN THE PROPERTY.

WHY I USED THE TOOL:

THE NEGLECT TOOL WAS A WAY TO EVIDENCE AND SHOW MUM/DAD THE REASON PROFESSIONALS ARE WORRIED AND WHERE WE WOULD LIKE THINGS TO BE IN ORDER FOR THE HOUSE TO BE CLEAN AND SAFE FOR THE CHILDREN. THE LITTLE EXAMPLE CARDS VISUALLY HELPED PARENTS UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE OF THE TOOL AND HELPED THEM ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE HOME WAS POOR AND WHY THINGS NEEDED TO BE CHANGED IN ORDER FOR THE CHILDREN TO THRIVE.

BENEFITS USING GCP2:

THE TOOL HELPED BOTH MYSELF AND PARENTS WORK TOGETHER TO MOVE UP THE RATING SCALE AND SET SPECIFIC ACTIONS/TASKS OF WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE EACH WEEK FOR THINGS TO BE BETTER. I TOOK THE TOOL OUT EACH TIME I WENT, I VISITED THE PROPERTY A FEW TIMES A WEEK, ANNOUNCED AND UNANNOUNCED, SO WE COULD ALWAYS MEASURE THE HOME/CLEANLINESS AGAINST THE TOOL AND WHAT WAS DISCUSSED THE PREVIOUS WEEK. THE ENTIRE TOOL FORMED MY WHOLE INTERVENTION AND IF ANY OTHER ACTIONS WERE IDENTIFIED, THEY WERE INCORPORATED AS PART OF THE TOOL.

WORRIES:

WITH THIS FAMILY, THE FAMILY WERE VERY MUCH ONBOARD AND DESPERATELY WANTED TO MAKE CHANGED. MY ONLY WORRY WOULD BE USING THIS WITH A FAMILY THAT DON'T ACKNOWLEDGE THE CONCERNS AND WOULD THIS BE HARDER TO ACHIEVE RESULTS UNTIL THEY RECOGNISE THE CHANGES THAT NEED TO BE MADE.

FINDINGS/OUTCOME FOR THE FAMILY:

THIS HELPED PARENTS VISUALLY AND THEY WERE ABLE TO COMPLETE THESE MINI TASKS EACH WEEK TO FINALLY AT THE END THE HOUSE WAS CLEAN, REPAINTED AND DECORATED AND LOOKED COMPLETELY DIFFERENT. THE CHILDREN ALSO NOTICED A BIG DIFFERENCE AND WERE HAPPY BEING AT HOME AND FELT HAPPIER THEY COULD GET INTO THE KITCHEN AND THE HOUSE WASN'T MESSY.

THOUGHTS ON GCP2:

THE TOOL IS A FANTASTIC WAY OF MANAGING RISK AROUND NEGLECT. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE SEVERAL AREAS THROUGHOUT, IT ALLOWS THE WORKER AND FAMILY TO IDENTIFY THE SPECIFIC AREA THAT NEEDS ADDRESSING TO MAKE POSITIVE CHANGE FOR THE CHILDREN.

EXPLOITATION CASE STUDY

REFERRAL BACKGROUND:

T WAS OPEN TO THE HORIZONS TEAM IN NOV. 2020 DUE TO CONCERNS SURROUNDING EXPLOITATION TO COUNTY LINES INVOLVEMENTS, GANG AFFILIATION AND GLORIFICATION AND CARRYING OF OFFENSIVE WEAPONS. THERE WERE ALSO CONCERNS SURROUNDING THREATS TO KILL AIMED TOWARDS T AND THE FAMILY HOME. T WAS DEEMED TO BE HIGH RISK VULNERABILITY OF EXPLOITATION. T HAD MULTIPLE MISSING EPISODES AT THE START OF THE HORIZONS ALLOCATION AND MOM WAS SUPPORTED IN ENSURING THAT ALL APPROPRIATE MEASURES WERE IN PLACE AND ANY INFORMATION WAS SHARED WITH OURSELVES AND POLICE COLLEAGUES. DURING THIS TIME, SESSIONS WERE COMPLETED OVER THE PHONE AND T WOULD PICK UP THEIR PHONE AND ACCEPT THIS SUPPORT VIA PHONE CALLS INITIALLY AND TRUST WAS BUILT. HIS ALLOCATED HORIZONS WORKER WOULD MAINTAIN HIS CONSISTENT WORKER COMPLETING RETURN HOME INTERVIEWS FOLLOWING MISSING EPISODES. T HAD BEEN ARRESTED OUT OF AREA FOR A POSSESSION OF BLADED ARTICLE AND PWITTS CHARGE OF CLASS A SUBSTANCES. ALONGSIDE THE ABOVE CONCERNS, THERE WERE ALSO CONCERNS AROUND T NOT BEING IN TRAINING OR EDUCATION, A POTENTIAL FAMILY BREAKDOWN, T'S MENTAL HEALTH AND T'S UNDERSTANDING OF HIS IDENTITY SPECIFICALLY TO CULTURAL IDENTITY. THERE WAS AN INCIDENT WHEREBY POLICE WERE CALLED TO THE FAMILY HOME AFTER AN ALTERCATION BETWEEN MOM AND T. T WAS PLACED IN EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION DUE TO MOM STATING THAT SHE FELT THAT SHE COULDN'T KEEP T SAFE AND THERE BEING A BREAKDOWN IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP AS PART OF THE MULTI-AGENCY TEAM HIS HORIZONS WORKER PROVIDED HOLISTIC SUPPORT IN THIS AREA ALSO. HE AND MOM WERE SUPPORTED FOR T TO RETURN TO THE FAMILY HOME AND THE IMPROVEMENTS IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP DURING THE WORK WITH THE PROFESSIONALS SUPPORTING WAS POSITIVE. DURING THE RELATIONSHIP BUILDING STAGE, WHERE TARGETED WORK WAS MINIMAL DUE TO TRUST BEING BUILT - MORE CONTEXTUAL WORK WAS COMPLETED. AN NRM WAS SUBMITTED, PNC AND SIG MARKERS WERE REQUESTED TO POLICE, MAPPING AROUND PERPETRATORS AND LOCATIONS WERE COMPLETED WITH THE INFORMATION WE KNEW, A REFERRAL TO TALENT MATCH WAS MADE TO SUPPORT AROUND TRAINING AND RESEARCH WAS COMPLETED AROUND T'S CULTURAL IDENTITY TO ENABLE THAT WORK TO BE COMPLETED.

INTERVENTION:

WHEN TRUST HAD BUILT, MORE TARGETED INTERVENTIONS WERE THEN ABLE TO TAKE PLACE WITH T AROUND SUBSTANCE MISUSE, EMOTIONAL WELLBEING, EXPLOITATION AND GROOMING AWARENESS WORK, WEAPON AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING OF RISK, CULTURAL IDENTITY, PROSOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS. T ENGAGED EXCELLENTLY IN THIS WORK AND WAS ABLE TO RECOGNISE THROUGH THE WORK COMPLETED THAT HE HAS BEEN TARGETED FOR THE PURPOSES OF EXPLOITATION AND HAD A DETERMINATION TO TURN THINGS AROUND.

IMPACT AND OUTCOME:

T ENGAGED EXCELLENTLY WITH HIS TALENT MATCH MENTOR AND COMPLETED DIFFERENT TRAINING COURSES IN CONSTRUCTION AND HEALTH AND SAFETY. ALONGSIDE THIS HE PARTOOK IN FOOTBALL TRIALS TO JOIN A FOOTBALL TEAM AND UNDERTOOK VOLUNTEER INTERVIEWS FOR THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES, HE WILL CONTINUE THIS VOLUNTEERING NEXT YEAR WHEN THE GAMES TAKE PLACE. T WAS DUE TO BE ARRESTED FOR AN HISTORIC PWITTS CHARGE - WHERE AN ONGOING OCG INVESTIGATION WAS PRESENTED DUE TO A COUNTY LINE GOING INTO THE AREA. DUE TO THE CLOSE COMMUNICATION AND STRENGTH OF THE MULTI-AGENCY WORK WITH ALL PARTNERS WHICH INCLUDED HORIZONS AND THE POLICE ALONG WITH THE CONCLUSIVE GROUNDS NRM NOW BEING IN PLACE, T WAS ABLE TO INSTEAD ENGAGE IN A VOLUNTARY INTERVIEW AND T WAS SEEN AS A VICTIM OF EXPLOITATION. HE WAS SUPPORTED BY HORIZONS WORKER TO A VOLUNTARY INTERVIEW WHEREBY HE TOLD HIS EXPLOITATION JOURNEY AND WAS ABLE TO SUPPORT PARTS OF THE INVESTIGATION. THE CHARGES WERE THEN DROPPED AGAINST T FOR THE PWITTS CHARGE FOLLOWING HIM ENGAGING WITH POLICE AND HIM BEING SEEN AS A VICTIM OF CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION. T WAS ALSO SUPPORTED TO COURT FOR THE CHARGE OF POSSESSION OF A BLADED ARTICLE, T PLEADED NOT GUILTY BASED ON MODERN SLAVERY ACT - THIS WAS DEFERRED FOR MORE INFORMATION REGARDING THE EXPLOITATION CONCERNS. FOLLOWING THE CPS INVESTIGATION, INFORMATION BEING SUPPLIED BY ALL PROFESSIONALS SUPPORTING T THIS CHARGE WAS DROPPED AND AT CLOSURE THERE WERE NO REMAINING OUTSTANDING CHARGES AGAINST T. T WAS CLOSED TO MACE AND TO THE HORIZONS TEAM AFTER ALL WORK BEING COMPLETED AND IN VIEW OF THE POSITIVE CHANGES MADE. A CLOSURE SAFETY PLAN WAS DEVELOPED ALONGSIDE T LOOKING MAINLY AT RESILIENCE, SUSTAINABILITY AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE POST 18.

We have seen the progress made by each subgroup in delivering the objectives of the 2020/21 SCSP Strategic business plan and together with subgroup Chairs have closely recognised some of the benefits from the unpredicted climate where working 'differently' navigating and embracing the changes seems to becoming the 'norm' and are continuing to build and strengthen our Safeguarding arrangements through showcasing and celebrating some of the important activities that have been carried out across the Safeguarding landscape in Sandwell.

This year we have particularly focused our attention on the impact of the activities undertaken by partners in keeping children, young people and families Safe during the Covid pandemic.

We know that Ofsted during their assurance visit in January 2020 reported safe practices in and maintenance of core child protection activity during the pandemic.

The Report now moves on with a focus on some of the direct activities undertaken by the statutory Safeguarding Partners, and our relevant agencies and really demonstrates the wealth of work covered during the period and using case studies, feedback from children, families and frontline practitioners in evidencing the growth, developments and commitment to safeguarding in Sandwell.

SANDWELL HEALTH

News and updates over the last 12 months



IN THIS ISSUE

BARRIERS HEALTH SERVICES/FAMILIES FACED IN ACCESSING HEALTH SERVICES

IMPACT OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS

SERVICE USER FEEDBACK

During the Covid-19 Pandemic....

Sandwell and West Birmingham CCG

Due to the COVID 19 Pandemic there was an unprecedented demand for health and social care services, with the situation changing daily. NHS staff members were required to work under exceptional circumstances, with the expectation that they may be redeployed outside of their usual sphere of practice to support the delivery of patient services. This significantly impacted upon the capacity of all staff to continue with business as usual and required a need to consider "life-saving safeguarding", identifying tactics to support our most vulnerable children, for example children who are Looked After, unaccompanied asylum seekers, children in care homes and children who may need to be isolated. As schools closed, it was imperative to support our most vulnerable children e.g. those who are reliant on free school meals, those who are at risk of exploitation and those living in households where Domestic Abuse, Mental Health or Substance Misuse is a feature.



Black Country Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust



Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust - At the outset of the pandemic universal services (maternity, health visiting, school nursing, community children's nursing teams and allied health professionals) were guided by NHS England and other publications on what services could be stepped down and how others could safely be delivered.



MATERNITY AND HEALTH VISITING WERE INVENTIVE IN HOW THEY REMAINED 'COVID SAFE' BUT WERE **ABLE TO CONTINUE TO DELIVER COMMUNITY CLINICS UTILISING A LOCAL FOOTBALL STADIUM**; THIS IMPROVED COMMUNITY CONFIDENCE AS IT WAS KNOWN THERE WAS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF FEAR IN ACCESSING HOSPITAL SERVICES GIVEN THE IMPACT OF COVID. INITIALLY SWBT SAW A REDUCTION IN FOOTFALL THROUGH THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS (ED) AND PAEDIATRIC REFERRALS; WHICH IN LIGHT OF THIS WORKED WITH SWBT COMMUNICATIONS TEAM AND SOCIAL PLATFORMS UTILISED SUCH AS FACE BOOK AND TWITTER IN EACH SERVICE AREA TO CIRCULATE KEY MESSAGES (DOH TRAFFIC LIGHT SYSTEM) TO PARENTS ON WHEN TO ACCESS HEALTH SERVICES AND IN PARTICULAR ED GIVEN A CHILD'S HEALTH PRESENTATION.

School health introduced a 'home visiting team' on a daily basis to carry out home visits to our most vulnerable children as required following an appropriate risk assessment as per SWBT guidance. The team also promoted Chat Health on social media platforms as a means of gaining support from the team manned during working hours which enabled a prompt response to queries children and young people (CYP) may have had.



Emotional wellbeing is important for both you and your child. Your GP can help signpost you to support services, or talk to your health visitor or the school health nurse attached to your child's school. There is also BEAM <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/.../services/beam-sandwell-or-www.kooth.com>.

KOOTH.COM
www.kooth.com

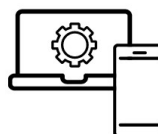


Children are spending more time on electronic devices - do you know what your children are accessing online? Have you set parental controls? Do you know who they are conversing with? <https://www.npscc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/parental-controls>



Dentists in Sandwell are open for routine appointments. Children's oral health is so important, remember to replace toothbrushes every 3-4 months.

BARRIERS HEALTH SERVICES/FAMILIES FACED IN ACCESSING HEALTH SERVICES



All Sandwell and West Birmingham GP Practices rapidly implemented a 'total triage' model using telephone and online consultation tools and worked together in developing **Red, Amber and Green** primary care sites. **Red** was for patients with COVID-19 related symptoms who needed to see a GP (e.g. COVID 19 and required management of diabetes). Staff who had no risk factors were stationed here. **Amber** facilitated all face to face activity (non COVID-19) related, both planned and unplanned activity. Most sites were undertaking vaccinations and immunisations in the morning and telephone triaging those needed to be seen in the afternoon to reduce cross infection. Staff at lower risk were stationed here. **Green** practices were closed to the general public, but staff were working behind closed doors to telephone/video triage and undertook all administrative tasks such as prescriptions.

Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust Technology was a barrier for some families but where possible this was overcome by offering home visits or telephone contact, and other virtual apps such as WHATSAPP /visionable if families had access to smartphones. Health visiting continued to provide community clinics and offered these via an appointment system to ensure social distancing could be maintained during the pandemic (this was the same for maternity services).



Sandwell and West Birmingham CCG Safeguarding Team worked in collaboration with partners to identify children at high risk and this information was shared with Primary Care during the lockdown period to inform the GP assessment of need.

IMPACT OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS

WITHIN UNIVERSAL SERVICES, SERVICE PROVISION REMAINED STABLE. SPEECH AND LANGUAGE SERVICE PROVIDED A RAPID COVID SWABBING TEAM TO SCHOOL STAFF FOLLOWING A COVID OUTBREAK WHICH ENSURED THERE WAS MINIMAL DELAY IN THE SCHOOL RE-OPENING TO CHILDREN.

HEALTH VISITING CONTINUED TO UNDERTAKE HOME VISITS TO REVIEW POSTNATAL MENTAL HEALTH, SUPPORT FOR BREAST FEEDING MUMS EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS. FOR SOME FAMILIES THE HEALTH VISITOR MAY HAVE BEEN THE ONLY PROFESSIONAL VISITING A HOME DUE TO A NUMBER OF SERVICES MOVING TO A VIRTUAL PLATFORM.

THE IDVA SERVICE CONTINUES TO BE A POSITIVE VENTURE IN OUR EDS WHICH IS DEMONSTRATED BY THE VOICE OF THE VICTIMS AS QUOTED:

"THANK YOU FOR LISTENING"

"YOU DO AN AMAZING JOB, THE FIRST PERSON WHO HAS ACTUALLY MADE ME FEEL SAFE"

"THANK YOU FOR COMMENTS THAT SUPPORTED BELIEFS"

"THANK YOU FOR ONGOING SUPPORT AND TELEPHONE CALLS THAT MADE ME FEEL BETTER ABOUT MYSELF"

"RELIEVED TO GET INTO REFUGE"

"RELIEVED PEOPLE BELIEVE WHAT I WAS SAYING"

"IT MADE A DIFFERENCE BEING ABLE TO TALK TO SOMEONE"

"THANK YOU FOR VALIDATING RELATIONSHIP WAS ABUSIVE AND PROVIDING USEFUL INFORMATION MAKING ME AWARE SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE"

THE DESIGNATED NURSE FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN HAD DEVELOPED THE CARE LEAVERS MOBILE APP, WHICH WAS LAUNCHED AS A PILOT IN JANUARY 2020. IT IS A USER-FRIENDLY HEALTH INFORMATION STORE FOR CARE LEAVERS WHICH ENABLES THE USER TO KEEP IMPORTANT HEALTH INFORMATION IN ONE SECURE PLACE, MAKING IT EASILY ACCESSIBLE AT THE CLICK OF A BUTTON. THE APP CREATED / DESIGNED WITH THE HELP OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE AND GIVES INSTANT ACCESS TO THEIR HEALTH INFORMATION INCLUDING HEALTH HISTORY, MEDICATIONS, MEDICAL HISTORY, ALLERGIES AND CHILDHOOD IMMUNISATIONS. IT IS A USEFUL TOOL IF VISITING THE DOCTOR AND THE USER WANT'S ACCESS TO INFORMATION QUICKLY.

THE MASH TEAM HAVE BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN ANALYSING DATA. IMPLEMENTING THE 'SO WHAT FACTOR' FOLLOWING THEMES/TRENDS IDENTIFIED THROUGH ANALYSIS OF THIS DATA, THE HEALTH MASH TEAM SET SIMPLE REMINDERS TO PARENTS VIA SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS SUCH AS:

- THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILDREN'S ORAL HEALTH, WHICH LINKS IN TO THE ROLL OUT OF SWBT 'MOUTH CARE MATTERS CAMPAIGN'
- INCREASED SCREEN TIME DUE TO HOME LEARNING - IMPORTANCE OF REGULAR OPTICIAN APPOINTMENTS
- CHILDREN ARE SPENDING MORE TIME ON ELECTRONIC DEVICES - DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR CHILDREN ARE ACCESSING ON LINE? HAVE YOU SET PARENTAL CONTROLS? DO YOU KNOW WHO THEY ARE CONVERSING WITH? [HTTPS://WWW.NSPCC.ORG.UK/KEEPING-CHILDREN-SAFE/ONLINE-SAFETY/PARENTAL-CONTROLS/](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parental-controls/)
- EXERCISE AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING.



Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust
 27 March · 🌐

Due to increased screen time and learning from home, children's vision may be affected. Please contact your local optician for a vision check. If your child wears glasses their prescription may need reviewing.

Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust
 26 March · 🌐

How active has your child been while not in school? Even going for a walk once a day can help increase their physical activity.

Seek advice from your GP, Health Visitor or School Health Nurse for advice on diet and activity.



SWBT 'MAGIC MONDAY' PLAY THERAPY GROUP MOVED TO A VIRTUAL PLATFORM, WITH PARENTS ATTENDING VIRTUALLY VIA THEIR HOMES; WHICH FACILITATED PARENTS PARTICIPATING IN PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH OTHER FAMILIES. THE SERVICE NOTED AN INCREASE IN ATTENDANCE/UP TAKE; THEREFORE GOING FORWARD WILL CONTINUE TO OFFER BOTH FACE TO FACE GROUP AND A VIRTUAL GROUP.

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY NOTED AN INCREASE IN UPTAKE OF SERVICE FOR THOSE YP IN YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICES AS THEY PREFERRED THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR APPOINTMENTS. ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE FOR OUR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN WOULD SUPPORT THE SAME VIEW.

Sandwell
 Children's Trust

Keeping staff and children safe and maintaining continuity of services during the pandemic has been our highest priority this year and we have been resolute in the face of this extended crisis. In their assurance visit in March 2021, Ofsted inspectors noted this as a clear strength and representatives from the DfE have commented that our response has been as good as anyone nationally.

Single Point of Contact and Multi-Agency Assessment Hub referrals from health services have almost doubled since March 2020 when considering previous years' performance measures. The pandemic has seen a rise in mental health issues and alcoholism which have impacted upon families in various ways; largely but not limited to adults causing harm to themselves or their children.

Throughout the pandemic we have had feedback from families to highlight how positive COG intervention has been, both virtual and face to face; giving indication (in addition to audits) that COG work has been and continues to be meaningful and effective.

Intervention through visiting and the impact of COVID-19 on visiting Throughout the pandemic, our approach has been that we visit children and young people face to face, based upon presenting needs of children, and staff safety, utilising PPE. It can be seen that we have maintained good levels of visiting both virtually and face to face, after an initial drop in face to face visits in May / June.

Practitioners are continuing to seek to see children alone during virtual visits, through the use of video messaging; the oversight and assurance of this happening is more of a challenge but where possible, the participation and involvement of children continues, there is increasing evidence of the use of direct work seen on children's case files.

Service by service examples of success stories or feedback from children:

- RP and JP who are now able to access overnight short breaks at Stourbridge House.
- MH who is now receiving an increased support package and weekly multi agency meetings underway whilst an appropriate placement search is underway.
- Care Management Team 3 worked with a young person, 16 years old, there were concerns regarding exploitation/county lines and poor relationships in the family home. Despite the challenges regarding covid, the SW worked jointly with Horizon's Exploitation Team and other agencies and change was made for this young person. He went back into education, engaged in work around exploitation and his relationship improved significantly with his father. This young person positively turned his life around. Given his achievements, he was nominated for an award and he was selected as one of the ten winners of the West Midlands Young Active Citizen Award 2020. He also won a prize in a national poetry competition. His poem "Stuck in a Freezer" is being published. This young person shared how much his life had changed, how much happier he was and enjoyed getting back into education. Following Child Protection and Child in Need planning, he is now closed to the Trust.
- Some young people have told their IROs they have preferred a greater use of technology to enable them to be part of their process
 - Families have commented that they have felt more engaged
 - Compliments from service users about how they have continued to feel supported
- Data around the reduction in plans means that we are not holding ICPCs where they are not needed and we are reducing the time that children spend on plans. We are not increasing the number of looked after children as a result of CP plans reducing meaning we are successfully reducing risk and stepping down

Children's Voice

The Participation Team has continued to engage with children and young people during the pandemic. Face to face forums have had to be put on hold, but the team have found creative ways to engage. Virtual meetings were established immediately, and despite the limitations of the software available (young people don't like to use Skype) alternative tools were employed to stay connected. The use of Zoom and WhatsApp enabled the Trust to keep in touch using communication platforms that young people were comfortable with. In between the national lockdown and the localised Sandwell restrictions, officers were twice able to meet with some of our care leavers, socially distanced in a local park.

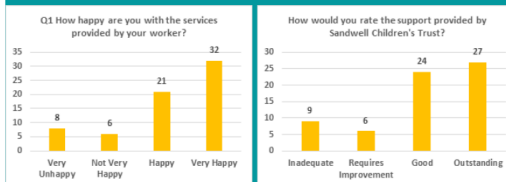


Partner organisations have continued to support the Trust and its young people. Colleagues from Kooth, the HOME Programme, Brook Sexual Health, REES Foundation as well as several internal services have engaged virtually throughout the pandemic. Officers have also hosted regular quizzes which have proved popular. Virtual meetings have been noted and the discussions shared with the wider 'Voice of Sandwell' and 'Care Leaver's Forum' groups, which have well established WhatsApp groups.

Ensuring their voice is heard, children and young people have maintained their involvement in activities that support the Trust, including recruitment (Social Worker, Managers, Targeted Support Workers, Service Managers and Independent Reviewing Officers) and inductions for new social workers, frontline students and ASYE social workers.

From the beginning of lockdown in March until the end of July 2020, the Trust worked closely with Sandwell Council to provide daily food parcels for children, families and care leavers (including their own children). The Trust helped to support over 400 children and young people via the local food hub, ensuring that Sandwell's most vulnerable children and families were supported during the most difficult period of lockdown.

In addition to supporting our most vulnerable with food parcels, the Trust has also been involved in the distribution of DiE laptops. Both engagements afforded the Trust the opportunity to catch up with its children and young people. When it has not been possible for the Participation Team to see young people in person, then the team have made welfare calls and checked in.



In total, Children and families completed 67 surveys of which 39 surveys expressed their wishes on how to improve the quality of service delivered by the Trust. They were largely satisfied with the quality and timeliness of our service delivery, with special mention for the great services delivered by our COGs. COGs appear to be delivering high quality, person centred services using a relationship-based approach. Some quotes are:

"Due to how COVID-19 as affected how all organisations are run I think everyone has done a really good job on making it work so well considering the challenges due to the current pandemic."



"I have no concerns so far. My daughter's worker has been professionally excellent and caring towards all of the family."

In the loop
Your ~~work~~ *Year* roundup



Positive feedback shared by Trust Comms

Now for some non-Covid news! The Children in Care Team got in touch about one young person who had been awarded a Blue Peter Badge! She is so proud and quite rightly. Here is what the young person had to say:



'It was exciting to receive my Blue Peter sports badge. I had to take part in lots of sports including dodgeball, trampolining, tennis, badminton and football over the summer lockdown. I also had to complete a form and include a photo of myself to apply for my badge. My Blue Peter badge gives me free entry to lots of UK attractions like Blackpool pleasure beach, Black Country museum and the Eden project to name a few places.'

Chad Smith, Arts Lead – Youth Offending Service:
"One of our young people is amongst 65 other artists whose art work was selected from 6500 entries to be exhibited at the Southbank Centre in London. I'm sure that you'll agree that this is an amazing achievement from a young man who has overcome many obstacles in his life and is now achieving many things as a young adult. It's a reminder that the work that we do really can change a young person's life. It's a privilege for me to have seen this young person blossom and be part of his journey. Young people never stop amazing me."

I have been working with Amy for nearly 2 years and we have just closed a CIN Plan with a family today. I wanted to take this opportunity to highlight and praise Amy's incredible work and professionalism. She is so efficient, effective and fabulously brilliant at her job and at this time when we are all so pressed with time, stress and restrictions, I believe praise should be noted when it has well and truly been earned. Amy has kept up brilliant communication with us at school, she has continued to be a proactive challenger with the parents involved and has been really approachable and kind with the child involved also. Amy has always kept us up to date with the case, and sends us minutes, invites to meetings etc. without fail.

In the past months Angie has gone above and beyond for our family. She has supported me all the time spoke to me and calmed me down when things took a turn for the worse. Angie has supported me, she has checked in on me and also chased other things up. I have to contact school, CAMHS and social services, and would also contact Angie...Angie would always try and offer support, she would help me see it's not just me that has a duty of care to my daughter. My family is at breaking point now and I will continue to fight for my family and myself. We need people in our corner and fighting with us and I would feel even more alone without the support of Angie. Thank you for allowing Angie to help us, because she made me start to change and find

I'm writing to you to highlight the excellent work being done by Rochelle, Social Worker – Children in Care on O's case. Since Rochelle has been involved there has been significant progress made. O now has British Citizenship, which means we can apply for a British Passport. By the new year we should be in a position to revoke the Care Order. Rochelle has put time and energy into strengthening the support for O and her mum. Rochelle has contacted Housing to ask for additional support for the family. Housing have appointed a Floating support to help O's mum get a transfer nearer to family and to an area where they will feel more comfortable and have access to community activities. Mum is getting regular support from the community mental health service and she also has an Advocate to support her in meetings, such as PEP meetings. Rochelle has ensured that O has a new Opticians prescription. This followed on from the PEP when it was reported that O was struggling to see in class. Rochelle has also scrutinised the schools support to make sure this is working effectively, and tangible progress can be measured. I believe that this work will support the revocation application as it will show to the court that this child and her mum have good support from universal and community services, therefore paving the way for a good outcome. You only have to look at the file to see the difference Rochelle has made. All this has been achieved in a very short time. O has a good relationship with Rochelle, finding her to be approachable and good fun. O's mum has expressed to me how much she appreciates the work Rochelle has done.

EDUCATION

The Council's Covid Impact report showed that food insecurity has been exacerbated (demand for food vouchers increased by 188%; 15,000 food parcels delivered to vulnerable households; eligibility for Free School Meals increased by 19% on previous year; 600+ children were shielding)

188%



17500 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY CHILDREN ARE IN RECEIPT OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS. THIS HAS INCREASED BY 19% SINCE SEPTEMBER 2019.

Children and young people said that the most difficult aspect of the pandemic was not seeing family and friends, and half welcomed the increased time spent with their family in lockdown.



As part of the impact assessment 509 young people from a wide range of backgrounds were surveyed: a third were worried, a fifth were lonely, a quarter were stressed, and a smaller number were angry, sad and having trouble sleeping.

THE COUNCIL'S COVID IMPACT REPORT SHOWED:

digital exclusion has been exacerbated (high numbers of households with no IT device and no access to Broadband – has become more evident when identifying children's access to remote learning)

MOUNTING HOUSEHOLD DEBT (HOUSING ARREARS UP 26.6%)

increased social stress (ASB incidents increased by 50%; domestic abuse calls to police increased by 22%)

HIGHER LEVELS OF INDIVIDUAL STRESS AND ANXIETY, AND POOR WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH (RELATED TO FINDINGS ABOVE AND EXACERBATED BY HIGH LEVELS OF DEPRIVATION AS A STARTING POINT)



2500+ pupils have a SEND Education, Health and Care Plan

17500 primary and secondary children are in receipt of Free School Meals. This has increased by 19% since September 2019.

Elective Home Education (EHE) has increased – 1% of the school population based on Jan 2020 census. No Children in Care are EHE. Just under 20% of EHE are children with an Education, Health and Care Plan or were in receipt of SEN Support in school.

What difference have you made to the lives of children and young people over the last 12 months?

Vulnerable children have attended early years settings and school and received the support that this protective factor offers to their lives.

Vulnerable children's learning has been supported by the provision of IT devices and data. Parents and school staff have received Online Safety training to be able to protect children and young people better.

Outreach to families has provided them with food, essential supplies and other support. Children have been provided with play resources and learning resources, including children CME and living in hostels and refuges.

Children not attending school have received outreach and families have been supported through welfare checks and other activities.

SEND children have received additional support.

The wellbeing of school leaders has been supported, which in turn supports children and young people.

How have you adapted services to ensure safeguarding of children and young people has continued during the Covid 19 pandemic?

A multi-agency Vulnerable Children's Group was established at the start of the pandemic and continues to meet weekly. This monitors all of the identified support needed by children and families and ensures that contact is made, and appropriate support provided. Escalation has been via the multi-agency Covid Vulnerable People and Practical Support Cell.

Council Scrutiny Board processes have continued during the pandemic, seeking assurance about a number of key issues including Elective Home Education, SEND children, and support to children needing social care services, in addition to the broader pandemic response activities.

The Children and Young People's Strategic Commissioning Partnership has ensured that additional resources have been put in place for services to support emotional health and wellbeing, domestic abuse, internet safety training for parents and school staff, family support, our Supporting Families Against Youth Crime programme, Free School Meals provision during school holidays and 1800+ IT devices for vulnerable children who haven't accessed DfE devices through school.

The council has enabled Sandwell Children's Trust to access its various Covid grants to support increased costs and has fast-tracked agile IT for social workers.

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Council Scrutiny Board processes have continued during the pandemic, seeking assurance about a number of key issues including Elective Home Education, SEND children, and support to children needing social care services, in addition to the broader pandemic response activities.

Children Electively Home Educated were supported via the Sandwell Residential Education Service, ensuring that all families are fully informed and were supported throughout the pandemic by qualified teachers and/or EHE specialists who provided advice guidance plus learning resources to those families who were new to EHE and whose decision was covid related.

Concerns and actions in response to potential child exploitation during lockdown:

- During lockdown, students have obviously spent more time in their home environment and the opportunity for exploitation has increased.
- As they have spent more time on Social Media, some young people have been ‘recruited’ into such activities as stealing alcohol to order and other crimes. This may have happened due to boredom and simply the opportunity to go out and meet other people. In some cases, this criminality has given these young people ‘a purpose’.
- The Exploitation Hub has continued to meet regularly, where the most ‘at risk’ children are discussed. A plan is formulated around these young people for relevant partner agencies to work with them and the family. These agencies include Police, Health, Youth Service, DECCA, CAMHS and Education.
- In the case of Education, we ensured that the young person is on roll at a school and liaise with that school to ensure that they were engaging with online work and that regular welfare checks were made with that child and family.
- If for any reason the child is not on roll due to be new to area for example, we have ensured that regular telephone calls and visits are made to the family and support provided / signposted, as appropriate. All children known to be CME were provided with learning packs, information about online safety and other support they would usually be given if they were on roll at a school eg. Access to food vouchers (including school holidays).

Continued



What barriers have you faced/have families faced in accessing your service and how have you overcome these?

Families not wanting to send children to school:

- The school attendance team has developed a Return to School Support Strategy, focusing on welfare and also encouragement to parents/carers that may not be sending vulnerable children to early years provision or school.

90%

IMPACT

Good school attendance numbers (more than 90%)

SEND children attending school:

- Guidance to schools provided on expectations of attendance for SEND pupils
- Meetings with Special/Resource Base Head teachers and SENCo Cluster groups to discuss issues and plans to support e.g. collaborative home / school approach to individual reintegration plans
- Special / Resource Base Head Teachers joint work with Community Health Nurses to identify and reassure families who are anxious about individual health needs
- Welfare Team supporting schools with home visits and return to school of identified pupils
- Joint working with Vulnerable Children’s Group to signpost pupils and schools to appropriate support to deal with emotionally-based school-refusal, including school referrals to EP / SAT SEMH team
- Trusted Adult Training available to all schools / wider workforce on mental health and well-being and the return to school

85%

IMPACT

Increase in Special School attendance (85%)

- Education teams (attendance / CME) continue to work very closely with Horizons and Social Workers and Police, to ensure that we offer support, where appropriate. We have provided schools with a multi-agency response to notifications of a lack of engagement with schools / on-line learning. We have set up a dedicated email contact address for schools to highlight any concerns around children and families - Welfare_Checks@sandwell.gov.uk . With support from partners, we have visited those families to discuss how we can support them to re-engage with agencies working together to ensure an effective plan for the child.



Like all organisations Covid has impacted directly on police workforce resilience with staff either too ill to work or otherwise isolating and unavailable for duty.

This has been manageable with the setup of a centralising WMP Covid team, and departmental teams to ensure that resilience is maintained and staff are deployed swiftly to any gaps.

Safety planning meetings – including those including victims and families (such as MASE and ICPC) – have been delivered remotely where possible using video conferencing IT. This has allowed the meetings to continue, ensure that risks are minimised, and also allows increased efficiency with time management as it has cut out travel time to and from meetings.

The evidence would suggest that the effects of Coronavirus restrictions - such as schools closing and mandatory lockdowns – have had an impact on both recorded crime levels and actual offending levels, including for child abuse crime. Total recorded child abuse crime in Sandwell decreased by 10% compared to the previous year (1416 crimes in 2020/21 and 1584 crimes in 2019/20) When the latest lockdown began to ease in March 2021, and when schools returned to face to face teaching the same month, there was a significant increase in recorded child abuse crime in Sandwell.

There have been a number of significant child abuse investigations in Sandwell in the past 12 months, all of which take an incredible amount of hard work and patience from the police, partners, and most of all the victims and their families. WMP have charged suspects with offences whereby they have caused serious and lasting injury to their children as follows:

- *Two suspects charged in connection with the murder of an infant child in their care following an extensive homicide investigation.
- *An offender found guilty in crown court for sexually abusing a child while the suspect was working for the victim’s family and imprisoned as a result.
- *Arrested and convicted suspects who have groomed children online and attempted to meet with them afterwards.
- *Conducted search warrants and retrieved 1000’s of indecent images of children and charged the suspects for these offences. In one case 25,000 images of children were recovered and the offender subsequently fled abroad. They were later tracked down and captured, then sentenced to several year imprisonment after pleading guilty in court, given a sexual harm prevention order with stringent conditions, and made to sign on the sex offenders register indefinitely.
- *Convicted a man who had seriously assaulted his partner and baby, endangering both of their lives. He was sentenced to 8 year imprisonment.

Sandwell Local Policing have continued to support schools, pupils, and SHAPE by creating a sharing online learning and YouTube videos rather than face to face inputs. Local officers have also supported the safeguarding of more vulnerable children by conducting welfare visits alongside to children at home which ensures that the children who most need contact with safeguarding professionals are seen and supported.

APRIL 2020 - MARCH 2021



WEST MIDLANDS POLICE CASE STUDY

WMP were made aware of an incident of serious sexual assault on a child aged 7 at the time of the offence, who had been targeted by an offender who had been employed by the victim’s family in their place of work. Specialist officers were used to investigate this crime which required a sensitive but thorough approach given the age of the victim, what they had suffered, and the risk the offender posed to them and other children. The offender denied the crime but through a diligent investigation they were charged with sexual offences and remanded in custody. They have now been convicted and have been sentenced to over 5 years imprisonment and given an indefinite sexual harm prevention order for when they are released, which carries a further prison sentence if breached.

WMP have spoken to the victim’s family who have agreed for this story to be shared in its anonymised form and also gave their views on behalf of themselves and the victim. The family have clearly been through a lot, but have stated that they could not have asked anymore of the police and other agencies and that they felt WMP had gone above and beyond to ensure the offender was convicted and could no longer hurt their child nor pose a risk to any other children. The family will always be grateful for the help they received, so much so that they have encouraged a friend to support a prosecution after their own child suffered a similar experience. The family say the child has massively benefited from the police investigation in that they have received the closure they needed to get on with their life. Prior to the conviction in court the victims had become very withdrawn but is now said to be flourishing again and described as being “back to their old self”. The victim had always said they just wanted to be believed.



Schools Liaison Officers

WMP receive quarterly feedback reports regarding the school liaison officers (SLO) though in this format this usually comes from school staff themselves rather than the children directly. One example of feedback is below which was shared by a vice principle at a Tipton school:

“(The SLO) has only been with us for a short period of time, but it already feels like she is part of our family of staff. Her tireless attitude has assisted the school in various issues and she will not stop until we get the best outcome for all involved. (The SLO) has met with several pupils and families and has provided us with a platform to work on community issues together. We look forward to continue developing this relationship to benefit the children and community of Tipton.”

Early Help Partnership

August 2020, Nov 2020 and March – May 2021: The Bigger Picture local town events (10 events covering the 6 towns in Sandwell) hosted on Teams:



Aim of the event was to find out:

- what services are currently available for CYP and families in their local area
- share concerns/challenges and ideas of what has worked for them
- share information about what is planned for the near future
- link in with each other and build new partnerships

FEEDBACK FROM EVENTS:

Sandwell Educational Psychology ...
@SandwellEdPsych
#EHPSandwell a brilliant event hosted by @EarlyHelpPtr! So brilliant to meet and share ideas with the amazing providers supporting CYP mental health and well being across Sandwell. Thanks for organising!
10:57 · 20 Nov 20 · Twitter for iPhone

KH (SMBC): thank you all, great to hear about all the services available to support CYP emotional health & wellbeing

Thanks for the insight on children services in Oldbury.

Sandwell Young People's Services
@SandwellYouth
Great #EHPSandwell event this morning focused on emotional health & wellbeing for #CYP - amazing to see the full breadth of support & services we have from universal through to targeted! #partnerships #emotionalhealth #wellbeing @EarlyHelpPtr @sandwellcouncil @SandwellDCS
13:05 · 20 Nov 20 · Twitter for iPhone

- How did you find our Event:**
- 8% Partly useful and informative
 - 33% Useful and informative
 - 59% Very useful and informative

It's a great way of networking with agencies within the town who can all support the families within our community.

SR (VCS): Thank you this has been a fantastic 2 hours!

useful to meet new partners and to find out the wider work that is going on, very useful as a starter meeting thanks!

DG (VCS): This has been really good to network and see what is available out there. Well done.

KRUNCH VIRTUAL MENTORING DURING LOCKDOWN - APRIL TO PRESENT DAY 2 CHILDREN WITH SEN ON ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION AND NOT IN SCHOOL

Both of the children described below were very difficult to engage pre-lockdown; we were in the early stages of building trusted relationships with them. Both were not in school as their SEN needs mean that they couldn't engage in a school setting and they needed 1:1 mentoring and alternative education placements. They were on a bespoke timetable with Krunch at our premises and with NTAS teachers in other locations. The first child is very anxious and reluctant to move into public spaces without his family. The second child is in a single placement care home and comes to Krunch on 3:1 support owing to violent outbursts occurring in previous settings and in the home.



During Lockdown - working with K:

- Both communication and relationship with K have been maintained via a twice-weekly phone call to Mom's mobile. Mom has not always answered our calls however, many positives have come out of this lockdown period.
- On the occasions that Mom has taken our calls, she seems very positive about our attempts to make contact with K. She also seems to appreciate the time to offload the stress lockdown is causing to her too.
- We have been flexible with regard to the time that we attempt to contact K, often remaining available until 7pm in the evening allowing Mom to return our calls. We repeatedly attempt to contact K to give her the best chance of answering.
- Krunch mentor was privy to a conversation over email during which he became aware that the family's home address had changed. Krunch mentor shared this information with the family's social worker and other agencies that work with the family. This ensured all agencies working with the family were able to continue to support them during lockdown.
- Krunch mentor arranged to drop off a gift of sweets and chocolates from the Krunch Team to K's home address to ensure that K still feels remembered by Krunch. Krunch mentor walked approximately 2.5 miles from his own home address to K's family home to deliver the gift. During this visit, Krunch mentor was able to spend time with all the members of the family at a socially acceptable distance in the garden. Krunch mentor spent 20 minutes chatting about everyday life, hearing about their new house, playing with the younger children and sharing more about himself and his own personal story. Krunch mentor considered this to be very worthwhile and has resulted in Mom answering a lot more of his phone calls which feels a real positive.
- After attending K's virtual CIN meeting, Krunch mentor was asked by other professionals including teachers, social workers and health care professionals, to conduct safe and well checks on the younger children in K's family. After the above-mentioned visit, Krunch mentor was able to confirm that the children were well and seemingly happy.
- Following these suggested checks, Krunch mentor set up an email thread allowing any professionals or agencies involved in supporting K and his family to provide each other with updates and reports, ensuring all the family are safe and well.
- K spoke on Mom's mobile to Krunch mentor and responded to his questions and engaged really positively in conversation. Krunch mentor believes the growth in K's confidence and how comfortable he seems to now be, is a real breakthrough. Mom feels it is in response to the sweets that were dropped off at his house from the Krunch Team which she expressed had been really well received by K.
- Krunch mentor is planning another visit to K's family home to drop off some more sweets for K. He is hoping to arrange a time to spend more time with K and family at a safe distance in the garden.
 - Transport forms taken to the home by Mark and completed
- Manager attended CIN meeting 8/6/20 - case due for closure by SW and step down to EH

Working during Lockdown with R:

- Engagement and communication with R has been a bit of a rollercoaster ride. Currently R spends most of his day watching the TV or playing games and at times refuses complete work set by the external teaching service.
- I have called R a number of times to try and complete mentoring sessions over the telephone - the success rate mixed initially.
- Played a few simple quizzes over the phone - R enjoys this - and then discuss what he has been up to in the week, how he is feeling etc. R struggles to express his feelings.
- I knew that R was struggling with motivating himself to complete work set so I decided to get a bit creative.
- I have delivered some mentoring sessions via a pre-recorded video on the Krunch YouTube Channel (private video link). These have included a challenge at the start, an activity to complete in the week and a discussion at the end. The discussions have been based around controlling your anger and relating that to lockdown.
- I have also done a cooking session via my kitchen to R's using cameras and a video mixer.
- With permission from Krunch and the Home, I have been able to complete a number of social distancing visits to R.
- We played games where he could win some prizes - such as Higher or Lower with giant playing cards and also managed to complete an hour of photo-editing using professional graphics software.
- The staff at the home are really grateful of the support we are giving to R. This is contributing to keeping him calm at home and engaged in other activities. It's important for us to keep that consistent communication with R, a familiar face and engagement in activities.

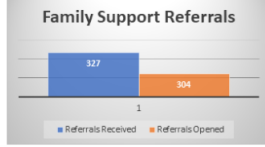
<https://youtu.be/YmkBuHFU6h8> - A clip showing online mentoring

Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)

There are over 300 VCS organisations whose principal beneficiaries are children, young people and young adults. Many organisations engage in partnership working and collaborate on projects and services where they can, and meet in various settings such as the Sandwell VCS Children and Young Peoples Forum. Safeguarding children, young people and families, with a focus on early intervention, forms a significant part of ongoing discussions and learning for Forum members, with VCS organisations taking responsibility for their own safeguarding arrangements whilst accessing support and training from SCSP partners.



Throughout the year we have received 327 referrals for Family Support which equated to 659 individual children within those requests for support.



We opened 93% (304) of those cases and we have made a positive impact upon



95% (623) of children's lives.

"We are happy that our child has been able to express herself during the session. We are surprised how positive she has said her relationship is with us"

Following our Family Support intervention with Children and Families, 95% of families are improving in at least 1 area, 81% are improving in two or more areas and 73% are improving in 3 or more areas. This evidences that the support and advice the Children's Centre offers to families and the work families complete is having a positive impact on children and families lives and families are making positive progress.



Our Outcome Star Impact Tool evidences that the Children's Centre are supporting families and enabling them to have improvements in the following areas:-



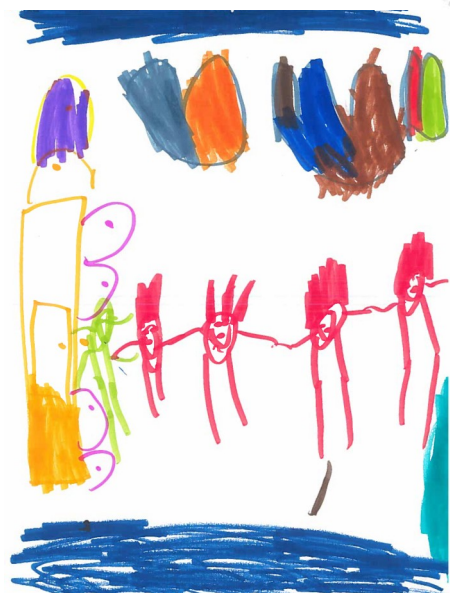
We have continued to deliver our Children's Centre universal offer via social media and 227 different virtual session videos have been made by staff and shared via our Facebook page. 946 individual children and families have accessed these session throughout the year.

Comments from Children

- 'I have enjoyed the sessions and have found them fun'
- 'I have enjoyed the sessions as I had someone to talk to about my feelings and it got me off my XBOX'
- 'The sessions have boosted my confidence'

Comments and Feedback from Parents

- "We are happy that our child has been able to express herself during the session. We are surprised how positive she has said her relationship is with us"
- "I found the Domestic abuse sessions very useful and insightful. I didn't realise how domestic abuse can affect the family as a whole and wouldn't want my daughter to go through what I went through".
- Mum commented that she really appreciated and valued the emotional support because she had never had someone encourage and believe in her. Mum's overall well-being was incredibly low at times however she is more positive, emotionally stronger and gaining in confidence since engaging with support.
- Mum stated she wished she had done the course earlier and felt that she had missed out on opportunities in which she could have supported her Son's communication.



Across our whole Family Offer services we supported/impacted 2426 children and young people during 2020-21.

The Family Support team have supported 1079 children and young people (463 families)

PPE was obtained quickly and doorstep and face to face visits were delivered in creative ways to ensure meaningful contact could be maintained for the majority of our families in need of support.

Using Outcomes Star, 94% of closed cases achieved positive outcomes making progress in areas identified at referral.



'Well-being Boxes' and 'Sensory Packs' have been distributed and continue to be used as vital resources for those families supported by Family Support team members.

Family Partners parent feedback: "I had social work involvement for 2 years and now I don't want to go back to having professionals involved in our lives. I feel much more confident now in being able to manage without any services involved."

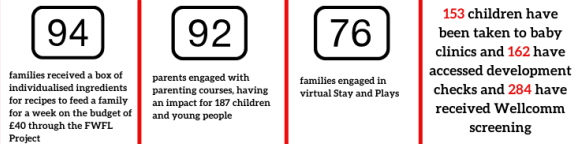
Single Parent father struggling with emotional attachment with child. "I feel that I have been a lot better with my daughter, I am understanding her needs. In the past I would phone the children's centre all the time. I am not doing that anymore and I am not going into school saying I can't cope".

Feed Well for Less parent feedback: "it helped a lot as I am on a limited income" "cooking with my boys was good."

Emotional Wellbeing Boxes child's feedback: 'helpful and we will use it' 'useful - seems good' 'good I will use it'

Some of the impact from our family support service over the last 12 months:

- Ensured children and young people are safe, escalating to Targeted Early Help and Social Care as and where thresholds have been met
- Supporting families in their home conditions, liaising with housing to make repairs or to move into more suitable and safer homes.
- Providing home equipment to enable families to eat healthier meals, wash clothes and sleep in a bed leading to improve the physical and emotional development of children and young people
- Supporting parents with appropriate boundaries and behaviour support alleviates stress and pressure within the home, ensuring a safe and happy childhood
- Engaging with fathers to ensure positive co-parenting whether residing inside or outside the family home, impacting in consistent approaches for children and young people



Through the Feed Well for Less (FWFL) project a Community Engagement Worker identified a family who were unable to go to the shops during lockdown as her child has severe SEND and the mum was victim of DA living in a refuge centre. The worker contacted Ideal For All to refer the family and made arrangements for them to deliver shopping to the refuge to support the family. Parent continues to live in the refuge and has sent text messages to the worker to say thank you. The staff member contacted Sandwell Parents for Disabled Children (SPDC) to make a referral. The family has since attended SPDC sessions.

Feedback from parenting courses:

- 'I found it nice to speak to people who were in the same situation as I am'
- 'The activities were fun and my baby loved the singing every week'
- 'It gave us something different every week and my son was excited to join in'
- 'It was lovely doing the competition and knowing we were doing it for something exciting.'
- 'It's helped being able to talk to other mums and I have something to look forward to. I know I am not the only mum struggling or having a bad day or have those worries.'
- 'I have increased my imagination, my confidence and the importance to interact more with my children. I am a good Mum and I am trying the hardest for my children.'
- 'A parent volunteer with 3 year old twins stated that she was worried about the development of her children's speech and language, the course enabled her to put the theories she had learned into practice and she was able to see a tangible difference in her children's development and progress in these areas. The children were in day nursery and had been WellComm screened but mum was not sure how she could support the twins at home. As a result of the training the parent felt more confident to support her children's speech, language and communication. She commented: "I let my children play with chalks - my son crushed the chalks and it was dusty and covered his face - So happy with my children's development."
- 'I observe more - I see learning in the park now - I try to interact from the start of the walk. We look out for number plates, road name, door of car park. The most important thing to interact with my child. As an adult you can see that the small things make a big difference - you have made us think - the small talk with our children now.'

CASE STUDIES



FAMILY PARTNERS / WORKING TOGETHER WITH FAMILIES

STANDOUT MOMENT FOR THE WORKER WAS WHEN ONE MOTHER RECOGNISED THAT THE NEGLECT HER CHILD WAS EXPERIENCING WAS GENERATIONAL. MOTHER HAD A LIGHT BULB MOMENT WHEN LOOKING THROUGH PHOTOS OF CLUTTERED AND UNCLEAN HOME CONDITIONS AND PHOTOS OF HER OWN HOME CONDITIONS TO RECOGNISE THAT THIS IS WHAT SHE GREW UP WITH AND SO TOO WAS HER GRANDMOTHER'S HOME, SO SHE HAS NEVER KNOWN HER HOME TO LOOK ANY DIFFERENT.

SINCE THEN, SHE HAS MADE CHANGES & IMPROVEMENTS WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE WORKER AND FRIENDS AS SHE DOES NOT WANT HER DAUGHTER TO HAVE TO LIVE IN THE SAME WAY. IMPACT - THE HOME HAS BEEN CLEARED, KITCHEN CLEARED SO THAT MEALS CAN BE MADE - PREVIOUSLY WERE HAVING ALL TAKEAWAYS, CHILD CAN GET ACCESS TO THE BATHROOM TO WASH, BRUSH HER TEETH. ALL CATS (9) HAVE BEEN RE HOMED SO NO MORE DIRTY, SMELLING LITTER TRAYS, SPACE FOR CHILD TO PLAY, MOTHERS MENTAL WELLBEING IMPROVED. REMINDERS SET ON PHONE TO GET MEDICATION AND TO ATTEND GP FOR REVIEWS. PRE-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE HAS IMPROVED.

IMPACT

HEALTH VISITOR CHECKS COMPLETED, AND REFERRALS MADE TO RELEVANT SERVICES.
SPEECH AND LANGUAGE REFERRAL
WELLCOMM SCREENING (PERFORMED BY ACTION FOR CHILDREN STAFF AT THE FAMILY HOME)

IMPACT

MOTHER IS MORE CONFIDENT AND HAS STARTED TO IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGIES LEARNT FROM EB+ HER SON NOW HAS A DIAGNOSIS AND AN EHCP AND THE SCHOOL AND PRACTITIONER HAVE WORKED WELL TOGETHER.
NO LONGER EARLY HELP AND CASE CLOSING TO FAMILY SUPPORT HOWEVER SIGNPOSTED TO UNIVERSAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES WITHIN A4C.

FAMILY SUPPORT

A FAMILY IN WEDNESBURY WAS LABELLED BY PROFESSIONALS AS "VERY DIFFICULT TO ENGAGE" AND PROFESSIONALS HAD STOPPED GOING TO THE PROPERTY STATING THE MOTHER CAME ACROSS AND 'NEGATIVE' AND 'AGGRESSIVE'. THE REFERRAL WAS VIA EARLY HELP AND STATED THERE WAS ISSUES WITH ASB DISPUTES WITH NEIGHBOURS AND DRUG USE/SELLING. INITIALLY ENGAGEMENT WAS DIFFICULT DUE TO THE LACK OF TRUST OF PROFESSIONALS, HOWEVER OUR PRACTITIONER CONTINUED TO PRESERVE AND EVENTUALLY GAINED ACCESS TO THE FAMILY AND THE FAMILY HOME. THE MOTHER PRESENTED AS HOSTILE BUT WITH THE PRACTITIONER BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS AND DELIVERING EVERYTHING SHE AGREED,

THE MOTHER STARTED TO COME AROUND TO ACCEPTING THE SUPPORT AND BUILDING TRUST. THE PRACTITIONER AND THE MOTHER SPOKE ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF THE HEALTH VISITOR DOING DEVELOPMENT CHECKS ON THE CHILDREN AND SHE AGREED TO A VISIT AS LONG AS THE PRACTITIONER WAS PRESENT. THE YOUNGER CHILDREN HAD HAD NO HEALTH VISITOR INVOLVEMENT.
THE PARENTS WERE UNDER THE MISCONCEPTION THAT THEY COULD NOT BID ON PROPERTIES, EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE A FAMILY OF 7 LIVING IN A 2-BEDROOMED HOUSE, BUT THEY ARE NOW BIDDING ON PROPERTIES WITH THE HELP OF OUR PRACTITIONER.

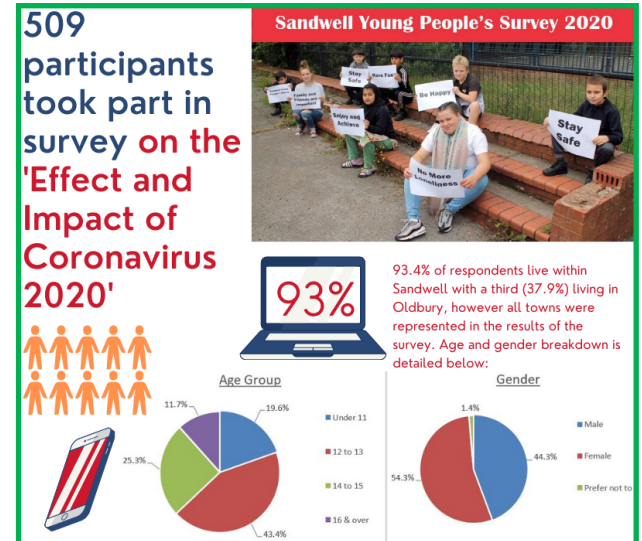
IMPACT

MOTHER AND PRACTITIONER ATTENDED A STAY AND PLAY VIRTUAL.
MOTHER AND PRACTITIONER ATTENDED EARLY BIRD+ (EB+) PARENTING COURSE DELIVERED BY ACTION FOR CHILDREN VIRTUALLY FOR THE FIRST SESSION AND THEN CONTINUED AND COMPLETED THE COURSE INDEPENDENTLY.



It is impossible to estimate the impact which the coronavirus pandemic had on emotional health and well-being for children, young people and families and on those who work for CYP services. SHAPE have shared some of their findings of a survey they conducted with young people and below public health outline some of their key work around suicide prevention.

SHAPE



In the survey participants were asked a range of questions about their understanding of the pandemic, including where they get their information from regarding it, along with questions about their emotional health and wellbeing such as 'what makes them happy and who makes them feel awesome and why?'

“My family because they always praise me for doing good things and because they love me, and I love them, and my friends because they laugh at most of my jokes and I laugh at theirs and we had great fun”

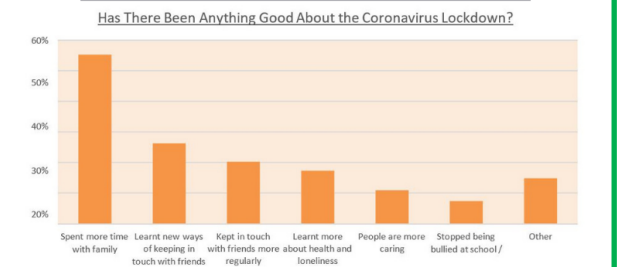
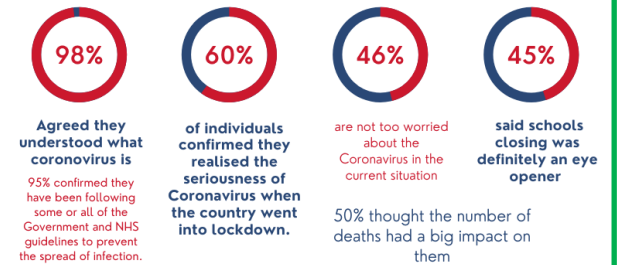
“My Mom, she is always there for me”

“The idea of everyone getting better and the number of cases of Covid 19 decreases. Also, the idea of black people gets treated the same and all the racism in the world stops. In addition, the idea of the world being a welcoming place for all.”

“When I'm told I'm doing something good because sometimes teachers don't realise we have stressful homes and sometimes a little bit of praise for trying Even if we get it wrong Can change our day”

“Being with family and friends. Having fun!”

“When I cheer somebody up or stand up for somebody because it makes them happy and makes me feel awesome”



There were also some positives identified by participants with 55% stating it was good because they have had more time to spend with family members

Emotional Health and Well-being

Current position – What we know

CYP want easy access to services
Demand and access rates are challenging
COVID-19 has contributed to increased isolation, loneliness and anxiety

Black Country wide pathway

No matter where a CYP presents in a crisis they will get the same support
Clear routes for early intervention
MH Services are being developed to span the Black Country
Aligned to THRIVE



Over 200 school children are lost to suicide each year

Suicide is the biggest killer of under 35's in the UK

By 2030, no one will die of suicide in Sandwell

Mental Health Training Review – Public Health and SCSP
Aim: Develop a training offer for all professionals who work with children and young people based on their level of interaction.

You Wouldn't Let Your Phone Battery Run Out:

Feeling down? Recharge. Talk to someone.

Please talk about suicide and self-harm to help remove the stigma in accessing support



THE EFFECT OF DOMESTIC ABUSE ON CHILDREN

In 90% of cases of domestic abuse, children are in the same or the next room when an incident happens. Children directly witness 75% of abusive incidents. Even where children do not directly witness violence, living with coercive, controlling behaviour in the home can severely affect them.

Our Future's Advocate-Educator team offers child-centred one to one support which provides a safe space to work through how domestic abuse in the home may be affecting them.

What children and Young People say about the support services:

- “Doing work around domestic abuse made me understand more about what my mum went through and why we had to leave”
- “My confidence has improved and I have someone that I can talk to about anything. I am always smiling now. Every time I see my support worker at school she makes me smile.”
- “I am glad I now have someone to talk about things that have happened as I never had a good relationship with workers before”
- “I've learned how to love myself and smile”

healing together

The Healing Together programme provides support for young people (6-16 years) who are impacted by domestic abuse.

Since starting the group he has had fewer anger outbursts. He has got so much better at opening up and expressing his feelings.

I think it has given her the language to express how she is feeling and almost permission to discuss things.

Black Country Women's Aid

Our Future

OPERATION ENCOMPASS

School based support for children and young people living in the Black Country affected by domestic abuse.

REFERRAL PROCESS
Referrals into Our Future are accepted from all agencies.

SUPPORT NEED IDENTIFIED
Child or Young Person affected by domestic Abuse. (Current or Historic)

CONSENT OBTAINED TO MAKE REFERRAL
Parental consent required for all children under age 13 years.

COMPLETE SCREENING AND REFERRAL TOOL
Refer to Our Future via Secure Email.

REFERRAL PROCESSED AND ALLOCATED
One to one sessions or group work will commence in school.

Our Future offers a range of school based support to children and young people affected by domestic abuse. Our Future is available for children and young people aged between 5-18 years in Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton. Our Future underpins Operation Encompass, a police and education partnership in which police provide notifications to schools when there has been a call-out to a child's home relating to domestic abuse.

Key Stage 1: Helping Hands

- Age: 5-8
Group size: up to 10 (minimum group 6), mixed or single-sex groups
Sessions: 6 one-hour sessions, delivered weekly
Helping Hands aims to increase children's understanding of feeling safe and to explore and promote behaviours which will contribute to a safe environment.
- Week by week**
1. Helping Hands
 2. I Feel Safe When...
 3. Developing Children's Self Esteem
 4. Feelings and Emotions
 5. Honesty/Conflict Management
 6. Gender Roles & Stereotypes



What children say

"You can find ways to calm your angry"

"I have learnt who to talk to if I have a problem"

"You can have many emotions and its ok not to be scared of them"

Key Stage 2: INSIDE-OUT

- Age: 9-11 (Year 5 & 6)
Group size: up to 10 (minimum 6)
Sessions: six one-hour sessions, delivered weekly



The primary purpose of Inside-Out is to increase children's understanding of their feelings and emotions and how to deal with these internally and externally. This allows them to gain a better understanding of themselves and how to keep safe. It can also help to reduce potential behavioural issues arising from witnessing domestic abuse.

- Week by week**
1. Me and my feelings
 2. Recognising and dealing with anger
 3. Managing your fears
 4. The right to feel safe and who helps us
 5. Secrets and surprises
 6. Coping strategies and celebrations
- What children say**
- 96% of children said it helped them increase in confidence. 92% said it had improved their emotional health.
- "I definitely feel more confident."
- "I did not really understand some emotions but I do now."
- "I enjoyed everything about Inside Out and want them to stay all of the time."

TRAPPED is a group education and awareness programme for children and young people which educates and empowers them around the crucial issue of relationship abuse.

It features detailed lesson plans for ages 11-15, providing healthy, age-appropriate messages around gender, consent, healthy relationships, sexuality, abuse, cyber-safety, gangs, and other risk factors. TRAPPED offers them the language and understanding to communicate about these issues, know their rights, increase their resilience and know where to go for help. TRAPPED was originally developed in partnership with the Home Office, Sandwell MBC and West Midlands Police. It was designed in accordance with PSHE Association guidelines on Sex and Relationships Education. It was peer-reviewed and recommended as good practice by the Department for Education and Home Office in the report: Tackling Knives and Serious Youth Violence Programme Good Practice Guide 2010-2011.



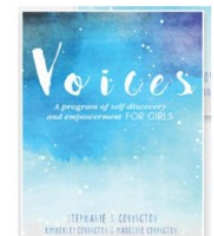
93% of secondary pupils said they enjoyed all or part of the session; 72% said they learned something they didn't know before; 36% of boys and 41% of girls recognised from their own lives issues covered in the session. 85% said that following the session they would know where to go to get help if they faced any of the issues covered themselves.



VIVA is a group programme for young people who may be at risk of abuse or exploitation. The six-week programme further explores self-esteem, risk taking, trusted adults and healthy relationships. One to one work is also available with young people who are suffering any kind of abuse.

VIVA can be offered in schools and community settings

Voices is a programme to address the unique needs of adolescent girls and young women. It encourages them to seek and celebrate their "true selves" by providing a safe space, encouragement, structure, and the support they need to embrace their journeys of self-discovery. The program includes modules on self, connecting with others, healthy living, the pressures of social media, early puberty, gender exploration, human sex trafficking, and binge drinking. It also covers pressures from texting, social media, and online or "in real life" (IRL) friends



Online engagement has increased with young people around Prevent during the COVID 19 period as all delivery was adapted to online platforms.



IN FOCUS PREVENT

5386 young people and families have been engaged in various activities through the prevent team.



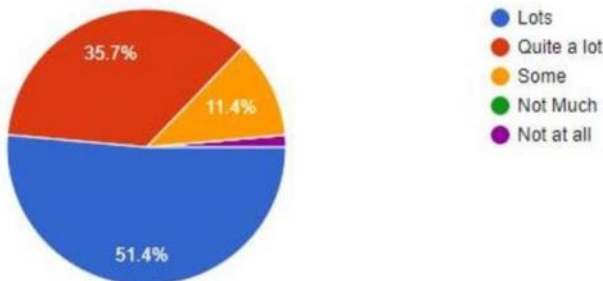
'Child Online Safety for Parents and Prevent' webinars, which were successfully delivered to 89 parents/members of the community as part of the Safer 6 campaign.

One parent said they "didn't realise the age permissions for some apps"

Our services have helped in building resilience against extremist narratives by raising the awareness of radicalisation and Prevent with secondary children, and focussing on messages such as cohesion and British Values with Primary children.

We responded to reported issues of a historic and remerging 'hate culture' and a lack of awareness amongst students regarding racism and sharing racist and extremist references online, and with its detrimental impacts at a large Secondary school in Sandwell. 'How Hate Can Lead to Extremism' sessions were delivered to year groups 7-10 with delivery of an accompanying resource/discussion. This knowledge will help children who may be in a situation where they could be exploited to deal with it and make effective decisions to get out of the situation/not be negatively influenced.

'How Hate Can Lead to Extremism' sessions in this instance and 87.1% of students that attended the sessions detailed above said their awareness of online safety in relation to racism, extremism and the risk of radicalisation had increased "quite a lot" or "lots" *. 97.1% of students now know where to get support from if they have concerns regarding these issues.



*PIE CHART DETAILING FEEDBACK. HOW MUCH ARE YOU MORE AWARE OF ONLINE SAFETY IN RELATION TO RACISM, EXTREMISM & THE RISK OF RADICALISATION AFTER HAVING THE SESSION? (70 RESPONSES)



COMMUNITY SAFETY TEAM

I-TRUST - SUPPORTING FAMILIES AGAINST YOUTH CRIME

This programme has been providing support for young people, their families and schools during the transition period from primary school to high school across Smethwick and West Bromwich. The programme aims to empower young people and build resilience to make positive choices.



ONE TO ONE MENTORING SUPPORT

The team work with Sandwell Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) and 10 mentoring organisations to provide mentoring sessions to young people identified by schools as at risk of exclusion or of being drawn into crime/ASB. The Covid 19 pandemic and the knock-on effect of schools being closed and lockdowns has meant that the team and the mentors have had to adapt to virtual methods of delivery.

EVENTS AND UNIVERSAL SESSIONS:

Whilst everyone has struggled during this last year, young people in particular have had an extremely difficult time. The team sought to continue supporting young people and moved to a totally digital approach.

The first virtual event was 'Spill the Tea'; an opportunity for young people to sit down with their families and have a cup of tea whilst talking about their fears and anxieties. The event received really positive feedback from young people and their families.



As part of the Spill the Tea event, packs were delivered to young people with some treats in, and bookmarks were designed with coping techniques on them for anxiety. Young people provided the team with posters they created for the NHS to spread some cheer and show their gratitude to those on the frontline of the pandemic. Over 40 families engaged online with this event.

In July 2020, just before young people broke up for the summer break, the team went into Galton Valley Primary school to deliver some universal sessions around empowerment and self-esteem to 100 year 6 children. Pupils were engaged with in relation to their hopes and dreams for the future and how they thought that they could achieve these goals.



PARTNERSHIP WORK

iTrust has depended on a strong multi-agency partnership approach throughout - from creating the initial bid to developing and delivering the programme.

By working closely with the police, schools and the voluntary sector, children were identified who would benefit from the targeted support or the universal early intervention. One of the strengths of the programme was working with Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations, who identified a pool of 10 mentoring organisations who were paid on a sessional basis. Access to this variety of organisations enabled case co-ordinators to match children to organisations best placed to meet their needs.

FREE 45-minute Child Online Safety for Parents & Prevent Webinar

Wednesday 25 November 5.30 - 6.15pm
Thursday 26 November 9.30 - 10.15am
Thursday 26 November 6.00 - 6.45pm

www.sandwell.gov.uk/OnlineSafetyEvent

Educate Against Hate @EducateAgainstHate - Apr 26

Today we released our latest blog on how we can build young people's resilience to online extremism. Read it now

Sandwell Prevent Team @preventsandwell - Apr 23

Conspiracy theories have been pushed out more than ever before. Whilst not Extremism, it's important that the vulnerable are safeguarded as these narratives can be a stepping stone.

@UKgovcomm have a game to alert to these dangers & how to combat them.

BROOK YOUNG PEOPLE - CHILDS VOICE

YOUNG PERSON/CHILD'S HISTORY/EXPERIENCE:

THE 17 YEAR OLD CLIENT WAS REFERRED TO BROOK AS A RESULT OF THEIR CONTACT WITH A 38 YEAR OLD MALE FRIEND WHO THEY WOULD ENGAGE IN SEXUAL ACTIVITY WITH. THE CLIENT WOULD ALSO MEET UP IN THE PARK WITH THEIR FRIEND WHERE THEY WOULD DRINK AND HAVE SEX. THE MUM REPORTED THE CLIENT'S BEHAVIOUR TO BE UNCONTROLLABLE AS THEY WOULD SNEAK OUT OF THE HOUSE AT ALL HOURS AND SMASH UP THEIR BEDROOM. THE CLIENT IS HOME-SCHOOLED DUE TO THE BLACKOUTS THEY SUFFER FROM, AS A RESULT OF THEIR EPILEPSY. THE PREVIOUS INTEL RECEIVED FROM THE CLIENT SUGGESTED THAT THEY WERE AT RISK OF CSE AND GANG NOMINALS'.

CLIENTS VOICE: 'I WAS REFERRED TO THE SERVICE DUE TO THE SITUATION THAT HAPPENED AND BECAUSE I WAS GOING THROUGH A LOT AT THAT TIME... SO MY SOCIAL WORKER REFERRED ME TO THE SERVICE SO I COULD GET SOME HELP. SHE EXPLAINED THE REASONS WHY AND WHY SHE WAS CONCERNED AND TALKED TO ME ABOUT THE LEGAL AGE OF CONSENT. I FELT DEPRESSED AND WAS GOING THROUGH THINGS SO I DIDN'T MIND BEING REFERRED'

WHAT'S WORKING WELL? (SERVICE, SUPPORT, POSITIVE FACTORS)

THE CLIENT STATES THAT THEIR MUM IS SUPPORTIVE AND IS SOMEONE THEY CAN TALK TO. THEY ALSO HAVE FRIENDS THEY ARE ABLE TO TALK WITH ABOUT ISSUES THAT ARE AFFECTING THEM. THE CLIENT SPOKE TO CHILDLINE A LOT THROUGHOUT HIGH SCHOOL AND HAD COUNSELLING SESSIONS. CURRENTLY, THE CLIENT WOULD LIKE A MALE POINT OF VIEW IN REGARD TO SUPPORT. THEY FEEL THAT MALE SUPPORT IS SOMETHING WHICH IS MISSING FROM THEIR LIFE, AND BELIEVE THAT HAVING A MALE PERSPECTIVE WOULD BENEFIT THEM. THE CLIENT'S BROTHERS ARE LIVING IN AMERICA SO THEY HAVE LITTLE CONTACT WITH THEM. THEY EXPLAINED THAT THEIR SUPPORT SYSTEM IS MADE UP OF WOMEN AND WOULD LIKE TO HEAR A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE OTHER THAN THAT OF A WOMAN'S.

HOW DOES THE YOUNG PERSON FEEL CURRENTLY? WHERE ARE THEY IN THEIR JOURNEY? WHAT DIFFERENCE HAS YOUR SERVICE MADE TO THIS YOUNG PERSON? CHILD'S VOICE: 'BROOK HAS MADE A DIFFERENCE WITH HELPING ME TO BE AWARE OF MY SITUATION AND THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR WHEN I AM INTERACTING WITH MALES. I HAVE LEARNT ABOUT CONSENT AND THE WORK WE HAVE DONE HAS HELPED ME TO LEARN HOW TO SAY NO TO THINGS I DON'T WANT. THEY HAVE ALSO GIVEN ME SERVICES I CAN CONTACT IF I NEED SOMEONE TO TALK TO. I AM CURRENTLY STRUGGLING WITH THE RELATIONSHIPS I HAVE IN MY LIFE. I FEEL LIKE I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH AND I'M NOT TICKING ENOUGH OF THEIR BOXES; I'M NOT SEEING THINGS FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE. THIS IN TURN, TURNS ME OFF AND CLOSES ME OFF AS A PERSON AND I'M LESS OPEN WITH PEOPLE. OVERALL THOUGH, I FEEL QUITE POSITIVE. EVERY DAY I TRY TO TURN A NEGATIVE THOUGHT INTO A POSITIVE ONE. I LISTEN TO MUSIC WHEN I'M DOWN OR IF SOMETHING MAKES ME FEEL NEGATIVE.'

THE CLIENT STRUGGLES WITH THEIR SELF-ESTEEM AND CONFIDENCE. IN REGARD TO THE RELATIONSHIPS THEY MENTION, THE CLIENT IS REFERRING TO THEIR CURRENT SITUATION WITH THEIR 25 YEAR OLD EX-PARTNER. THEY WOULD LIKE TO MAKE THE RELATIONSHIP WORK WITH THEIR EX, HOWEVER THEIR EX-PARTNER HAS CRITICISED THE CLIENT FROM NOT SEEING THINGS FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE AND FOR HAVING A YOUNG MIND-SET.

ASK THE CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON FOR FEEDBACK. IF THEY HAD SUPPORT FROM SERVICES IN THE FUTURE WHAT WOULD THEY CHANGE? WHAT COULD BE DONE DIFFERENT?

CLIENT'S VOICE: 'THE APPOINTMENT TIMES ARE FLEXIBLE, SO FITTING IT IN IS PERFECT. THE AURA THAT I GET IS GOOD AND YOUR PERSONALITY BANGS, YOU ARE REALLY FUN TO TALK TO. THE ONLY THING I WOULD LIKE TO BE DIFFERENT IS IF WE WASN'T IN CORONA TIME, I WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO MEET ONE ON ONE. I ALSO THINK THE INTERVENTION SHOULD BE A LITTLE LONGER THAN 6 WEEKS. DEPENDING ON WHAT THE PERSON HAS GONE THROUGH IT SHOULD BE LONGER TO BE ABLE TO SEE IF THE PERSON HAS MADE MEANINGFUL CHANGE. ON A SCALE OF 0-10, I RATE THE EXPERIENCE 9 OVERALL.'



600 Young Carers

Despite young carers being on the government vulnerable children's list, far too many have chose to remain at home and not access this opportunity for fear of bringing covid home to ill family members.

Sandwell Young Carers is a registered charity offering activities and support to children and young people aged 5-18 years whose lives are affected as a result of caring for a disabled or ill family member. We currently have over 600 young carers registered.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the Short Breaks Team are using video/telephone calling and virtual online platforms to continue to provide positive activities to support young carers.

The Team are providing age-appropriate virtual activities that offer a distraction from caring roles and responsibilities.

- Dance classes
- Science experiments
- Baking 'at home'
- Arts and Crafts
- Circus skills workshop

During the COVID-19 pandemic the Support Work Team are using video/ telephone calling and virtual online platforms to continue to assess and support young carers.

- One-to-one telephone/video support
- Virtual group support
- Virtual study support
- Welfare checks
- Initial Assessments and Early Intervention
- Participating and advocating at conference call meetings with families and professionals
- Multi-agency working
- Early Help Assessment (eCAF)
- Safeguarding (MARF)
- Advocating and empowering young carers to have a voice

Life as a Young Carer during COVID-19 Pandemic



- Mental Health is worse
- Education is suffering
- More Worried about the future

During COVID-19 the team have continued to provide up to date information on guidance legislation to professionals and families and ensure that statutory and voluntary sector professionals continue to identify young carers and ensure that their needs are met.



"Wanted to say thank you for the package that has been delivered this morning ... Your hard work is not going unnoticed as a mom of a young carer I take great comfort knowing [young carer] has an outlet other than us ... Thank you and you are all fabulous!"

Parent of Young Carer, 2020

Conclusions and recommendations

Reflecting on the local demographics, child population, emerging needs, demands and pressures providing provision to children and families during these extremely strained and unusual period brought about by the covid pandemic, and through the evaluation undertaken by the independent scrutineer, who has also validated this annual report, there is evidence in lots of areas, of the partnership continuously striving to improve practice as well as being able to demonstrate innovative ways to maintain the delivery of practice. There are multiple examples, including evidence provided by Sandwell Children's Trust of their improvement journey; to demonstrate a partnership meeting the challenge to deliver the functions as required in Working Together 2018. Through the reflection received from the Independent scrutineer, and much of the outcome from internal reviews, audits, CSPR's, and the Ofsted assurance visits in the 'Trust', we know the coming year will provide opportunities to build on much of the work which are in the early stages of development for the year ahead.

With much to reflect on during 2020/21, the contents of this annual report shows a partnership that is continually striving to improve outcomes for children and families despite the adversities faced during the year, there is evidence of effective safeguarding arrangements in Sandwell.

Key priorities for 2021/22

Moving forward in to 21/22 Sandwell Partners have recognised the need for further work to strengthen:

- the understanding, approach, application and offer for Early Help, in particular, the interface between statutory services and 'relevant partners, ensuring that more families receive the right level of service at the earliest point.

- our connectivity and work with the voluntary, community and faith-based organisations, and even further, to engage with members of the public in our aspirations to make safeguarding everyone's business in Sandwell.
- Develop a performance management framework to better understand the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements across the multiagency landscape
- Be able to demonstrate the impact of training on practice, this includes learning from reviews, including CSPR's.
- Engage with Children and parents. Gain better communication channels with frontline practitioners
- Increase our focus on the emotional mental health and well-being of children and young people, in particular the impact of the covid pandemic on children families and the community.
- Continue progressing work on teenage suicidal ideation and self-harm.
- Continue to increase our understanding on the wider issues of child exploitation.
- Increase our response to child Neglect
- Promote greater use of the Resolution & Escalation Protocol
- Increase attention of the areas identified for greater need in relation to, engaging with fathers', better, more responsive intervention in pre-birth, through the Sandwell Unborn Baby Network (SUBN) and under 1's, and thread culture and diversity through all aspects of our work.

With much of the work noted as key priorities for the year ahead started however in its infancy, the next annual report will seek to demonstrate the achievements by the SCSP, subgroups and by partners during the year and follow on with activities undertaken by the statutory and relevant partners across Sandwell.