



Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership

2020-21 Annual Report

Reporting Period April 2020 – March 2021

Chair's Foreword

This year we are reporting about the lockdown: the first to the third. The Covid-19 pandemic cast a long shadow over the whole year. The intensity of face-to-face safeguarding work undoubtedly took a step backwards with the understandable constraints on contact unless this was demonstrably essential. Deciding on how best to handle incoming concerns on every single day of the year added complexity and stress to what was already complex and stressful decision-making. The spike in referrals more recently is partly explained by demand being suppressed over such a long period of time. I am pleased to report agencies in Suffolk got this right most of the time. Some brilliant work was carried out whilst still following Government guidance about being cautious. The impact of the year on professionals was great with many ending the year exhausted and sometimes numb. The stress of children and their families was much greater of course. The rise in child mental health referrals over the last six months of the year is an example of this, including a rise in complex eating disorders where the level of specialist services and interventions needed are not keeping pace. The rise in referrals for domestic abuse is also perhaps not a surprise after so much locking down. Too many vulnerable adults were hidden behind closed doors both in their homes and in their care settings, without much scrutiny and advocacy. I do not think we have understood the extent of the impact of that isolation on adults at risk.



I am especially concerned about the widespread increase in anxiety levels amongst vulnerable people. The year has shown that rigid eligibility criteria cut many people out of the services they need, because their level of assessed need is just under the line rather than being just over the line. Being just under the line today would have been over the same line a decade ago. This means there is a new level of unmet need which may have hidden lifetime consequences. In this respect, the scale of the backlog of referrals to the emotional well-being hub is extremely worrying. I would expect this to have been resolved by the time I write my overview next year. Adversity breeds innovation as well as challenge. For example, vulnerable young mothers were supporting each other on a What's App Group, far more intensively and supportively than professionals ever could. The importance of peer support, frequently facilitated by professionals in the statutory and voluntary sectors, can make the difference between survival and collapse.

Finally, I would like to thank all members of the Safeguarding Partnership for never losing their focus. Countless children and adults at risk were protected as a result of this and their skill, commitment and teamwork. My thanks extend to the Partnership team who have delivered everything asked of us and more.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony".

Anthony Douglas CBE
Independent Chair, Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership

Voluntary Sector Foreword

Whilst difficult and worrying Covid-19 headlines dominated the news, there were also headlines that demonstrated community action and compassion for others. Suffolk's 15,000+ Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations and 600+ small hyper-local community groups of friends and neighbours have pulled together to keep people safe and to help them in every way possible. The demand for support from the VCSE increased. Many groups saw their income reduced, fundraising events were cancelled, and Covid-19 prevented them operating. Many found they were supporting people with more complex needs and were facing more safeguarding issues exacerbated by lockdowns and Covid-19. They found new ways to support and safeguard the people who needed them. For some that meant learning how to collect and pay for medicines and shopping for people who were self-isolating, for others it was how to adapt their transport to be Covid secure. Many voluntary organisations identified the need for increased support and guidance to recognise safeguarding concerns and how to report, finding confidence in their newfound knowledge. We kept emphasising – *See it. Recognise it. Report it.* At Community Action Suffolk we supported them with personalised 1 to 1's, developing virtual safeguarding training and 'on-demand' training. Our new materials had examples of high-risk situations that people who were unfamiliar with safeguarding could relate to so they could *See it. Recognise it. Report it.*

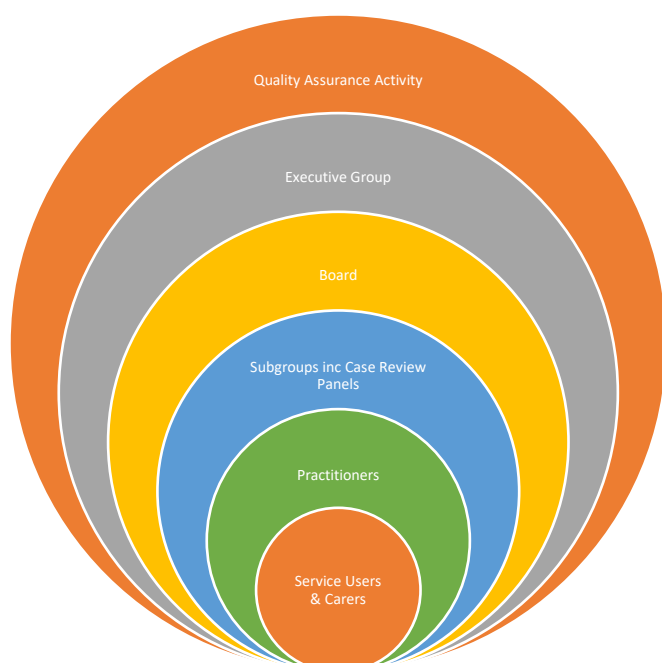


We worked with the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership to develop an on-demand safeguarding conference. Partnership working continues as we collectively work to equip the vibrant, vital VCSE to *See it. Recognise it. Report it.*

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Governance Arrangements



The Partnerships core objective is to coordinate and hold partners to account to make sure they are protecting the people of Suffolk who might be at risk, and to ensure that timely learning from serious safeguarding incidents is identified and implemented.

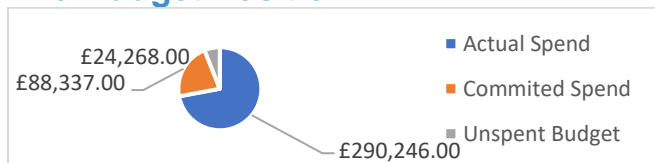
Underpinned by The Care Act 2014 and Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Executive Group sets the strategic direction of the Partnership in the context of the wider Suffolk System (Health & Wellbeing Board and Safer, Stronger Communities Group), providing a point of escalation while aligning the work of the Adults and Children’s Boards. Members are the most senior leaders from the three statutory partners.

The newly published Quality Assurance Framework puts the voice of service users and carers at the heart of all audits and reviews. This trend towards multi-agency case auditing and more co-production with individuals who need to be kept safe and their families, was a notable development throughout the year in question.

2020-21 In Review

Priorities were set before the Covid-19 pandemic transformed every aspect of people’s lives for at least a year and, for some, perhaps irreversibly. Safeguarding activities remained a priority throughout the pandemic. All board and sub-group meetings, and the work on case reviews, continued without a need to compromise on timescales or priorities. Inevitably there was an impact on professionals as well as individuals, families and communities. The extent of that and in what ways the effects are lasting, will not be known for a while. We will be carrying out an Appreciative Inquiry in the late summer to make sure the lessons learnt from the last year are understood and built into future working practices.

End Budget Position



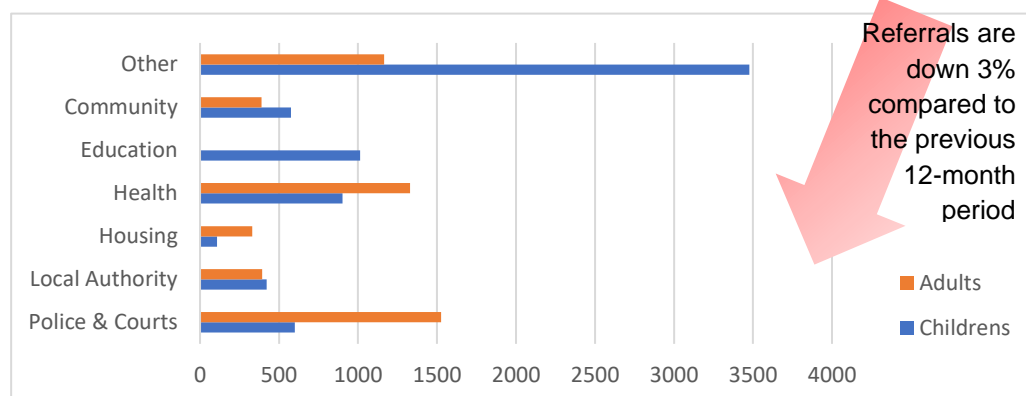
Budget	£400,105
Budgeted Spend on Reserves	£0
Final Costs for 2020/21	£378,583
Carried Forward to Reserves	£24,268

Key Achievements

- Re-focussed the terms of reference for the Learning and Improvement Group introducing a thematic forward plan enabling the membership to be broadened so the correct decision makers are present on key issues.
- Adapted with no notice to working remotely, successfully maintaining all statutory safeguarding functions while ensuring partners kept safeguarding at the heart of their recovery activities, seeking assurance, and providing support where appropriate. Exception reporting led to greater scrutiny being placed on waiting lists, for example within the Emotional Wellbeing Hub and on the handling of adult safeguarding enquiries.
- Delivered webinars on key topics such as self-neglect and hoarding, professional curiosity and safeguarding during the pandemic that were attended by over 1000 practitioners working across Suffolk.
- Developed a safeguarding self-assessment tool for schools to audit their own safeguarding activity.
- Revised the Partnership’s audit methodology including preparation for a programme of multi-agency auditing which had to be put on hold during the pandemic.
- Developed free safeguarding resources targeting a response to real time issues: for example, a condensed version (‘mini guide’) of the Self Neglect and Hoarding Policy that has been distributed to over 1200 practitioners in Suffolk following two practice reviews. It became evident from MASH intelligence and practice reviews that understanding/awareness of the Safeguarding Adults Framework could be stronger. This resulted in a campaign to re-launch the framework after developing a ‘mini guide’ version of the Framework, and associated e-learning module (to imminently follow). Over 750 mini guides have been distributed to date.
- Launched a combined Partnership website bringing together adults and children’s safeguarding materials written in a language lay people would understand along with diverging from Local Authority email addresses to reinforce the shared responsibility of police, health and social care as equal status statutory partners.
- Increased engagement from the VCSE in the 3 adults locality forums which enabled key safeguarding messages and resources to be shared. The Partnership also took on board issues raised within the forums and shared best practice.
- Successfully sought funding from the Department for Education to deliver targeted interventions aimed at supporting schools to reduce permanent exclusions as a result of persistent disruptive behaviour and to reduce the risks of a downward personal spiral as a result of disengagement from learning.

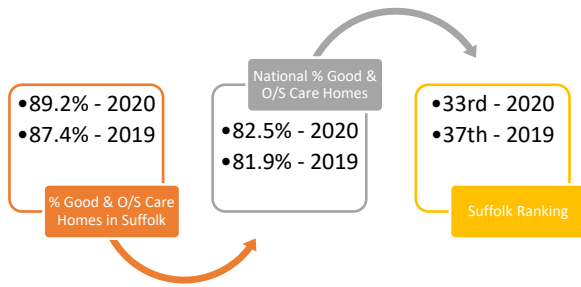
Referrals by Agency

The graphic (right) shows where referrals to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) originated between April 2020 and March 2021.

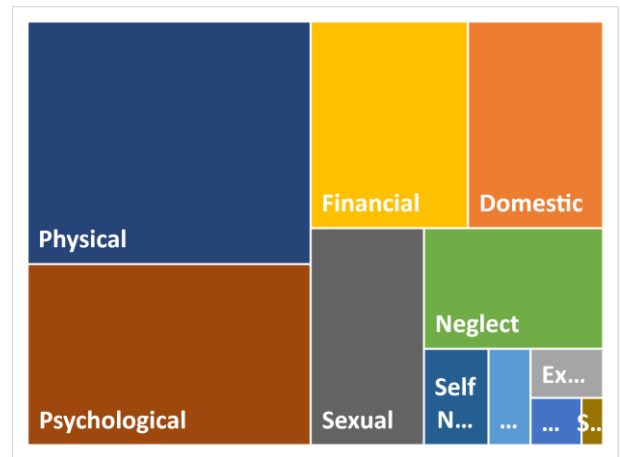


Headline Data in Adult Safeguarding

Care Home Ranking



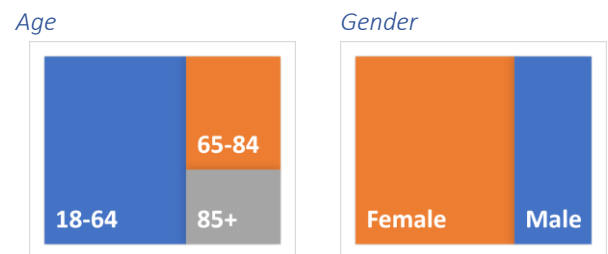
Referral Rate by Abuse Type



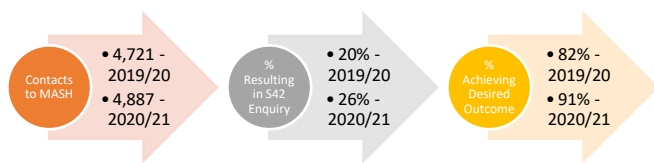
Organisational Abuse Concerns



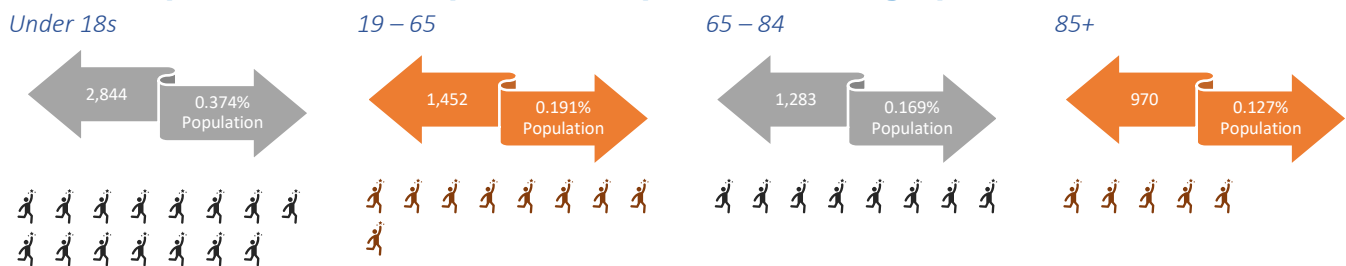
Safeguarding Referrals by



MASH Safeguarding Referrals



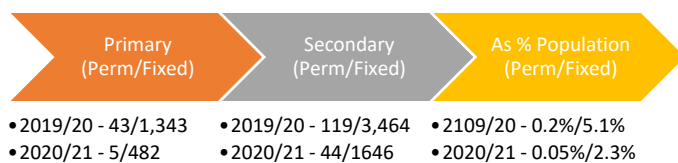
Partnership Wide Abuse Reports Vs Population Demographics*



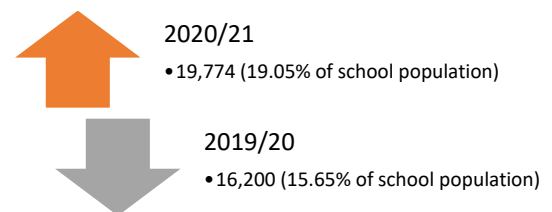
*Percentages represent proportion of the total Suffolk population, not proportion of individual demographics.

Headline Data in Children's Safeguarding

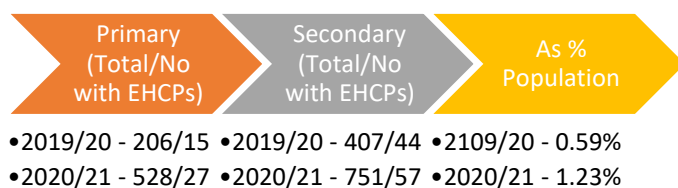
School Exclusions



Children Accessing Free School Meals



Pupils Electively being Home Educated



Children on Child Protection Plans (CPP)



2021-22 Priorities & Aspirations

The pandemic will continue to influence the services provided by partners, in ways such as blended practice and we will ensure that lessons learnt from how we safeguarded during the pandemic are identified as part of our Appreciative Inquiry. An example is our faster triaging of concerns and more rapid review processes, aimed at understanding the learning from high-risk situations as soon as possible. We played our part in both tactical and recovery meetings and processes and we intend to maintain this level of collaboration in what we hope are slightly easier times.

The Partnership's core priorities for the coming year are:



Support Partners in retaining Safeguarding as a core activity across all services as we recover from the Coronavirus pandemic



Extend Signs of Safety across the Partnership footprint and all its agencies



Improve 'Information' Transparency within the Partnership



Develop our review methodologies based on the trials undertaken in 20/21

The Partnership will know these priorities have been met when:

Supporting Recovery

- System Leadership across the 'Suffolk System' supports 'outstanding' Partnership Working
- Non-statutory services e.g. working groups have the capacity to resume
- A comms plan has a variety of ways Partners are engaged at least bi-monthly
- Crossover with complementary Partnerships e.g. Community Safety will have been explored to reduce duplication and improve information sharing
- Best practice will routinely be sought nationally and adapted for Suffolk

Extending Signs of Safety

- Suffolk will have an emerging omni-competent front line and greater partnership working
- The number of permanent school exclusions will be in decline
- We will have worked with housing providers to develop a model safeguarding system for them
- There will be support for young people to facilitate 'Return Home Interviews'

Information Transparency

- There will be a dynamic Policy & Procedures section on the Partnership's website
- A Transparency Standard will have been agreed and routinely used
- Greater links will have been established with active service user groups e.g. the University of Suffolk
- There will be better promotion about safeguarding to the people of Suffolk

Practice Learning

- Practice review methodologies will be aligned across adult and children's services
- The Reviews in Rapid Time Methodology will have been adapted and embedded into our portfolio of review options
- Internal reviewers will be fully supported to undertake practice reviews
- The voice of the adult or child will routinely be brought into reviews
- Professional Advisors will have the capacity to undertake horizon scanning of national learning
- There will have been an evaluation into the effectiveness of learning from Reviews building on the 2019 case review learning report

Adults

For adults, the Partnership will look to:

Establish and refine support for Designated Safeguarding Leads in Care Homes (*linked to NICE guidance*)

Refine and adopt the Reviews in Rapid Time process, exploring thematic reviews

Complete further work on embedding the Safeguarding Adults Framework across the sector and sharing best practice

Support partners in the roll-out of the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) and completion of S42 enquiries

Identify new training opportunities from case reviews e.g. professional curiosity

Children

For children, the Partnership will look to:

Support the Local Authority in its reduction of Permanent Exclusions

Develop and refine a self-assessment Safeguarding Audit that can be used by schools

Monitor the rising number of children who are home educated and work with the EHE Team to ensure appropriate support and resource is in place to safeguard home educated children to minimise the risk of exploitation and abuse increasing

Ensure further promotional material on 'Non-Accidental Injury' (NAI) and overlay in babies is made available for both practitioners and families

Continue to monitor the Emotional Wellbeing strategy with a particular focus on the impact of the emotional wellbeing hub in supporting children and young people to receive a service and/or support

Multi-Agency Working

Despite being an ongoing theme that always requires further development across the county (as highlighted by Practice Reviews, Domestic Homicide Reviews, and LeDeR reviews), there has been some evidence of excellent work in this area over the past year. Below are two examples of where effective multi-agency working has led to positive outcomes for the individuals concerned.

Organisational Abuse Concerns

Timely, joined up response to a care home rated Inadequate by CQC. Early information sharing about concerns of organisational abuse led to a safeguarding enquiry. Early findings led to SCC suspending the contract with the home following several concerns (the main being the number of staff available to keep residents safe). The home now has a safeguarding action plan in place, the Local Authority's Central Safeguarding Team alongside Service Development and Contracts colleagues and health colleagues are meeting with BUPA regularly regarding the safeguarding plan and continue to undertake visits to the home to review. Ongoing liaison with CQC regarding the actions ensure further joined up approach.

Parental Neglect

Two female siblings were serially abused by mother and her male lover. An excellent joined up response by police and social care began when abuse was uncovered: both during the initial investigation and the months before the trial of the perpetrators. Consistent contact from police officers initially involved and the social workers have helped to support the girls. Since being placed in permanent foster care, a range of specialist therapeutic interventions have been made available to both them and the foster carers. The result has been that they increasingly feel able to talk about their lived experience, highlighting both their developing sense of security but also the scale of the continuing commitment required of professionals.

Responding to Coronavirus

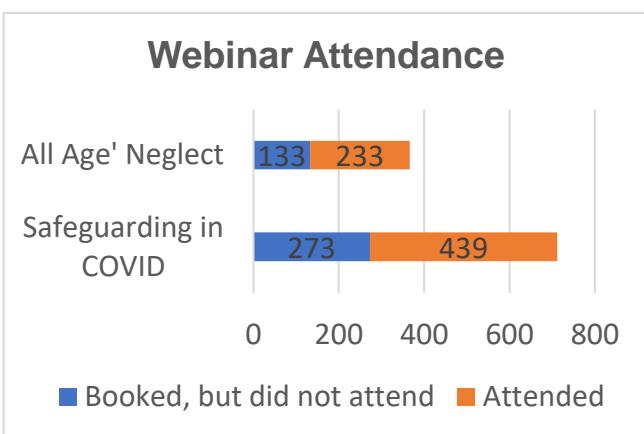
Meetings moved online and agendas adjusted to reflect the most pressing issues as they evolved. The move to online meetings has improved attendance and participation at meetings as the rural nature of the county meant significant time could be saved travelling to meetings.

Lockdowns have had an unprecedented and extraordinary impact on all aspects of day-to-day life and behaviours. There have been ongoing concerns about how adults at risk of abuse with care and support needs may experience different or more abuse or neglect. For children it was how pupils on teachers' 'watchlists' went unnoticed while not in school.



Coordinating multi-agency communications in response to the lockdowns and their impact on safeguarding led to the creation of the *See it, Recognise it, Report it* campaign. This included a video explaining what to do when concerned for someone and a targeted social media campaign which received over 2,500,000-page impressions, 2,400 click-throughs and 333 shares, increasing social media followers by 200% and coincided with an increase in MASH referrals.

'Spot the signs' postcards were created by the Partnerships Covid Tactical Response Groups to spread awareness of spotting signs of self-neglect and hoarding (adults – 500 copies distributed), and spotting signs of neglect (children – 2,000 copies distributed). These issues were identified as key concerns in Suffolk communities during Covid-19 using live data from partners. The postcards were circulated to schools, health centres, community organisations and those who were still coming into contact with people in their homes and may be able to spot signs of neglect or abuse.



The Partnership also began delivering webinars to support practitioners in the response to Covid-19. This included a webinar on identifying neglect, what the 'new normal' looks like and working under Covid Easements.

Throughout, a risk-based approach has been taken when holding Partners to account in performing their statutory safeguarding duties. This included asking Partners to report by exception when there was a risk to service delivery, so support could be targeted. This has led to greater multi-agency coordination in responding to the growing waiting list in the Emotional Wellbeing Hub. This continues to be monitored monthly by the Learning & Improvement Group.

The Partnership's training offer to the sector was well received. Training helped to reduce the risk of professional isolation associated with the pandemic restrictions on movement and contact. Quality assuring the safeguarding training materials of other organisations was introduced. This is an offer the Partnership intends to continue next year.

This focus on virtual training was a catalyst for the introduction of 7-minute briefings which have been well received by Partners. Following the publication of a Safeguarding Adults Review, the first briefing focused on organisational abuse. The intention is that 7-minute briefings will form part of the plan to disseminate learning from all case reviews going forward.

Looking ahead to 2021/22

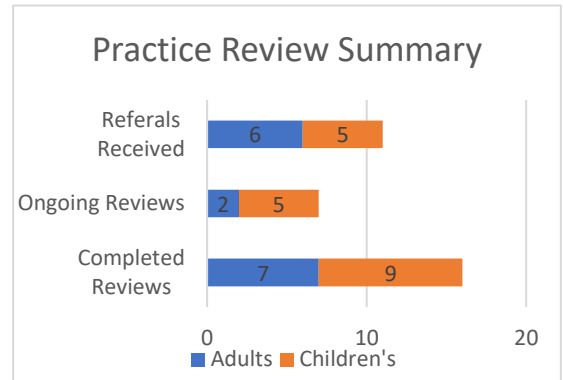
As life begins to transition into the 'new normal' the Partnership intends to undertake an Appreciative Inquiry over the summer to identify the impact on safeguarding work throughout the pandemic and the learning to be applied in the future. At the time of publishing this report Suffolk is in Stage 3 of the Government's roadmap out of lockdown. It is still too early to tell when future waves will happen and how this may affect partners, users and communities. The findings of the Appreciative Inquiry will undoubtedly inform a strategy for managing future waves or pandemics if Suffolk is fortunate enough to avoid a third wave.



Practice Learning

Practice Reviews continued to be undertaken despite the pressures placed on partners due to Covid-19. This included the completion of 16 reviews where the learning and actions are being monitored by the Learning & Improvement Groups.

Reviews often cover serious social issues and this year, the Stella Maris Inquiry was published, which highlighted the needs of young adults at risk in supported housing. Planning started to review a case of a young adult who was extremely vulnerable, exploited and then murdered. The Partnership published its final two Serious Case Reviews for Children’s cases that were initiated prior to the introduction of Local Safeguarding Children’s Practice Reviews. Emphasis has remained on early identification of learning with the rapid review process now being used across both adult and children’s services. This early identification of learning has enabled the Partnership to develop its use of internal reviewers and support a better understanding of the issues facing the subject of the review in the context of local systems. As the year ended the Partnership was in the process of concluding its first Safeguarding Adult Review using the Social Care Institute for Excellence ‘Reviews in Rapid Time’ methodology. This approach, that looks at system learning, has been well received in Suffolk and will be adapted to fit the Suffolk model across adult and children’s services in the current year.



Key Learning

Some key themes that are emerging across reviews, regardless of age are around the sharing of information, professional curiosity, challenge, and effective multi-agency working. Using this information, the Partnership will be looking to trial thematic reviews by grouping similar issues together and overlaying this with a new approach of finding system wide learning. An example is to promote a greater understanding of the Mental Capacity Act and to prepare as effectively as possible for the introduction of new Liberty Protection Safeguards, now planned for April 2022. The case studies below are from reviews that were published during this reporting period.

Maria was an 89-year-old retired teacher who became a resident at Lound Hall following a period in hospital where she had been admitted from a previous residential care home placement. During her time at Lound Hall, she had problems with her weight and with eating, infected pressure ulcers, and other infections. At the end of her life, following admission to hospital, Maria had grade 4 pressure ulcers across her body that had been poorly cared for. This meant that she had extensive areas of rotting flesh. Maria had multiple medical and physical issues and it was notable on most GP visits that only the issue (for which they were called) was attended to and treatment recommended. Maria’s medical needs were not attended to holistically, highlighting poor nursing and care practice within the home, but also the need for improved communication between care homes and GPs.

Lily was a month old at the time of her death. She died in the parental home after feeding in the parental bed. The family moved from Essex in 2019. The family had not engaged well with services in Essex and there were concerns about Lily’s mother’s care of her. Lily’s parents had a history of drugs and alcohol abuse and involvement with the Police. Lily’s father also had mental health episodes. Both parents smoked in the house and father also smoked cannabis. A tortoise was kept in an open enclosure next to the parents’ bed. Key learning points from the case included remaining curious and challenging of parents and families to ensure professionals remain child focused, consideration of the role of fathers when assessing risks to children, the need for all professionals to communicate, share information and ensure records are up to date, reviews of ‘did not attend’ policies and to develop a piece of work on safer sleeping to support parents and professionals.

Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

Of the 78¹ death notifications in this reporting period 47 (over 60%) were children under 1. This is in line with national trends, with cause of death typically resulting from genetic or chronic conditions. The panel identified a number of ‘modifiable factors’ such as, co-sleeping associated with neglect, drug and alcohol consumption, and smoking. The Partnership will focus on this in 2021, learning from similar work in Norfolk.



¹The number of reported deaths is combined with Norfolk for reporting purposes.

Inclusion

The Partnership has continued to ensure service users and their voices remain at the heart of decision making and the Partnership's agenda whether that is ensuring their experiences are conveyed in practice reviews, policy development or through information sharing.

Last year the Partnership committed to and has delivered on:

- Publishing an Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan
- Tailoring its website and communication messages to service users, using language they understand rather than 'professional jargon'
- Exploring the idea of the vice-chair being from the Voluntary and Community Sector. The pandemic has meant this will be carried forward for implementation a year later (2021/22).

Engaging with the Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise Sector

The Partnership and Children's Social Care are working with Volunteering Matters to support Independent Return Home Interviews when children go missing. All volunteers have been trained in safeguarding and the Return Interview process. They are all DBS checked. More intensive work with adults at risk who go missing was also carried out, to ensure the Herbert Protocol was fully complied with.

There are plans to offer further support packages for the children/young people once they have received a Return Home Interview. These will consist of a 'Touch Base' process, a distraction toolkit and mentoring to encourage a dialogue and resilience around their safety plans. The project will be monitored and evaluated by the Partnership and the Local Authority's 'Missing Co-ordinator'.



This initiative is great for the young people in care receiving a return home interview as early findings suggest they are more comfortable talking to someone closer to their own age and those conducting the interviews are gaining valuable experience and life skills for the future.

Supporting those who Self Neglect & Hoard

Focussing on self-neglect and hoarding cases has been an ongoing priority for the Partnership over the past year following an increasing number of reviews with this theme running through them, as well as intelligence from the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub showing a rise in cases.

With this in mind, the Adult Board welcomed two service users, Melissa and

George, to share their story and journey through services, talking about how it felt for them. This has subsequently impacted the work of the Partnership in many ways, such as inclusion of Melissa and George's story as a case study in the Safeguarding Adults Framework e-learning, as well as being instrumental in helping multi-agency professionals learn from their experiences. Two important quotes from Melissa and George are included here.

"You need to think about mental health support. Hoarding can be due to mental trauma or stress. It's not just a case of having a clear out."

"Build up trust with us before you come in and try and take all our possessions away. They are our safety net and we have an emotional attachment to them."

Social Media Headlines

Over the past 12 months



Reach 751,222
373 Likes
317 New Followers



Impressions: 91,830
65 Mentions
198 New Followers



Reach 119,000
578 Likes
New Followers 415

In 2021/22 we plan to:

- Promote sector-led improvement;
- Promote facilitated self-help including with personal safety plans;
- Work with 'Wednesday's Child' to ensure adequate support is provided for people with Eating Disorders;

- Support advocacy organisations attempting to support vulnerable individuals in settings whose doors are too often closed.

Statutory Partner Impact & Reflections

As Part of the annual review, Executive Group members were asked to summarise their experience with the Partnership over the past twelve months, identifying any pertinent learning or achievements for the benefit of their organisation and more broadly the people of Suffolk.

Police

Despite the obvious challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic has presented to us all, the strength and collaborative approach of the established partnership has really shone through. Like many organisations, IT solutions have enabled members of the Partnership to continue dealing with daily business as a partnership whilst not actually meeting face to face, as well as managing the unique challenges that covid-19 has presented enabling us to support the Suffolk community.

A number of cases have been subject to the rapid review process and this has enabled all members of the Partnership to reach a collective and informed decision about the next steps that need to be taken, with support to each Partnership agency being strong.

County Lines drug dealing continues to be a threat to many areas of the UK, and Suffolk is not immune to this. The work that our wide range of teams contribute to, from education and prevention; enforcement and prosecution; and safeguarding of vulnerable people; all with the support of our partner agencies, contributes significantly to protecting those exploited by County Lines offenders. The professional relationships within the Partnership result in regular contact and ready access to one another to discuss safeguarding situations which are collectively addressed to mitigate harm being caused wherever possible.

Health

Due to Covid-19, it has continued to be a time of transition and change over the past year. As statutory partners, health has continued to play a pivotal role, ensuring safeguarding remains high on the health economy agenda despite the challenges faced. We have continued to contribute our experience and expertise to all the Partnership forums giving a health voice. There have remained some challenges with ensuring health has been recognised as an equal partner, this has been evident in case reviews and safeguarding decision making.

The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) remains a valuable part of the Partnership and the Chairs contribution has been influential in ensuring that learning from child deaths is a priority across Suffolk. Health representation for Waveney has increased for both adults and children in Partnership forums throughout the last year.

Participation and learning from both safeguarding children practice reviews and safeguarding adult reviews have been progressed and shared collaboratively across both Suffolk, Norfolk and Waveney. The three health subgroups, chaired by the CCG's, now have attendance from the Partnership management team which has supported and facilitated partnership working.

Suffolk County Council

This past year has been a test of our resilience, strength of relationships and ability to innovate quickly – and it is pleasing to share at the end of the year that the positive relationships we knew existed have stood up to support the needs of the people of Suffolk during the most testing time of the pandemic. SCC and Partners have been agile in their responses to the pandemic and lockdowns, creating strategies to counter anticipated risks and issues specific to its communities. At the beginning of the lockdown, the Partnership very quickly developed a forum with which partners could agree joined up messages and the channels from which information could be shared. This ensured we were not duplicating efforts and could all contribute to the collaboration across the partnership.

The continuing strengthened relationship between adults' and children's services is enabling us to work more effectively on areas of like transitions and exploitation. Developing better and seamless transitions can only improve a young person's experience and support as they enter adulthood. This is still work in progress, but we look forward to continuing working within the partnership space and building upon the solid foundations we have.

The Partnership has continued to support the safeguarding agenda of both the Local Authority and the Suffolk system. Notable examples are assisting in the escalation and prioritisation of the waiting list issues within the Emotional Wellbeing Hub, coordinating the development of a Standard Operating Procedure for the handling of Section 42 Enquiries and its support in developing resources to support professional curiosity for practitioners.



Suffolk
Safeguarding
Partnership

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