

Member Report



South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2023/24

Report to: Children & Families Scrutiny & Improvement Committee

Report from: South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership

Portfolio:

Report Date: 03.12.2024

Decision Type: Executive / Committee

Council Priority Meeting Residents' Needs

HEADLINE POSITION

1.0 Summary of report

This report summarises and reflects on the work of the South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (STSCP) between 01 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. This covers the fourth full financial year of operation by the STSCP. All details about the work of the Partnership and the materials it presents to professionals, children and young people, their parents carers and communities, and the comprehensive and complex network of services that work with them, are available on the STSCP website: <https://stscp.co.uk>

The Partnership is a statutory body, led by an Executive. The Executive is made up of representatives from Redcar & Cleveland Council, Middlesbrough Council, North East, North Cumbria Integrated Care Board and Cleveland Police.

The 4 Priorities of the STSCP are as follows:

Exploitation formerly VEMT (Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing, Trafficked)

The aim is for children/young people to be free from the risk and harm of exploitation, going missing or being trafficked

Neglect

The aim is to reduce neglect, reduce the impact of neglect and ensure help & support is provided at the earliest opportunity

Empowering Young People

The aim is to create a clear focus on the needs and experience of young people

Working Together

The aim is to achieve excellent partnership working across all areas

Summary of 2023-24

This Annual Report covering the year 2023-2024 is published by the four statutory partners (Middlesbrough Council, Redcar & Cleveland Council, Cleveland Police and North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board) who are responsible for putting in place effective arrangements to support the co-ordination, quality assurance and continuous improvement of activity to safeguard children and young people.

Effective joint working has continued and has been further strengthened, in this report the statutory partners set out critical areas of development to further improve the effectiveness of the statutory partnership arrangements including the need for a robust multi-agency quality assurance framework and using the learning from serious safeguarding incidents and auditing to make a difference to practice and service provision.

During this period the STSCP has completed no rapid reviews therefore no Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews have been required, however we have signed off 2 CSPR from early 2023. The partnership has also completed a number of multi-agency audits.

This report also sets out the achievements and the work that has progressed at time of unprecedented pressures on services. These achievements are a reflection of the committed individuals who either work directly with children, young people and their families or those with a specialist role in safeguarding in partner agencies.

We are in a strong position to implement the revisions to national guidance as outlined in the recently published Working Together 2023. Our current partnership arrangement reflect that which is stipulated, as does our use of Independent Scrutiny which is separate to the role of Chair. Schools have been represented on the Executive at strategic level, and through events run in partnership with schools. The annual school safeguarding survey (Section 175) has a high rate of completion and the questions are adjusted annually to take into account local issues which have been identified.

It is a measure of the increasing confidence of the Executive that since March 2022 the role of Chair has now been assumed by the Corporate Director of Children and Families, Redcar and Cleveland and since April 2024 the chairing has passed to Cleveland Police. This has created the opportunity for the appointment of Independent Scrutineer/s who is able to undertake focussed work as identified by the Executive.

Statutory Partners-strategic level arrangements

Working Together outlines the importance of the oversight of the most senior representatives of the four statutory safeguarding partners on the local arrangements. During the past year meetings have been held which were chaired by the Chief Executives of the two Local Authorities and attended by the Chief Operating Officer of the CCG/ICB and Senior representatives of Cleveland Police. The meetings have considered the reports from the independent scrutineer and received updates from the Exec members on relevant matters.

These reports have outlined both the progress made and the challenges of the new arrangements. The meetings have also updated and reaffirmed the written commitment to the partnership across the two geographical areas, including the financial

arrangements which underpin the work.

The contribution of schools

The membership of the STSCP Executive was extended to include the two Directors of Education. The impact of this change has been that the significant role of schools in safeguarding children is recognised in the arrangements. An event with schools which will address a range of issues was held in Oct 2023. It is intended that the Section 175 will be repeated annually.

Section 11

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 established the statutory duty of partners to safeguard children. A comprehensive self-assessment framework has been established within Tees.

The Tees Section 11 audit will be repeated in November 2024 and in the meantime it is expected that any gaps which were identified in 2022 audit will have been addressed.

Learning from serious cases

One of the most challenging aspects of the work of any safeguarding partnership is the decision making about serious cases. STSCP has a clear process in place which involves the statutory partners and during the year decisions have been made within the required (and challenging) timescales. The constructive relationship with the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel which had been established previously has continued with regular dialogue throughout the year.

The CSPR process is intended to capture learning which could help to prevent a reoccurrence in future. This learning is encapsulated in a series of recommendations and an action plan at the completion of every report. Recognising the importance of implementing the recommendations, the challenge process established in 2022/23 continues, which is intended to make sure that the learning is embedded in practice. The process involves all the agencies who were involved in the case presenting the changes which have been made since the report, explaining what impact this has had on children and families and any learning which can be shared.

Effective infrastructure

Multi-agency safeguarding partnerships require effective infrastructure in order to undertake the work which is required. In STSCP this has been an area which has taken some time to resolve but I am pleased to report that progress has been made in the past few months with new appointments in place or underway.

The North of the Tees (Hartlepool and Stockton), like the South of the area has a joint safeguarding partnership. Work continues and discussions are underway about aligning further aspects of the partnership work, specifically around performance and learning & development. This will enable the two partnerships areas to create a synergy between them whilst maintaining the local focus.

Learning and development

In this report you will read about the partnership events which have taken place as part of the STSCP commitment to Learning and Development. The themes of these events reflect the priorities of STSCP as well as local and national reports, including the impact of neglect

Priorities for 2024-25

The Executive recognises that although there is evidence of agencies involving children, the voice of children could influence and impact further the priorities of the partnership.

It is also recognised that the performance framework requires review to reflect the changing nature of vulnerability and risk. This is one of the drivers for the discussions with HSSCP and a proposal is on the verge of agreement between both partnerships.

2.0 Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report.

DETAILED PROPOSALS

3.0 What are the objectives of the report and how do they link to the Council's priorities

The annual report is a statutory requirement and therefore members should be made aware of the contents and work of the South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership

7.0 Consultation and Engagement

Report is on the STSCP website

8.0 Appendices and Background Papers – N/A

9.0 Contact Officer

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