



DONCASTER CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP

Position Statement April 2022 to March 2023

Foreword by Independent Chair

Trusting relationships, underpinned by good communication, is the bedrock of keeping children and young people safe. The COVID pandemic challenged us as a Safeguarding Partnership to find new effective ways of communicating, not dependent on face-to-face meetings, whether with families or with colleagues. Although this is now easing there are permanent changes which we need to continue to negotiate to keep children safe.

The COVID pandemic also demonstrated so clearly how we need to keep an ever-watchful eye on the most vulnerable of our children and young people.

I joined the partnership as Independent Chair and Scrutineer in July of 2022. It is with the above context in mind that I give my heartfelt thanks to the huge efforts made by so many people in Doncaster during 22/23 to continue to safeguard our children and young people and work effectively with families to secure positive change.

Dot Evans

Independent Chair and Scrutineer.

Introduction

It has been agreed by the Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership that for the period April 2022 – March 2023 the partnership will provide a position statement of the activity of the partnership rather than a full annual report. This is based around capacity issues alongside the impact of the pandemic during this period. The DSCP will ensure a full annual report for the period April 2023 to March 2024 will be produced, in line with the requirements of Working Together 2023, by September 2024.

This position statement reports key areas of work completed during 2022/23 and the areas identified for development for 2023/2024.

DSCP Priorities

The DSCP had an agreed delivery plan for 2022/23 building on the progress of the priorities agreed the previous year. There were 6 agreed priority areas:

Priority 1: To support and challenge work to deliver a more effective multi-agency response to child exploitation in Doncaster.

Achievements:

- The Child Exploitation Strategy was implemented.
- The work to improve the MACE process (Multi-Agency Child Exploitation) was progressed focussing on the protocol for children missing from care and home.
- A benchmarking self-assessment on the quality of DSCP response to missing children was undertaken.

Child Exploitation Training

EPIC (Encouraging Potential & Inspiring Change) is an immersive virtual reality (VR) experience, using VR headsets, led by the EPIC Team to guide participants through a portrayal of county lines from a young person's perspective. It is based on the young person's experience of exploitation aiming to highlight the risk and complexity around child criminal exploitation.

169 participants from across the partnership attended one of the 17 sessions held.

Comments from attendees include:

"An excellent course. The video clips and VR headsets experience are powerful ways of learning, and I would strongly recommend others to attend."

Areas for Improvement:

- More work needed to ensure MACE plans reflect all the relevant information needed.
- The self-assessment on children / young people going missing identified areas for improvement which included timeliness of strategy meetings; and sharing of information between social care and police for out of area or recently moved children could be improved. It also found the use of the protocol was not implemented in private providers.
- The Children's Society Missing Children Benchmarking Assessment ¹found our response to children and young people going missing to be effective and robust. It found the partnership use of the Philomena Protocol² had had a positive effect on children and young people, especially those in residential settings. The sharing of information through the Philomena protocol at meetings had been effective in safeguarding young people.

Priority 2: To deliver a more effective multi-agency response to child neglect across the partnership.

Achievements:

- Graded Care Profile (2) was implemented across the partnership supported by a pool of 16 trainers trained to deliver GCP2 across the partnership. 390 people completed the training.

GCP2 Training Feedback

103 attendees, out of 390, completed feedback on the GCP2 training. Comments included:

"It was a very engaging training session, which allowed us to practice the tool in a safe and secure manner".

"The course was very good in content and purpose"

- SYP progressed the implementation of Child Matters to improve partnership response to identifying neglect.

Area for Improvement:

- More work was needed to improve the analysis of risk of long-term neglect by professionals working with families.

¹ This self-assessment tool to evaluate partnership response to children and young people going missing completed by the Child Exploitation

² Philomena Protocol is national scheme that encourages agencies and carers to record vital information to be used should a child or young person go missing.

Priority 3: To ensure schools, and other education providers, are at the centre of the safeguarding partnership and there is a two-way communication flow.

This priority made limited progress in 22/23 but became a priority for 2023/4.

Priority 4: To ensure the embedding, dissemination, and evaluation of learning from the full range of quality assurance activities.

Achievements:

- There was more streamlining of multi-agency performance data to DSCP to identify areas for improvement and to enable DSCP to have a clear line of sight on frontline practice.
- The Youth Council contributed to the development of the DSCP website
- A Practitioner Forum was started to share good practice and learning
- There was a move away during the year from using the Virtual College training Platform to the Buy Doncaster Platform. Buy Doncaster alone saw an increase of 33% (equivalent to 722 people) attend training during the latter half of 2022/23.

Areas for Improvement:

- The DSCP Training Evaluation Report 2022/23 notes that there appears to be a growing demand across the partnership for more face-to-face delivery of training / learning opportunities.
- There was a need to do more and learn from frontline practitioners and to ensure we embed learning from reviews and inspection activity.
- There was no progress on ensuring feedback on training was mandatory part of course participation.
- The plan to undertake a multi-agency audit into the response to child exploitation was purposefully delayed to take into account findings of sector led improvement activity. This activity has now been completed and identified positive practice.

Priority 5: To ensure multi-agency policies and procedures are kept under review – commissioning any work required and effectively scrutinising proposed new multi-agency procedures.

Achievements:

- Multi-agency thresholds / levels of need document was launched at a practitioner event in April 2022. Training was rolled out to support this.
- TriX continued to manage and review policies twice yearly and supported this by attending meetings quarterly.

Area for Improvement:

- There was a need to measure the impact of the threshold policy and training on frontline practice.

Priority 6: Align DSCP governance to practice in order to capture the impact for children and families (through annual report).

- There has been limited progress in this area.

Area for Improvement.

- This will continue to be a priority for DSCP.
- The transition to MOSAIC case recording system by City of Doncaster Council which impacted on the quality and availability of performance data. Significant progress has been made in relation to this issue as confirmed by the findings of an OFSTED focussed visit in May 2023.

Learning and Development

Despite emerging from Covid restrictions and the impact this had had on training across the partnership there was a positive take up of training supported by the DSCP.

Online training saw a positive update with training modules available across two different platforms over the year as the DSCP moved from using the Virtual College to Buy Doncaster. Overall, 3062 courses were completed online with the highest uptake being around working with autism (91); emotional abuse (38), and FGM (37).

There was no completed training needs analysis (TNA) in 2022/23. A short TNA was completed by the SBU in 2023/24 whilst compiling the Training Report for 2022/23.

There is need for a clear policy regarding attendance at training – for example EPIC had a total of 90 participants did not attend its sessions over the year. The DSCP has a previously agreed charging policy for non-attendance but there is no evidence of this being administered, or the policy reviewed.

Learning and development offer delivered by DSCP mainly focused on training and activities organised and delivered by partner agencies such as children's services with the local authorities' Workforce Development Team taking on responsibility for the Multi-agency Induction for new staff across the partnership.

There was no progress on establishing systems to evaluate the impact of training in respect of individual practice and outcomes for children and families. This needs to be progressed during 2023/24 alongside a wider partnership learning and development offer to embed learning from assurance activity and to ensure the partnership workforce feels knowledgeable, confident, and competent in key areas of practice.

Assurance Reporting

During 2022/23 there was a series of assurance reports to the DSCP. Below is just one of the examples:

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (January 2023)

Assurance was sought regarding those children and young people arriving in Doncaster under the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) and Asylum Dispersal Scheme (ADS) following the requirements for all local authorities to take responsibility for asylum seeking children and young people through the ADS and NTS.

At time of assurance reporting there were 40 young people in Doncaster aged under 18 years who made up 7% of Doncaster's children in care population (this was under 1% in 2021). As the

government funding accompanying young people under each scheme is not sufficient to meet statutory responsibility there is a significant impact on budgets.

Identified safeguarding risks included:

- Numbers of young people arriving under 15 years of age alongside the need to undertake age assessments; and use of unregulated placements for these young people given pressure on local and national placements.
- A number of young people appear to go missing within 3 months of arriving in Doncaster, often prior to completion of an age assessment.

There was regular reporting on the Complex Abuse Enquiry (Hesley) to both the DSCP and Joint Board to ensure the Partnership was informed of progress and learning as it was identified. Reporting on this will continue into 2023/24. Learning so far has included internal LADO arrangements, and arrangements to seek assurance when commissioning placements for children, and young people, with complex needs out of area. The investigation raised issues of national concern and Doncaster Safeguarding Partners raised these issues with the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. Two reports were commissioned by the Secretary of State for Education. A government response was published in December 2023.

**Key Learning From Complex Case Review
(LADO Annual Report 2022/23)**

- The role of the LADO was seen as one of the key safeguarding components of the wider system designed to ensure all children and young people are visible and safe.
- There is no LADO type role specified within the CARE Act 2014
- As a result of the enquiry the LADO style approach was adopted for vulnerable adults identified as victims of abuse in the scope period to ensure consistency of approach across adults and children.

Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

DBTH and Public Health are responsible for delivering the Child Death Overview Panel arrangements for Doncaster and the sub-region. The SBU supports this by managing the CDOP in-box and E-CDOP record system. All child death notifications received are distributed to relevant partners to ensure the Rapid Response process is implemented where appropriate. The DSCP has received this report.

Key points highlighted include:

- CDOP made 4 notifications to DSCP and after consideration learning reviews were commissioned as appropriate.

Key developments include:

- The establishment of a safer sleep sub-group to promote safe sleep messages to prevent future deaths including training for Doncaster's Health Visits around safe sleep and asking parents where their child will sleep and wake.
- The Child Death key worker supported a family who had lobbied their MP to raise awareness of SUDIC (Sudden Unexpected Death in Childhood)
- Link nurses were identified to report back outcomes to Hospital staff in emergency departments the outcomes for children they had cared for.

LOCAL AUTHORITY DESIGNATED OFFICER (LADO)

The LADO Annual Report presented to DSCP in 2023/24.

The key highlights include:

- 153 consultations resulting in NFA; 136 referrals; and 23 evaluation meetings, all of which were a reduction on 2021/22
- There were 134 allegation management meetings held which was up by 38 on 2021/22.
- Main causes for concern were physical abuse (52); conduct (40); sexual abuse (16); followed by neglect (12) and emotional abuse (12).
- Foster carers (both IFA and DSCP) were the highest category of professionals subject to LADO involvement followed by residential and then education staff.
- The LADO strengthened its' quality assurance processes through this period.
- In addition to this the DSCP received updates on the implications from the Hesley Inquiry.

Moving into 2023/24 there is a need to ensure:

- Wide partnership take up of LADO / allegations training.
- The learning from complex case enquiry is embedded into Doncaster's LADO arrangements

Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR)

The Council has a statutory duty to notify the National Panel, Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (CSPRP), and by extension the Department for Education and OFSTED, if it knows or suspects a child dies or is seriously harmed, and abuse and neglect is known or suspected. DSCP's Case Review Sub- Group (CRG) conducts rapid reviews of those children or young people that have been notified to CSPRP, and of other safeguarding cases where there has been multiagency involvement which could support learning.

Below is the CSPR activity for 2022/23

Number of notifications made to the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel	2
Number of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPR) completed	1
Number of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPR) in progress	3
Number of cases notified to Case Review Group in 2021/2022 by partners for consideration of a Local Learning Review	3

For each LCSPR and Local Learning Review detailed action plans were started with actions to address recommendations of the reviews. Actions were monitored by the Case Review Group with regular reports on progress are sent to the Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership and Chief Officers' Safeguarding Oversight Group (COSOG).

CSPR – Cameron

Cameron was a young baby who died following an attack by the family dog. The learning from LCSPR 'Cameron' has been summarised into a learning resource and published on the DSCP website, presented to the DSCP Partners, cascaded across the DSCP and SSDP partnerships and included in the DSCP Newsletter. It has also been used to:

- review the Partnership's 'Dangerous Dogs Practice Guidance' and promote professional awareness around the importance of assessing the risks relating to dogs around children and infants.
- inform training at GP Target sessions around the importance of GP involvement at case conferences
- used to redesign Signs of Safety forms to assist social workers when assessing risk

One LCSPR has suffered delays due to criminal justice proceedings, however when proceedings are concluded arrangements would progress to publication.

Partner Contributions

Child Matters

South Yorkshire Police worked closely with the NSPCC to deliver Child Matters training across the force and partnership. This was based on the GCPs framework aimed at tackling child neglect. 5500 attended the training mainly from SYP workforce but also from across partnership. This led to an increased awareness in identifying potential neglect from frontline officers

St Leger Homes (SLH)

Reviewed their safeguarding offer for domestic abuse which led to better communication, support, and guidance to safeguarding children and adults and achieving better outcomes. SLHs adopted an established set of standards and, completing a nationally recognised accreditation process aiming to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse. Through this process lessons were learnt and, changes made to their response to domestic abuse response. St Leger Homes were awarded full accreditation from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) in 2022.

SLHs' Young Persons Engagement Board wrote the Forward for the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse Toolkit which they launched in June 2023. The toolkit aims to enhance existing safeguarding policies and procedures to give teaching and support staff detailed information and resources to assist them in dealing with this complex and sensitive agenda.

Other Key Achievements

- April 2022 saw the launch of Doncaster Neglect Strategy which was attended by 241 practitioners from partner agencies. The event was headlined by Dez Holmes, Director of Research in Practice, a well-respected academic and keynote speaker regarding neglect.
- There have been some positive improvements regarding the take-up of Return Home Interview's for children and young people going missing.
- Safeguarding week was celebrated for children and adults in Doncaster in November 2022 with a range of partnership activities including Safeguarding Awards event.

So, What Difference Did We Make?

- There were fewer children / young people in care reported going missing.

- Practitioners who attended the neglect strategy launch reported a renewed enthusiasm and optimism when working with families around neglect issues. For example: the majority felt they would think more critically about the differing aspects of neglect in their practice. practitioners expressed their renewed enthusiasm and optimism, not only for themselves but for Doncaster as a whole, when it comes to
- The Multiagency Child Exploitation (MACE) processes that support Doncaster's whole family 'contextual' approach to safeguarding young people has been successful in reducing risks for those young people at risk of being exploited leading to positive outcomes for the young people and sustainable changes.
- The use of the Philomena Protocol has had a positive effect on children and young people, especially those in residential settings.
- A focused visit was undertaken in May 2023, findings of this were broadly positive and included the following comment: Senior leaders have significantly improved strategic planning and partnership working at the front door since the last inspection. Leaders know the service well.

Areas for Development in 2023/24

Work within the Safeguarding Business Unit has identified areas for improvement in 2023/24 in business processes. These include:

- Update the Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements in line with revised statutory guidance.
- Refresh the partnership dashboard to ensure shared ownership of key performance information.
- Refresh the Section 11 Audit process and report findings back to the partnership.
- Need for consistency in the support provided to the partnership.
- The need to ensure that the tracker to ensure key documents and procedures not provided by TriX is maintained.
- Need to update website more frequently.
- Need to ensure DSCP fulfils its role in licensing.
- Whilst the DSCP achieved the child-friendly status it was achieved at the second of four levels meaning there is room for further development. Given the importance of the voices of children and families within partnership working the DSCP should be aspiring to achieve the highest level of this award.

So, what does this all tell us....

Whilst there were some planned activities which were not completed, as can be seen in this report there were a number of areas progressed during 2022/23 in relation to positive changes and impact for children and families.

The DSCP may need to reflect on the rolling over of priorities for the last three years. The priorities, such as neglect and child exploitation may have benefitted from being part of a longer-term plan i.e., over three years, when initially agreed as priorities.

Although multi-agency training took place in 2022/23 much of this was part of single agency's offer and is likely to have been delivered without DSCP support. Moving into 2023/24 there has been a need for a clearer learning and development offer which embeds learning from reviews and

supports the development of required partnership practice in key areas such as neglect and child exploitation.

Moving Forward into 2023/24

Moving into 2023/2024 the DSCP needs to ensure a focus on the following:

- Evidence of a positive impact on practice, and outcomes for children, young people, and their families particularly in relation to neglect, domestic abuse and child exploitation priorities. This needs to be strengthened across all priorities to ensure that there is progress throughout the year.
- South Yorkshire Police progressing their implementation of the Doncaster Child Exploitation Team due to start operating in 2023/24.
- The work on the neglect strategy, GCP2 training, and the Child Matters initiative from South Yorkshire Police has been a positive development. However, there is more for the partnership to do in 2023/24 to ensure all partners take responsibility in taking the lead role for completing the GCP2.
- There was a planned focus on improving multi-agency working for children going missing in relation to completing strategy meetings on time, information sharing between police and social care for those children out of area and, increasing the number of return home interviews completed within 72 hours. Work is also underway to ensure Philomena Protocol is used by commissioned providers for young people.
- Moving forwards the group will refine and embed reporting of multi-agency performance data to DSCP, ensuring that key performance analysis informs improvements and identifies.

opportunities for deep dives to enable effective partnership practice and better outcomes for children, young people, and their families.

- The monitoring of CSPRs and sign off of actions plans will be reviewed 12 months after publication at a Peer Reflective Review event chaired by Independent Chair / Scrutineer.

Yvonne Byrne
Interim Manager
Safeguarding Business Unit
Updated May 2024