

LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

REPORT:	SCRUTINY – Children & Young People Sub-Committee	
DATE OF DECISION	14th November 2023	
REPORT TITLE:	Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2022-23	
CORPORATE DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR:	Debbie Jones, Corporate Director, Children, Young People and Education	
LEAD OFFICER:	Debbie Jones, Corporate Director, Children, Young People and Education	
LEAD MEMBER:	Cllr Maria Gatland, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People	
KEY DECISION? [Insert Ref. Number if a Key Decision] <i>Guidance: A Key Decision reference number will be allocated upon submission of a forward plan entry to Democratic Services.</i>	No	REASON: N/A
CONTAINS EXEMPT INFORMATION? <i>(* See guidance)</i>	NO	Public
WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL	

1 SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 Section 16G of The Children Act 2004 requires safeguarding partners to publish their arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It also requires the safeguarding partners to prepare and publish, at least once in every 12-month period, a report on the work that they have done as a result of their arrangements, and how effective the arrangements have been in practice.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

For the reasons set out in the report [and its appendices], the Executive Mayor, is recommended:

- 2.1 To note the Croydon Safeguarding Children (CSCP) Annual Report for 2022-23
- 2.2 to note that the report provides robust evidence of the impact of the CSCP's activity to improve outcomes for children & families
- 2.3 to agree that the funding for the CSCP requires action to ensure the partnership is more equitable.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The burden of funding has historically fallen to the Local Authority. This is not a tenable solution.

4 BACKGROUND AND DETAILS

- 4.1 The CSCP Annual Report aims to answer 2 key questions. The report does this in more detail, using the framework of The What?, The So What?, The Why Not? and The What Next? In summary the 2 key questions can be answered as follows:

- 4.2 ***Is the Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership effective in discharging its duty to co-ordinate local work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children?***

- 4.3 Answer: Yes, it is effective. This is evidenced by the Independent Review which found that:

- 4.4 *“The CSCP supports the delivery of safe multi-disciplinary practice in the Borough. Benefiting significantly from highly experienced and competent leaders, the partnership demonstrates a capability to identify and focus on those issues relevant to the needs of local children and young people”.*

- 4.5 The review also noted a lack of an overarching framework. This has since been resolved by the introduction of a New Arrangement Document which sets out how the CSCP co-ordinates local work and the expectation of agencies to engage with the format to ensure children are safeguarded.

- 4.6 ***Is the Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership ensuring how effective the activities of local organisations are, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children?***

- 4.7** Answer: Mostly. There is evidence of quality work to safeguard children and promote their welfare, however the quantitative evidence provided by audits and data is neither embedded as a process or formatted in a way to drive improvement. There is also a wealth of initiatives and work to support children in Croydon to flourish, where their voice is influencing service provision, but we have not been able to adequately collate this other than in separate activities to promote awareness. The Business Plan for 2023-24 is addressing this.
- 4.8** The annual report covers the financial year April 2022 - March 2023. It is a public facing document which will be published on the [CSCP website](#).
- 4.9** The CSCP arrangements are set out on page 7 of the Annual Report. Key workstreams are overseen by the CSCP Executive and the Independent Scrutineer Keith Makin, via a monthly Executive Partner meeting.
- 4.10** There continues to be a wide disparity between the income received from partner agencies. The partnership should consist of a shared and equal duty, however the Local Authority provided 76.6% of the income for the year in question.
- 4.11** The CSCP aligns its work with other multi-agency workstreams. As a result of the strengthening of the new arrangements (implemented March 2023) there are now 2 Network Meetings where senior representatives from the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and Croydon Safeguarding Adults Board (CSAB) meet twice a year to review cross cutting themes. The first such meeting took place in May 2023 and considered an early draft of the CSCP Thematic Review on Serious Youth Violence as well as how learning about transition points for children and young people could be examined and shared across our different partnership groups.
- 4.12** The diagram on page 7 shows the links with other Boards and organisations to improve the line of sight to all areas in Croydon where there is an opportunity to influence the outcomes for children and families.
- 4.13** The Safeguarding Practice Review Group conducted 4 Rapid Reviews relating to children who have died or were seriously injured; and neglect or abuse was suspected. Two were very young infants who died. Two were older children (aged 10-15) who were sexually abused. None of these cases progressed to Safeguarding Practice Reviews as the Rapid Reviews were “learning in action” sessions where multi-agency professionals agreed actions to capture and share learning from these cases where relevant. Some of these cases illuminates the fact that despite best efforts of professionals, sometimes children are harmed, often by their carers, and professionals cannot always be able to prevent it. Additionally, briefings were created to raise awareness of key issues and these cases continue to feature on the report summarising reviews which is updated and shared at every CSCP meeting throughout the year as well as shared more widely in learning events across the partnership.
- 4.14** The CSCP completed 3 Safeguarding Practice Reviews which had been started in previous years. Two were cases where children took their own lives (‘Jake’ has been published. However, the outcome of the inquest is preventing the publication of ‘Chloe’ and ‘Cora’ relates physical injuries inflicted on a child under 1, (probably by her parents)

which is still awaiting the outcome of criminal process. Whilst awaiting the outcomes, the learning from these cases (as well as national cases of interest) has been shared widely in briefings, on-line and in-person events. Wicked issues include:

- poor or inconsistent information sharing across agencies
- lack of professional curiosity by some practitioners
- the importance of identifying and engaging with fathers/male carers

4.15 Notwithstanding the above, we should be mindful that the number of cases we review is very small, given the number of children in the borough. We are very similar to our statistical neighbours in both the number and subject matter of cases which we review. In all cases there are examples of excellent direct work with families, and we have not identified any catastrophic failings which have led to the poor outcomes for the children in the cases under review.

4.16 The CSCP has held a number of events to progress the Thematic Safeguarding Practice Review relating to the serious youth violence incidents in 2021 where 5 teenagers in Croydon lost their lives in unconnected incidents.

4.17 This review focuses on 7 of the young people who were charged in connection with the deaths of 3 of those children who died.

4.18 The review has considered the following resources:

- The internal review completed by Croydon Children's Social Care to examine the facts surrounding 5 young people who were killed in 2021.
- Multi-agency reports from all known organisations who worked with the 7 young people associated with the deaths of the 3 young people (since the age of 10).
- Responses to surveys from multi-agency professionals who worked with the 7 young people (or young people with similar life experiences).
- 3 interactive, multi-agency workshops where responses from over 60 attendees were gathered electronically in real time as well as the opportunity for facilitated conversations.
- A number of separate conversations with various stakeholders and practitioners.
- Conversations directly between the Independent Author and parents of children associated with the deaths, and the parent of a child who was killed.
- Several multi-agency panel meetings to consider the information received and propose content/recommendations.
- A multi-agency learning event to consider the key features and learning from this review.

- 4.19** This review is expected to be published in December 2023, following a community meeting to seek feedback from community services and community members to ensure their voices and suggestions are included in the final version.
- 4.20** The community meeting (October 2023) will also be an opportunity to raise awareness and seek engagement with the Youth Safety Delivery Plan. The review is likely to influence the Youth Safety Delivery Plan, with the CSCP having some oversight and scrutiny to ensure the delivery of the final action plan.
- 4.21** The CSCP Learning & Improvement Group align the findings from both Rapid Reviews and Safeguarding Practice Reviews with the learning events commissioned for the following year. The Annual Report provides more detail on the 5 Learning Events and 3 Practice Week sessions which took place in the year in review.
- 4.22** The CSCP co-ordinated the training of 5732 professionals on either face to face online or e-learning courses. There has been a stronger representation from the voluntary sector availing themselves of courses. The new insight into data relating to training has been very welcomed and is now able to shape the learning offer for 2023-24 as well as hold specific agencies to account for their relevant participation in safeguarding training.
- 4.23** A number of statistics relevant to the work are shown on pages 9-10 of the annual report. The CSCP uses data to understand the safeguarding landscape for children in Croydon and to provide scrutiny or challenge of partner agencies. This is an area which requires more work and now that a Project Officer is in post with a responsibility in this area, this is gaining traction for 2023-24.
- 4.24** **OUTCOMES** - are referenced in almost every area of the report. Some key outcomes are:
- 4.25** Training Impact:
- Expanding Cultural Competences (empowering professionals working with LGBTQ+ young people who are also at risk of suicide and self-harm)
 - Training 22 more professionals in the use of the Graded Care Profile 2 Tool (Neglect Tool).
 - Inset Training (Youth Justice Service) - promotes a child first approach and ensures the child's voice is heard.
 - Respect training in Early Help has made fathers more visible and challenged perpetrator behaviour.
 - Quality Briefings & Learning Events based on Safeguarding Practice Reviews and National Learning which are well received by the wider partnership who value the content, opportunity to reflect and supportive learning environment in which they are delivered.
- 4.26** The impact from specific agencies or teams which have included:

- Police – Every Child Every Time meeting.
- PIP – Asylum seeking/displaced families have a safe space away from their hotel accommodation to seek parenting support.
- Virtual School – securing college places for 2 young people experiencing severe mental health challenges.
- Zero fixed term exclusions for primary school children.
- CAMHS – Transitions Panel – to support young people turning 18 and accessing adult mental health services.
- CSCP Executive letter to schools to encourage Operation Encompass engagement.
- VAWG Strategy – the CSCP continues to challenge the draft content and offer space to collaborate.
- Suicide & Self Harm Strategy includes a CSCP case study.
- CSCP challenge on Section 11 compliance and safeguarding for residents of Windsor House saw improvements in both the accommodations and fundamental changes in how Housing approaches safeguarding.
- MASH Transformation – the CSCP has brokered conversations and meetings with the wider partnership agencies to ensure they are engaged and consulted on the new portal referral system which is instrumental in improving the quality of referrals into MASH.

4.27 The value of the opportunity for ad-hoc conversations with CSCP Members who are seen as “experts in safeguarding” and their ability to influence workstreams outside of the CSCP core business cannot be under-estimated.

4.28 Key themes for the CSCP Business Plan for 2023-24 are:

- Asylum Seekers
- Child Victims of Domestic Abuse
- Professional Curiosity/working with resistant families
- Child Sexual Abuse
- Serious Youth Violence/Extra Familial Harm
- Evidence of traction on the Audit Program
- Evidence of traction on the voice of the child
- More creative use of data

4.29 The key themes may be adjusted in the year dependent on emerging risk.

4.30 Themes are tracked via the CSCP Business Plan which is a live document, with quarterly updates to the CSCP Executive Officers.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 *There are no alternative options*

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The three statutory partners (Local Authority, Health and Police) along with other CSCP member organisations including the voluntary sector have contributed to the annual report. The Independent Scrutineer has also provided his own reflections.

7. CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES

7.1 The work of the CSCP supports the council priorities in the following areas:

7.2 Children and young people in Croydon have the chance to thrive, learn and fulfil their potential

- Ensure children and young people have opportunities to learn, develop and fulfil their potential.
- Make Croydon safer for young people.
- Work closely with health services, Police and the VCFS to keep vulnerable children and young people safe from harm.

7.3 Strengthen collaboration and joint working with partner organisations and the voluntary, community and faith sectors.

8. IMPLICATIONS

8.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report as it is retrospective. The CSCP operates within a budget which partner agencies contribute to. However, consideration should be given to how future budgets are set, in particular how other partners can contribute a more equal share.

8.1.2 Revenue and Capital consequences of report recommendation

Not required

8.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.2.1 Section 16E of the Children Act 2004 requires the safeguarding partners for a local authority area in England to work together to exercise their functions in relation to

safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in their area. The safeguarding partners include the local authority.

8.2.2 Section 16G of the Children Act 2004 requires the safeguarding partners to prepare and publish a report at least every 12 months on what the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies have done because of the children's safeguarding arrangements, and how effective the arrangements have been in practice.

8.2.3 There is also statutory guidance on the working of local safeguarding arrangements in *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2018).

8.2.4 The matters set out in this report comply with the above legislation and guidance.

8.3 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.3.1 The Council has a statutory duty, when exercising its functions, to comply with the provisions set out in the Sec 149 Equality Act 2010. The Council must, in the performance of its functions, therefore, have due regard to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.3.2 The role of the CSCP is to safeguard all children and promote their welfare. The CSCP has played a leading role in challenging inequalities and in safeguarding those children who have/are at risk related to their ethnicity and gender. For example, the work to provide LGBGTQ+ training for professionals working with young people who are self-harming or at risk of suicide.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

8.4 None

8.4.1 Approved by: ***Debbie Jones – Corporate Director Children, Young People & Education***

9. APPENDICES

9.1 Appendix A - The Croydon Safeguarding Children Annual Report 2022-23

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

9.1 None