

## **Safeguarding and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 12<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

### **Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2023-24**

#### **Recommendations**

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Members are asked to receive the report to understand how the safeguarding partners of the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (hereafter referred to as the SSCP) are working together to keep children safe. Expectations, laid out in the statutory guidance Working Together have been developed to underpin effective multi-agency practice, and includes strategic leaders, senior and middle managers and front-line practitioners.
- b. Members should review and scrutinise the impact and learning from the Partnership's scrutiny arrangements and how they are responding to the findings to improve the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements.

#### **Local Member Interest:**

Cllr Mark Sutton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

It is essential that the Partnership arrangements across the county are strongly led and promoted at a local level, specifically by elected local area leaders, including Lead Members of Children's Services, Mayors, Police and Crime Commissioners and through the commitment of chief officers in all organisations and agencies, particularly those representing the three safeguarding partners. Cllr Mark Sutton sits on the SSCP as a non-voting member.

**Report of Director for Children and Families SCC: Bernie Brown, Chief Nurse and Therapies Officer, ICB: Heather Johnstone, Detective Chief Superintendent, Police: Vicky Lee (Interim Delegated Safeguarding Partner).**

#### **Summary**

##### **What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?**

1. Local multi-agency safeguarding partnerships must report annually on the joint progress made by the Safeguarding Partners to the Safeguarding and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee to enable

robust Member scrutiny of its statutory functions. SSCP annual reports provide a transparent and public account of the work of the partnership.

2. This report includes information and evidence that sets out how effectively the safeguarding partners have worked together to achieve good outcomes for children and families, and how they are embedding a learning culture as a result of their scrutiny arrangements including statutory rapid reviews and child safeguarding practice reviews.
3. The Safeguarding Partners of the SSCP are required under statutory guidance to be transparent in how they co-ordinate, deliver and fund services for children and families locally. In order that others can hold the safeguarding partners to account there are two mechanisms for reporting on service delivery and leadership:
  - a. publication of arrangements and
  - b. a yearly report.Annual reports by the Safeguarding Partners must focus on the activity they have undertaken in the previous financial year, in this case 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024.
4. Members are asked to consider or comment on the progress that the Partnership has made since the last annual report was presented to the committee in January 2024.
5. Safeguarding Partnerships are required to publish their annual report and make this widely available. A copy will be sent to the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel who will review it to identify any issues that may need escalation at a national level and Foundations (What Works Centre for Children and Families) given its focus on learning within seven days of publication. If partners fail to submit the yearly report this may be escalated to the Secretary of State. The report will sit on the SSCP public facing website for a period of 12 months.

## **Report**

### **Background**

6. The SSCP works together in partnership to safeguard and promote the welfare of children across areas of safeguarding activity that consider the need to promote equality of opportunity and to meet the diverse needs of all children living in our communities. Specifically:
  - a. Engage partner agencies to set the strategic direction for safeguarding all children;

- b. Identify and prevent harm and impairment of health or development and help ensure that all children are provided with safe and effective care as they are growing up;
  - c. Lead and coordinate on proactive work to target vulnerable groups;
  - d. Lead and coordinate on responsive work to protect children suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm;
  - e. Lead and coordinate statutory rapid reviews and child safeguarding practice reviews; and
  - f. Lead and coordinate the development and delivery of multi-agency safeguarding training.
7. The objectives of the Safeguarding Partners are pursued through core statutory functions which are set out within the Children Act 2004 and the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. These core functions are achieved through the work of the Partnership's sub-group structure. Each sub-group is responsible for measuring its performance against an annual work plan, which is derived from the SSCP Business Plan. Lead and Delegated members of the Partnership and the Safeguarding Improvement Partnership (formerly known as the Scrutiny and Assurance Sub-Group) monitor the effectiveness of the work completed.
8. Membership of the SSCP is set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and the SSCP's published arrangements document<sup>1</sup>. The local authority, police and the Integrated Care Board (known as the Safeguarding Partners) within the local authority area, are required to cooperate and have a joint and equal responsibility for the operation of the Partnership and for the effective discharge of its functions. The Staffordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Children and Young People also attends Partnership meetings as a non-voting, participating observer.
9. The governance arrangements of the SSCP have been the subject of significant review since 2019 and during this reporting period are in line with the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. Under new guidance published in December 2023, further work is required to streamline the governance arrangements across all Partnership Boards and this work has begun. The Safeguarding Partners are confident that they are fully compliant with the statutory function requirements for local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. The statutory guidance was published in December 2023 alongside the government's plans outlined in Stable Homes, built on love, which provides a commitment to transform children's social care. This will bring about significant changes to the local arrangements and the safeguarding

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<sup>1</sup> Under the revised statutory guidance, the Safeguarding Partners are due to publish their new multi-agency partnership arrangements in December 2024.

partners will be afforded greater clarity about what is required of them individually and how they need to work in partnership with each other to deliver effective services.

10. Since the last report to the Committee in January 2024 the SSCP continues to make steady progress on a wide range of objectives through effective local partnership working, despite the legacy challenges presented by the economic climate, and agency restructures. This includes engaging in activity which is targeted at groups of children and young people who have been identified as being vulnerable due to criminal, or sexual exploitation and neglect. The information provided in this 23/24 annual report highlights some of the most noticeable achievements in respect of the priority areas and work undertaken with partner agencies.

### **Link to Strategic Plan**

11. The work of the SSCP contributes to and supports the values and principles detailed in the Staffordshire County Council's Strategic Plan.

### **Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity**

12. The work of the SSCP links to Committee's overview of the local authority's Children's Social Care arrangements, and its improvement journey.

### **Community Impact**

13. Not required, as there is no change to policy, decision or functions that would substantially impact staff, service users, the economy, the environment, climate change, health and care or a community.

### **List of Background Documents/Appendices:**

Appendix 1 - Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2023/24

### **Contact Details for the SSCP Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP):**

**Director for Children and Families SCC:** Bernie Brown

**Chief Nurse and Therapies Officer, ICB:** Heather Johnstone

**Detective Chief Superintendent, Police:** Vicky Lee (Interim DSP).

**Assistant Director:** Nisha Gupta, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care, SCC,  
Natasha Moody, Assistant Director for Wellbeing and Partnerships, SCC.

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