

Strategic Safeguarding Children Plan Priorities for 2021/2022



Safeguarding Surrey's
children together

The first discipline is to focus your finest effort on the one or two goals that will make all the difference, instead of giving mediocre effort to dozens of goals.

Chris McChesney, Sean Covey and James Huling, (2012) *The 4 Disciplines of Execution*, p. 23 Simon & Schuster Ltd

Introduction

The safeguarding partners through the Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) has responsibility to coordinate safeguarding services, to act as the strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others in the work of safeguarding children and promoting their welfare and implementing local and national learning including learning from serious child safeguarding incidents. The SSCP, jointly with the wider Safeguarding Partnership, commissions an annual Safeguarding Children Strategic Plan which identifies the strategic priorities of the SSCP.

Business As Usual Safeguarding Activities

As a children's safeguarding partnership, there is always a wide range of business as usual issues and actions that we must pay particular attention to if children are to remain safe and their welfare is to be promoted. These represent on-going or business as usual safeguarding activities that must be continuously coordinated and evaluated if the SSCP is to fulfil its statutory responsibilities under the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and statutory guidance Working Together 2018. The SSCP will continue to give conspicuous oversight of the continuing improvement in Children's Services so that the issues identified in the 2018 Ofsted inspection are fully addressed and we make progress towards getting to 'Good'. The SSCP will also continue to focus on the following areas of multi-agency safeguarding practice.

The journey of the child through the safeguarding system

- Early help and promoting good developmental progress and well-being for all children
- Children in need including children with Special Educational Needs and Children with Disabilities
- Children on Child Protection plans
- Children looked after by the County Council
- Care Leavers

Specific Safeguarding Concerns

- Domestic abuse
- Children at risk of various forms of exploitation
- Serious youth violence
- Children missing from home, school and care
- Parental substance misuse
- Other forms of abuse

Scrutiny and Quality Assurance of Multi-Agency Child Safeguarding Practice

- Strengthening the ability of the Partnership to demonstrate improvements in the quality of multi-agency child safeguarding practice and to evidence a positive impact on safeguarding children

User Voice and Influence

- Developing our work in ensuring children and young people's voice and influence

Practitioner Voice and Influence

- Ensuring that the work we do is practice led and practice informed

Developing and Reviewing Policies and Guidance

- Developing high quality, multi-agency policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, which are shared, understood and implemented in practice.

Developing the SSCP Priorities

The approach taken in proposing the SSCP priorities for 2021 to 2022 has been to build on the work of the partnership over the last 12 months. These priorities are, therefore, developmental. The proposed overarching priorities are key actions which, we believe, will deliver systemwide improvement in critical areas of multi-agency safeguarding practice. Our proposed priorities serve as a fulcrum or lever to create momentum across our entire system. These are safeguarding themes that are not just important, they are ‘Wildly Important’. They have been informed by local child safeguarding practice reviews, multi-agency audits, local and national serious safeguarding incidents, local and national research, feedback from partners and practitioners.

What Children and Young Adults Have Said...

These priorities have also been informed by the voices and experiences of children and young people. The Children and Young Adults we spoke to told us that early help is essential; there should be a heavy focus on prevention – working with children and families to prevent or de-escalate crisis.

Children and young adults have also told us that support for mental health and emotional well-being is important. We need to ‘think relationships’ and start early with helping children to understand good and healthy relationships through speaking about kindness, empathy, standing up for yourself and others, what is safe and not safe. Young people have told us about the gendered ways that we speak to them about issues such as ‘sexting’: girls are told not to do it; but boys are not always told about their behaviours and the ways that boys can put pressure on girls. Young people want us to think carefully about the messages we give and how we communicate them. Young people have a voice and a view and want to be included in work around safeguarding. In response to the feedback from young people, the SSCP will ensure that all the actions will include a clear focus on prevention and early help.

SSCP Priorities for 2021-2022

Early Help and Thresholds: We want to ensure that thresholds are clearly understood, and consistently applied, with effective multi-agency working and clear pathways for support.

A great deal of work has been done in relation to early help in Surrey, including improving our understanding and application of thresholds and there is some evidence of improvement. However, there is still more work to be done. We want to ensure that

1. There is a shared understanding of thresholds with clear evidence of effective partnership working across all agencies
2. Levels of need and pathways of support are clearly understood and consistently applied across the system. There is evidence from practice (including audit) children and families and partners that this is working to keep children safe and promote their well-being
3. Threshold decision making is truly multi-agency with the voice of all partners being heard

4. Threshold decision making is transparent and consistent
5. The escalation process is effective in keeping children safe and resolving professional disagreements, within appropriate timescales and there is strong evidence to support this
6. Schools are recognised and valued as a key partner in multi-agency safeguarding.

Child and Adolescent Resilience and Support (including Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Well-being, safeguarding children with SEN-D, contextual safeguarding and adolescent resilience in online spaces)

As children and young people grow in independence and go into spaces and places away from the family home, they can become vulnerable to risks outside of the home. Emotional and mental health, SEND, contextual safeguarding and safeguarding children and adolescents in online spaces are all inter-related and interconnected issues. Adolescence occurs roughly between 10 years old and 19 years old (it is helpful to think more about developmental stages than particular ages). As children build relationships and connections beyond the family the nature and level of risk changes. We would like to build a joined-up approach that supports child and adolescent resilience, especially in the following areas:

i) Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Well-being

The SSCP remains concerned regarding the re-commissioning and delivery of the new CAMHs contract and the emotional health and well-being of children and young people in Surrey more generally. The SSCP will have a keen interest in ensuring that this contract works for Surrey's children. The SSCP will

1. Work with commissioners and providers to ensure that processes are in place to monitor the effectiveness of the delivery of the contract
2. We will ask commissioners and providers to offer evidence from parents, children and partners, that the CAMHs offer is working and that children receive the help they need when they need it.
3. We will seek to develop and embed a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Strategy that demonstrates that child and adolescent mental health and well-being is everybody's business.
4. We will develop and approve a self-harm protocol and will seek evidence that this protocol is working to improve practice and support to children and families where self-harm is a factor

ii) Contextual Safeguarding

The SSCP will continue to develop and embed its response to adolescents who are vulnerable to safeguarding risks beyond the home including peer on peer abuse, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and other forms of harm related to the social and relational contexts in which young people live and relate to other young people and adults. We will

1. We will work with Partners to have clear view of the local profile related to context, vulnerability and resilience so that we have a clear understanding of the vulnerability profile in Surrey.
2. Ensure that multi-agency staff have a Practice Guidance document that gives guidance and practical tips on how to plan, assess, formulate a hypothesis with a family, develop a plan of work with a family and professional network
3. Ensure that multi-agency staff have Training and practice support sessions for staff to support implementation
4. Ensure that there are clear pathways and dedicated work streams around Mental Health, Contextual Safeguarding and Family Relationships and improve multidisciplinary working with our partner agencies
5. Ensure that multi-agency practitioners have practice toolkits to support their working with either Mental Health, Contextual Safeguarding or Family Relationships
6. Ensure that multi-agency practitioners have access to systemic Family Therapy clinics across the quadrants to support the development and embedding of Motivational Interviewing and systemic practice and give access to systemic Family Therapy to families in a timely way.

iii) **Online Safeguarding**

Evidence from our *Thematic Review of Adolescent Suicides in Surrey 2014-2020* and presentations to the Executive have highlighted the need to support children and young people to stay safe online. We will

1. Work with children, families, schools and key agencies to develop responses to staying safe and promoting well-being in online spaces.
2. Work with children, families, schools and key agencies to develop tools and approaches to address online risks and keep children safe
3. We will also work with children, families, schools and key agencies to develop tools and approaches that promote the emotional health and well-being of children and young people in online spaces. This may include access to online therapies, peer support, sites that promote emotional health and well being
4. There is a great deal of concern regarding ‘fake news’ and how children and young adults access important information and news. We will work children and young adults to develop guidance to support parents and practitioners.

iv) **Supporting Children and Young People with additional needs and disabilities who may be at risk**

Evidence from the *Thematic Review of Adolescent Suicides in Surrey 2014-2020* and national reports on child exploitation and adolescent safeguarding highlight the fact that having a an additional need, or a disability can be an additional risk factor. Children with social, emotional and communication conditions like Autistic Spectrum Disorder can be at a higher level of risk particularly of various types of exploitation and in online spaces.

1. We will ensure that our approach to adolescent safeguarding includes the need to understand and to respond to a child's special educational needs and/or disabilities.
2. We will ensure that the autism strategy includes information and guidance on safeguarding autistic children.

Neglect: improving the quality and timeliness of our practice in relation to neglect

Neglect remains one of the most prevalent forms of harm experienced by children in Surrey. Neglect is an urgent safeguarding issue which requires an urgent, skilled safeguarding response. We want to ensure that practitioners in all agencies are supported with the skills, awareness and tools to effectively intervene in cases where neglect is a factor. We want to:

- Achieve full implementation of GCP2 by the partnership; the utilisation of an evidence-based tool in cases of child neglect in Surrey.
- Evaluate, monitor and challenge the impact of the GCP2 partnership response (including GCP2A an antenatal pilot) through the use of a multi-agency platform 'ECINS' and data capture for Neglect. Impact is also to be monitored through SSCP audit and independent scrutiny. The Surrey Children's Workforce Academy will ensure that the learning is taken forward across the wider partnership.
- We want to ensure that Surrey multi-agency professionals are trained and confident in the utilisation of the GCP2 tool (and the screening tool which sits alongside it for professionals who have brief interventions with children and families).
- We want to improve awareness and understanding of Neglect within communities (public, voluntary services, community services for example) to share preventative messaging so that early identification can be achieved.
- We will oversee the development of a Neglect communication strategy to be led by the SSCP Partnership team.
- An increased understanding and a shared narrative of Neglect across the Partnership through the adoption of an evidence-based model and typology for Neglect.