

OPEN

Children and Families Committee

Monday, 13 November 2023

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report 2022/23

**Report of: Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director Children's
Services.**

Report Reference No: CF/38/23-24

Ward(s) Affected:

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report briefs committee on the activity of the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership in 2022/2023. Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) is the statutory guidance that underpins the work of the partnership. This guidance stipulates that each safeguarding partnership produces and publishes an annual report on the effectiveness of their arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in the local area. The annual report for 2022/23 sets out examples of the evidence, impact, assurance and learning of the statutory safeguarding arrangements in Cheshire East.
- 2 The work of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership contributes to the council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 priority to protect and support our communities and safeguard children and families from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Executive Summary

- 3 This report will provide the Children and Families Committee with an update on progress against the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership priorities in 2022/2023 and the plans in place to make Cheshire East a safer place for children and young people in 2023/2024.

- 4 The annual report is focused on evidencing what the partnership has done over the reporting year, the impact the partnership has had, the learning that has been identified and the steps taken to ensure the partnership continues to reflect and improve. This report recognises the work of the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership throughout the year whilst being transparent about the areas of improvement that remain. It reports on the following activity:
- The governance and accountability arrangements for the partnership.
 - The context for safeguarding children in Cheshire East, highlighting the progress made by the partnership against our 2022/23 priorities.
 - The lessons that the partnership has identified through the Learning & Improvement subgroup and the actions taken to improve child safeguarding and welfare as a result of this activity.
 - The range and impact of the multi-agency safeguarding training delivered by the partnership.
 - The priorities for the partnership going forward.
 - The key messages for those involved in the safeguarding of children and young people.
- 5 In 2022, the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership had a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) undertaken with a focus on children at risk of exploitation. This highlighted that there was more for the partnership to do to improve outcomes for children and young people in this area and the partnership have been committed to a programme of ongoing scrutiny, oversight, and assurance of the activity in this area, as well as across the safeguarding landscape for vulnerable children and young people.
- 6 To support the improvement activity, the partnership has worked alongside an independent advisor from the Department of Education and commissioned a separate Independent Scrutineer, both of whom have provided valuable oversight and scrutiny of the partnership arrangements. This has provided a springboard upon which the new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements for the partnership have been designed in preparation for roll out through 2023.
- 7 In 2022/2023, the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership continued to work on three priority areas – Contextual Safeguarding, Neglect and Emotional Health and Wellbeing of Vulnerable Children. Contextual Safeguarding will remains an area of focus for the

partnership and this work will continue into the forthcoming year. The Emotional Health and Wellbeing workstream has closed down recognising that it has now achieved what it was set up to achieve and actions and learning arising from this priority work area are now 'business as usual'. The partnership acknowledge that this will always be a priority, however scrutiny and assurance of this area has been passed back to the relevant teams. The partnership is also looking to close down the Neglect workstream in forthcoming months for similar reasons.

- 8 The partnership focus areas for 2023/2024 will be sexual abuse, children missing from education, and contextual safeguarding; with the voice of the child as an overarching area of focus running through all of the partnership activity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children and Families Committee is recommended to:

1. Scrutinise the work of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership from 2023/2023
2. Scrutinise the future plan of work for the partnership to ensure that the right actions are in place to deliver high quality support to children and young people.

Background

- 9 The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership is established in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) and the statutory guidance issued within Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. The partnership safeguarding arrangements define how safeguarding partners, relevant agencies and other organisations work together to coordinate their safeguarding services. These arrangements meet the requirements of statutory guidance and include details about how safeguarding partners will identify and respond to the needs of children, commission and publish local child safeguarding practice reviews and provide for independent leadership and scrutiny.
- 10 The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership arrangements intend to support and enable local organisations and agencies to work together in a system where:

- Children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted.
 - Partner organisations and agencies collaborate, share and co-own the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children.
 - Organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively.
 - There is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats.
 - Learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice.
 - Information is shared effectively to facilitate accurate and timely decision making for children and families.
- 11 The Partnership has a wide membership of partners and ‘relevant agencies’, including schools, the faith and voluntary sector, probation services, public health, health providers, the police and representatives from the Local Authority. These executive members work together to keep children and young people safe from harm. The partnership is responsible for scrutinising the work of its partners to ensure that services provided to children and young people make a positive difference.

Consultation and Engagement

- 12 The annual report has been written in consultation with the services involved and have incorporated findings from wider consultation with children, young people, families, and practitioners, such as through multi-agency audit opportunities.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 13 One of the key areas of focus for the Children and Families Committee is to review performance and the scrutinise the effectiveness of services for children and young people.

Other Options Considered

- 14 The committee could choose not to receive the annual report of Cheshire East’s Safeguarding Children’s Partnership, but this would limit the committee’s effectiveness in overseeing and scrutinising

services to children and the impact of services on children and young people's outcomes.

Option	Impact	Risk
Don't scrutinise/receive the annual report of the partnership.	The committee does not have oversight of the future plan of work for the partnership and its impact on outcomes for children and young people, or the current quality of services, so limits its ability to drive improvements to services.	There is not sufficient council leadership/ oversight to drive improvements to services.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 15 The Local Authority is defined as a statutory safeguarding partner by Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act, 2017). The Local Authority works in partnership with the Cheshire and Merseyside NHS Integrated Commissioning Board and the Chief Officer for the police for Cheshire. This partnership operates within that legal guidance.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 16 There are no financial implications or changes required to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as a result of this report.

Policy

- 17 The Children and Families Committee is responsible for services which keep children and young people safe and enable them to achieve to their full potential. The committee is responsible for oversight and

scrutiny of the impact of services on outcomes for children and young people.

	<p>A council which empowers and cares about people</p> <p>Work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient.</p> <p>Protect and support our communities and safeguard children and families from abuse, neglect and exploitation.</p>	
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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 19 There are no equality, diversity and inclusion implications – children and young people’s diverse individual needs, experiences, culture and backgrounds are considered as part of our support to them.

Human Resources

- 20 There are no direct human resources implications because of this report.

Risk Management

- 21 There is a risk that if the Safeguarding Children’s Partnership is not effective in driving improvements to services that we will not be meeting our statutory requirements under Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. This could lead to the work of the partnership to be judged as not being of the required quality during any inspection. We know that when services receive a negative judgement in inspection this impacts on team morale, can result in workforce turnover, and makes it more challenging to recruit.
- 22 Addressing any significant deficits identified during an inspection can also require investment so there is also a financial risk to a negative inspection. A negative inspection also poses a reputational risk to the council.

Rural Communities

- 23 There is no direct impact on rural communities as a result of this report; however our vulnerable children and young people exist in all communities, including in rural communities.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

- 24 The work of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership aims to improve outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people. It is vital that we provide high quality support to these children and young people as we know that for some, the experiences they have that lead them to require our support can have an impact on their long-term outcomes, health, and wellbeing.

Public Health

- 25 The work of Cheshire East's Safeguarding Children's Partnership aims to improve outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people and so should have a positive overall impact on the health and wellbeing of these Cheshire East children and young people.

Climate Change

- 26 There are no implications for climate change.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Katherine Oldacre, Head of Service - safeguarding katherine.oldacre@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report 2022/2023 Quick Guide to Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report Easy Read Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements
Background Papers:	