

Peer Review of Salford Safeguarding Children Partnership

undertaken by
Bolton Safeguarding Children Partnership
and Carole Brooks Associates Ltd

September 2020

Bolton Safeguarding Children 
Keeping children safe in Bolton

Salford
Safeguarding
Children Partnership



CAROLE BROOKS ASSOCIATES LIMITED

Contents

Feedback methods:

- Powerpoint presentation format that can be circulated as a document or used as a presentation
- Survey results
- Feedback to Safeguarding Operational Group – 9th November 2020
- For Salford, there will also be more detailed verbal feedback from Carole Brooks, Independent Adviser

Content:

- Objectives of the review
- Methodology and evidence base
- New arrangements
- Findings by area of focus:
 - Professionals Survey
 - Impact of the new arrangements
 - Compliance to WT18
 - Whole system approach and partnership working
 - Independent and Internal scrutiny
 - Case reviews
 - Understanding effectiveness
 - Learning and development
 - Engagement and communications
 - Effective meetings
 - Partnership infrastructure
- Reflections and next steps

Objectives of the review

Help the safeguarding partnership and component partners reflect on the effectiveness of their children's safeguarding partnership arrangements.

This includes:

- Effectiveness of meeting their statutory responsibilities and how well the partnership has implemented and embedded the requirements of Working Together 2018 (WT18)
- How well they work together as a partnership and understand the impact of their work and of services within the local area
- Effectiveness of specific components of a safeguarding partnership.

There is an understanding that this was not in the format of an inspection. Rather, it provides a critical friend in assessing strengths, observations and identifying areas for improvement from the point of view of peer reviewers against their own experiences and government guidance.

Methodology

A review handbook set out key lines of enquiry, method and how the review would be conducted.

WT18, National Children’s Bureau early adopter final report and experience of the reviewers provided a baseline of ‘what good looks like’.

The review was delayed due to the Covid pandemic.

Original Dates	Mid March	Mid Mar – End Apr	End Apr	May
New Dates	-	Aug-Oct	End Oct	Nov
Activities	Mobilisation Meeting of peer reviewers, Agree areas of focus. Documentation sent in advance for reading.	Undertake review and draw conclusions (mix of observing meetings, interviews and desk based reading documentation).	Moderation Meetings of Peer Reviewers (one Bolton, one Salford). Triangulate findings and draw conclusions.	Each peer review team reports back to the receiving safeguarding partnership.

Evidence Base

A range of evidence was gathered and triangulated by peer reviewers:

Evidence:

- A range of partnership documents
- Professionals survey
- Meetings observed and agenda item to ask what is working well/not so well:
 - Practice review, SSCP, Safeguarding Effectiveness, Safeguarding Executive, Safeguarding Operational
- Interviews:
 - By Peer Review Team: Emma Ford, Francine Thorpe, Charlotte Ramsden,
 - Solely by Carole Brooks: Tiffany Slack, Business Unit, Michelle Warburton, Rachel Prest, Tim Rumley, Andrea Patel, Rachel Harrison, Simon

Westwood

Review Team:

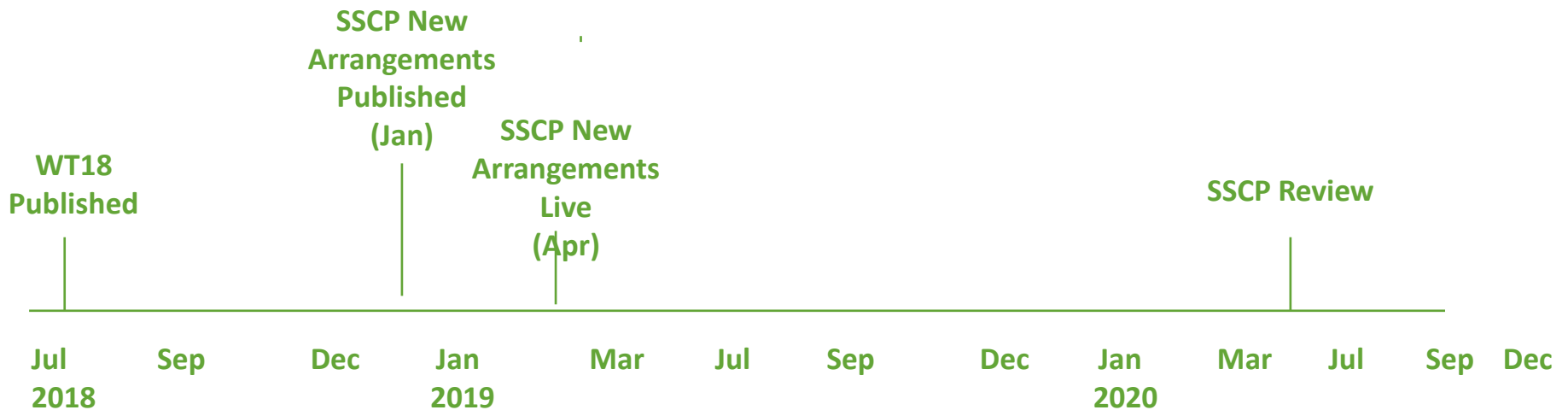
Name	Role
Carole Brooks	Independent Adviser
Shona Green	Bolton SCP Business Manager
Chris Dixon	Head of Safeguarding Children, Bolton CCG
Tanya Kitchen	Detective Inspector, GMP
Sarah Gatenby	Senior Head of Service, Children's Services
Gill Smallwood	Chief Executive, Fortalice Ltd.
Fiona Farnworth	Named Nurse, Royal Bolton Foundation Trust
Darren Knight	CEO, Bolton CVS

New Arrangements - Timetable

Salford was a DfE safeguarding early adopter site which provided additional funding and capacity to implement the new arrangements. Interviewees reflected on how this helped in providing focus in terms of national spotlight and timescales.

Salford part of early adopter programme & additional resource (Sep 2018 to June 2019)

COVID



Findings

Professionals Survey Results

53 respondents compared to 70 in the Early Adopter NCB survey (February 2019)

More managers from Salford responded. In Bolton more professionals (especially schools) responded.

1. The small sample size and type of respondents needs to be taken into account in considering the results.
2. In some of the general questions about effectiveness, the percentage of people who responded effectively or very effectively was slightly lower or in line with the 2019 survey but still consistently about the national average in the 2019 survey.
3. The same proportion as last time (77%) felt the effectiveness of partnership organisations collaborating, sharing and co-owning the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children was effective or very effective.
4. Information sharing, partnership working and robust processes to support effective joint-working were cited as a strengths.
5. 91% stated they felt supported or very supported across the partnership and know where to go for Information.

See full survey report for more details

Findings

Compliance to WT18

Is there compliance to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements as set out in WT18? This includes the role of the three safeguarding partners in a 'shared and equal duty' to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area', and any delegated functions

Strengths:

1. The review demonstrated that the published new arrangements are in place. Many interviewees agreed they are compliant, and felt they were through the transition phase and now "implemented and sustaining".
2. There is a clear structure which supports both compliance and effectiveness of the partnership. This includes the role of the statutory partners.
3. An annual report has already been published for 2019/20, ahead of many safeguarding partnerships.
4. There is strong evidence that the SSCP is beyond 'compliance' to 'good practice'.

Observations or areas for development:

1. It was not clear during the review how relevant agencies who are not as active in the partnership are involved and communicated with. We know there is an Education sub-group.

Findings

Impact of new arrangements

What has changed?
What is different, and what has been, or expected to be, the impact of changes as part of the new arrangements?

“It feels very dynamic and great to be part of it. We are a partnership that is really engaged, responsive, open to new ideas and innovation, and it doesn't matter if we get it wrong or right, it is the trying that is important, and brings a new energy to it.”

Impact is considered in more detail towards the end.

Strengths:

1. Salford was a strong safeguarding partnership prior to the new arrangements, which was a great enabler of change.
2. There has been significant commitment in devising and implementing the new arrangements, which includes high aspirations and expectations. This includes continued reflection and improvement, and interviewees felt that preparation and transition went “incredibly well”.
3. There is a good organisational ‘flow’. We could see a link through strategy and priorities, actions, reflection, reviews, comms and learning and development
4. SSCP members feel there is better equity between the three statutory partners than before – they work together as a team and there is “a shared and equal duty to make arrangements to work together” evident in different levels of seniority.
5. The Safeguarding Executive is seen as a new and valued part of the SSCP in driving safeguarding arrangements.
6. We could see evidence of the ‘one vision, two key values and six principles’ outlined in the published arrangements.
7. The review found strengths in many of the changes as a result of the new arrangements (e.g. safeguarding effectiveness, case reviews, independent scrutiny, communications).

Observations or areas for development:

1. The number of rapid reviews has increased as a result of the WT18. The resource required from partners, each review chair and the Business Unit has resource implications.
2. We heard how the governance for some of the sub groups is not as clear as it could be or has changed, and provision of reports to SSCP is patchy.

Findings

A whole system approach

How effective is leadership and partnership working, including Inter-Board across the local area?

We deal with things and we don't wait for the next meeting. We are colleagues, even though we work for different agencies".

Strengths:

1. Equality across the partners came across strongly in meetings, interviews and documentation. The involvement and voice of Police was especially noted as positive engagement which was valued.
2. There is great commitment and good relationships across the partnership, from a range of agencies including the hospital.
3. The voluntary section (via CVS) state that they are supported and feel like an equal partner around the table.
4. Meetings were well chaired with good engagement in a learning culture.
5. There have been improvements in inter-board working, for example violence reduction model, and a joint commissioning approach to domestic abuse.

Observations or areas for development:

1. Local area leaders have more to do in achieving the most effective joint working across the whole local area strategic partnerships.
2. There were a couple of meetings where not all three statutory partners were present. The SSCP may wish to consider quoracy, the impact, how messages are communicated to/from them and the role of deputies.
3. The experience and engagement of several key people in the partnership is both a risk and an enabler. Their personal attributes rather than their role plays an important part in the partnership, and thought to 'succession planning' and developing other individuals to ensure sustainability may be helpful.

Findings

Independent and Internal Scrutiny

What independent and internal scrutiny is in place and what impact has it had? Is there sufficient challenge, support, escalation and dispute resolution where required.

The University of Bedfordshire 'Six steps for Independent Scrutiny: Safeguarding children partnership arrangements' states that there are three key considerations in developing arrangements for scrutiny:

- how the scrutiny work of the partnership adds value to independent scrutiny processes already in place in individual agencies
- how the scrutiny functions undertake quality assurance across the safeguarding work of the partnership
- what training and support may be required for all involved where high challenge and high support were evident and welcomed

Strengths:

1. The Independent Adviser is knowledgeable and demonstrated a good grasp of topics discussed. Stepping down from chairing the partnership as part of the new arrangements has allowed him to focus more on challenge and scrutiny during meetings. T
2. here was evidence of challenge and scrutiny by partners in meetings, especially by the Chair of the Safeguarding Effectiveness Group meeting. This was not as strong in the SSCP meeting on 28th September, but this may be due to the size and content of the agenda.
3. Reviewers felt that challenge and scrutiny are well received, and acted on. There was evidence of a strong and healthy culture.
4. There was an example of effective dispute resolution in relation to a case review decision.

Observations or Areas for development:

1. We know that the SSCP continues to be in a period of 'settling into' the most effective way forward in independent scrutiny, and we would recommend this includes a greater emphasis on more reflective scrutiny, including on impact.
2. The footprint of the Independent Adviser could be stronger outside of meetings and case reviews, and higher profile understanding the effectiveness of independent scrutiny the difference it is making? We are not clear how some scrutiny report back their findings? The SSP may wish to consider a brief impact summary periodically to evidence the footprint and formalise challenge and assurance activity.

Findings

Case Reviews

What is the quality and effectiveness of rapid reviews and child safeguarding practice reviews undertaken? What has been the impact of the new arrangements?

Strengths:

1. We commend Salford for their approach to rapid reviews. There is a good model in place. Interviewees talked about how the change has resulted in a greater child focus with multi-agency analytical discussion and conclusions.
2. There are visible links between case reviews, how these involve the lived experience of children, what they tell us about our safeguarding effectiveness and links to learning and development. In one case, we could see that the review was so slick that a 7 minute briefing was signed off within a month of the rapid review starting.
3. A new quarterly report helps focus on lived experiences and learning as well as providing information about reviews themselves.
4. Developing a 'Good outcome review' is a significant strength.
5. At the practice review sub group, a number of 'stuck' action plans were reviewed robustly and signed off. Presentation by different agencies and multi-agency discussion was a strength. In some cases, this involved 'if this child was in the same situation now, what would be different'? to judge learning and impact.
6. There is good and consistent attendance and engagement at the practice review sub group which led to confidence in discussions and decisions.

Observations or areas for development:

1. The increase in rapid reviews puts a pressure on capacity. GM-wide work will be an opportunity to reflect on the different thresholds.
2. The two rapid review reports reviewed were very different in style. There is no national standard about reports and forthcoming work in GM could look at the quality and approach of different reports. SSP may wish to reflect on what, if any, improvements could be made (taking it to the next level).
3. There was evidence of a multi-agency audit (neglect), but it is not yet evidence if the SSP is yet in a position to share learning from single agency case reviews or audits.

Findings

Understanding Effectiveness

How the partnership gathers and uses a range of evidence to understand how they are doing, to inform learning and development activities and improvement.

Strengths:

1. There are clear priorities, high aspirations and a commitment to these within the partnership.
2. The safeguarding effectiveness framework is a strength, and we could see evidence of it working in practice, including summary report to the SSCP. The SEG chair drives this.
3. Other evidence to SEG, including findings from case reviews, provides a broader evidence base to understand effectiveness. The partnership has moved 'beyond data'.
4. There was a good level of triangulation in SEG between information, and a lot of good challenge in the form of pertinent and sometimes difficult questions to understand what information is telling us.
5. Planned spotlights appear to work well and were valued by interviewees. The format of SEG setting challenge questions and set format to which information is provided for the spotlight is an additional element of scrutiny, challenge, and whole system ownership.

Observations or areas for development:

1. There is strong and well presented performance data but metrics from some areas outside of social care was limited.
2. A paper on improving understanding of impact was brought to the September SSCP meeting. Whilst there are conversations in meetings focussing on lived experiences and impact, as with many other partnerships, there is still limited understanding of impact – what difference is the partnership making on children and families. However, the partnership are well aware of this.

Findings

Learning and Development

How well the partnership use a range of information to drive improvement, and how well they consistently identify and deliver learning and development needs across the local area.

Strengths

1. There was strong evidence that the SSCP are a learning organisation and are self-aware. Members know their strengths and areas for further development.
2. The SSCP has a well utilised and respected learning and development offer, with some face to face training moving to virtual during Covid.
3. There is a range of evidence of putting learning into practice, for example the recent multi-agency audits in Neglect practitioner forums, and we heard how more people are attending 'lunchbowl' sessions.

Observations or Areas for development:

1. A disconnect between learning and development and some elements of the SSCP were reported, but this is caveated with recognition that there will be a need to prioritise.
2. The SSCP learning and development functions have engaged more across the local area on a multi-agency basis, inc CSP, but there does not yet appear to be clarity in framing the multi-agency elements including resource and funding. From range of perspectives, interviewees who talked about this felt that the co-operation was not always as good as it could be.

Findings

Engagement and Communication

How are professionals, children and young people and families involved in the safeguarding partnership? Is there effective communication in communities and in the partnership including campaigns and signposting?

Strengths:

1. Participation and engagement is a strength in Salford, and a lot of work has been put in over the past 18 months to improve further. A dedicated resource through innovation funding, a new listening hub, with examples of how children and young people have engaged in safeguarding agendas (e.g. Neglect) was evidenced.
2. The Communications spotlight in the SSCP meeting was impressive, and showcases a range of activities and approaches SSCP have including social media, campaigns and other communications.
3. There is engagement with some professionals, mostly children's services, through 'lunchbowls' which were reported to be effective.

Observations or areas for development:

1. There appears to be little evidence at this time of the impact of engagement and communication activity, but this is common for many organisations. The SSCP may wish to consider ways to be assured of the quality and success of comms. Bolton and Salford may wish to support each other in this.
2. WT18 outlines specific groups of children and young people for attention, including young carers, disabled children, those that are privately fostered, etc. During the review and in the Comms spotlight to the SSCP, we are not clear whether specific attention has been/is being given to these and other especially vulnerable groups of children and also families and in communities.

Findings

Effective Meetings

When partnership members come together, are topics and agendas for meetings well planned, appropriately structured to allow time for getting information, discussion and decision making. Is time spent preparing for, during, and after meetings effective and achieving what it needs to?

Strengths

1. Agendas are clear and papers are well organised.
2. The Chairpersons of meetings observed were all effective chairs.
3. Spotlights and specific sessions on a topic were reported and observed to work really well in providing the required detail for assurance, challenge, and support through discussion in the meeting. People presenting papers generally presented them well.

Observations or areas for development:

1. Making meetings more effective is one of the key findings from this review, with strong evidence from a range of sources that this could be improved. Agendas tended to include too much detail and 'for information' items and papers which would benefit from being handled differently so that there are less papers and greater time for discussion on key topics. One interviewee described the number of papers to read for meetings as 'overwhelming'.
2. Verbal updates and tabled papers did not provide sufficient time for meeting members to digest the content, and discussion was therefore not as effective as it could be.
3. In the meeting, we would encourage the partnership to ensure that people have cameras on as it is hard to engage and have meaningful conversations with 'blank' screens.
4. Screen sharing of documents was varied. In some instances (e.g. 13 pages of minutes), it 'stuttered' the meeting but others (e.g. sharing action plans at the practice review sub group) assisted with discussion.
5. A short Business Managers report to SSCP is a potential solution to reduce the 'for information' agenda items, number of papers and provide a more critical narrative with relevant documents embedded.

Findings

Partnership infrastructure

Has the role of the Business Unit changed in undertaking the new arrangements? Is the Business Unit effective in supporting the partnership?

Are resources, including funding sufficient and well managed?

Strengths:

1. After a lengthy time holding a vacancy, the Performance Officer is now in post in the Business Unit and their footprint is being felt.
2. The Business Unit is well resourced compared to other local areas.
3. The new approach to case review action plans, and less 'chasing' may create capacity in the Business Unit.
4. There has been success in obtaining grant funding for the partnership. For example, DfE early adopter; participation; and domestic abuse. This is commendable and the impact for the partnership is tangible.

Observations or areas for development:

1. It is generally acknowledged that 'equity' of the three statutory partners does not relate to funding with the CCG and Local Authority funding the largest proportions. However, the Police contributions in GM are disproportionately lower than elsewhere. The CCG and LA were reported to be funding an additional £50k each next year to 'plug the gap'. The partnership may wish, if not already undertaken, to benchmark budgets and contributions, and identify any opportunities for income generation or ways to be assured that there is best use of resources, including pressures from the increase in rapid reviews.
2. There is an overly administrative approach to managing the partnership rather than the required strategic or relationship-based management. This means that other partnership members, including the Head of Safeguarding, are disproportionately involved in leading the partnership and undertaking activities that one would normally expect to see in the Business Manager. This has been recognised, although changes identified are not progressing at pace.

Impact – Questions for the Partnership

The SSCP published arrangements state that :

We will know that we have successfully implemented the new arrangements when:

1. Children, families and communities tell us they feel safer and able to contribute to the work of the partnership.
2. Professionals tell us they feel supported, know where to go for information, and they have opportunities to learn and network. Policies, procedures and tools for undertaking all types of reviews of practice are revised based on evaluation project, are implemented and users report an improvement in outcomes.
3. Agencies report, and we can evidence, reduced duplication across the different partnerships and Boards in Salford and Greater Manchester
4. The Partnership and sub-group chairs have clear workplans in place. Actions are undertaken, monitored and achieve the desired impact.
5. The Safeguarding Executive tells us they are assured.
6. We can evidence that the budget allocated has been managed effectively to implement priorities agreed.

FROM THIS PEER REVIEW AND YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES – DO YOU FEEL THIS HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

Reflections and next steps: Taking it to the next level

1. Consider how this review and the collective views and experiences of SSCP members will inform what gets stopped, started, or sustained in the partnership. This may include a session in Safeguarding Operational Group about the infrastructure (including expectations of meetings and more effective content and flow of information).
2. Consider and mitigate any risks that the partnership may face in the future that may impact on the success of the partnership. This may include acceptance that 'we can't do everything we want to'.
3. Consider opportunities from the GM Safeguarding Alliance.
4. Consider how the SSCP will share the findings of the review with professionals who responded to the survey, partners and others, including children and families.

Carole Brooks Associates

carole@carolebrooks.com

Bolton Safeguarding Children Board

shona.green@bolton.gov.uk

