



SHROPSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT

2014- 2015

Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board annual report 2014- 15, provides an account of the activities, development and impact of the Board and its partners in fulfilling their statutory responsibility of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in Shropshire.

Sally Halls, Independent Chair
Lisa Charles, Acting SSCB Business Manager

November 2015



Foreword

I am pleased to be able to report positively about the work of Shropshire's Safeguarding Children Board in 2014/15 and to set out the progress made during the year.

The vision of Shropshire's Children's Trust, as set out in the Children, Young People and Families Plan, 2014, is that: *All children and young people will be happy, healthy, and safe and reach their full potential, supported by their families, friends and the wider community.*

The LSCB contributes to the fulfilment of that vision by working to hold its partner organisations to account, seeking always to improve the experience and outcomes for children and young people.

There has been good progress on the Board's priorities, particularly in extending the reach and quality of early help services. The Board itself is also moving forward, becoming increasingly open, self-reflective and challenging, with Shropshire's schools, in particular, becoming increasingly important partners.

The climate in which the Board does its work has continued to be challenging, as partners face resource constraints and increasing demands for their services. Nevertheless, their commitment to the Board and its work has remained constant.

There is, of course, always more to do and many challenges still to be faced in 2015/16 and beyond, but the report demonstrates the way in which, individually and collectively, partners are working to improve the way they protect children and young people and safeguard their welfare.

What we do know is that it is crucial that everything we do is informed by the views, aspirations and experiences of children and young people, and dependent on the commitment of the children's workforce. I thank them all, children, young people and staff and volunteers alike for their continuing commitment and resilience, and look forward to continuing progress in the year to come.

Sally Halls
Independent Chair



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This is the annual report for the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board. It covers the period between April 2014 and March 2015 and evaluates the work and impact of the Board whilst identifying priority areas of work for the period 2015– 2016.
- 1.2 Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) is a statutory body established under the Children Act 2004. It is independently chaired (as required by statute) and consists of senior representatives of all the principle stakeholders working together to safeguard children and young people in the City. Its statutory objectives are:
 - (a) *to coordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area; and*
 - (b) *to ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.*
- 1.3 LSCBs have a number of core functions, which are set out in [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(DfE, 2015\)](#). LSCBs also have a responsibility for oversight of early help arrangements, clarifying thresholds, and developing a local framework for learning and improvement, which includes adopting a learning approach to case reviews by utilising systems methodologies.
- 1.4 The Chair is required to publish an annual report on the effectiveness of arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in the local area, providing an assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services, identifying areas of weakness and their causes and the action being taken to address them as well as other proposals for action, and including lessons from reviews undertaken within the reporting period.
- 1.5 The report is ratified by the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board and is presented in final version to the Chief Executive of the local authority, the Leader of the Council, the local Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board. It will also be presented to the Shropshire Children's Trust.
- 1.6 The annual report is published on the LSCB website and is disseminated to partner organisations electronically. Paper copies are not made available. Any questions relating to the content, publication, sources or accessibility of the report should be addressed to:

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2 Context and strategic overview

- 2.1 Shropshire is one of England's most rural and sparsely populated counties with a large geographic area of 1,235 square miles. Situated in the West Midlands, bordering Wales to the west and Cheshire to the north, the area has a population of 310,100 (ONS, mid-year estimates 2014). Shropshire's population is largely of White British ethnic origin. The number of residents from minority ethnic groups is low; comprising 4.6% of the population (this includes white other, gypsy/traveller and Irish). 40.1% of Shropshire's population lives in the main market towns of Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Whitchurch, Market Drayton, Ludlow and Bridgnorth. (Census 2011)
- 2.2 Shropshire has approximately 66,400 children and young people under the age of 19 years. This is 21.4% of the total population (ONS, mid-year Estimates 2014). The proportion entitled to free school meals is 10%, which is below the national average but in line with similar local authority areas. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for approximately 6.1% of the 0-19 population, compared with the English average of 24.2%. (Census 2011). In January 2015, the number of children whose first language is not English was 1040. This equates to 2.9% of the school population (figures exclude nursery aged children).
- 2.3 Shropshire has 153 state funded schools: 110 primary schools, 5 infant schools, 5 junior schools, one all through school, 7 secondary schools, and 2 special schools. There are also 42 local authority maintained nurseries. There are 23 Academy Schools consisting of 8 primary, 13 secondary, 1 special and 1 free school.
- 2.4 According to the Indices of Deprivation Affecting Children Index 2010, Shropshire had approximately 13% of children aged 0-15 years considered to be living in income deprived households, low compared to national figures. However, this statistic masks pockets of deprivation where 6 areas, each covering up to 1500 people, are amongst the 20% most deprived nationally in terms of income affecting children. Within these six areas it is estimated that 751 (40% of the total number of children living within these 6 areas) are living in households which are income deprived.
- 2.5 A particular characteristic of Shropshire is the large numbers of looked after children placed with private care providers within Shropshire by other local authorities. This number is rising steadily, and is now more than 400- significantly larger than Shropshire's 'in house' care population. This has a significant impact on a number of local services, particularly health and mental health services.

The Children and Young People's Plan

- 2.6 The vision of the Children's Trust set out in Shropshire's Children, Young People and Families Plan, 2014, is that:

All children and young people will be happy, healthy, safe and reach their full potential, supported by their families, friends and the wider community.



- 2.7 The LSCB contributes to the fulfilment of that vision by working to hold its partner organisations to account, seeking always to improve the experience and outcomes for children and young people.

The child's journey

- 2.8 Children and young people in need of additional support are able to draw on a range of services from universal provision through to more targeted services. Ideally, children are responded to as early as possible, to avoid their needs increasing and their safety and wellbeing being compromised.

2.9 In 2014/2015:

- 577 Early Help Assessments were completed, compared with 424 the previous year
- As of end of February 2015, 960 children were receiving a targeted early help plan
- 2,626 referrals were received by Children's Social Care, 7.7% resulted in no further action
- 90% single assessments were completed within 45 days
- The rate of 'Section 47' child protection investigations has increased from 74 in 2013-2014 to 84 per 10,000
- 85.5% of initial child protection conferences were held within 15 working days
- 249 children were subject of a child protection plan
- 0.8% of child protection plans lasted for 2 years or more
- 10% of children were subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time within 2 years – a decrease on the previous year's figure of 13%
- There were 310 looked after children, an increase of 14.8% on the previous year's figure
- 34.5 per 10,000 offences against children were reported – a rise from 22.3 per 10,000 the previous year.

Shropshire's partnerships

- 2.10 The SSCB is one of a number of multi-agency partnerships working in Shropshire to improve outcomes for Shropshire's communities. The partnerships which interface most closely with the Safeguarding Children Board are described below.

- 2.11 **The Health and Wellbeing Board** is responsible for the development and delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Established and hosted by local authorities, Health and Wellbeing Boards bring together the NHS, public health, adult social care and children's services, including elected representatives and Local Healthwatch, to plan how best to meet the needs of their local population and tackle local inequalities in health including early help for families <http://www.shropshiretogether.org.uk/>.



- 2.12 **Shropshire's Children's Trust** leads the elements of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy focused on children. It commissions services for children and families, including early help services. Its vision, set out in Shropshire's Children, Young People and Families Plan, 2014, is that:

All children and young people will be happy, healthy, safe and reach their full potential, supported by their families, friends and the wider community.

- 2.13 Organisations which comprise the **Safer Stronger Communities Partnership** work together to protect their local communities from crime and to help people feel safer. They work out how to deal with local issues like antisocial behaviour, domestic abuse, drug or alcohol misuse and reoffending. They annually assess local crime priorities and consult partners and the local community about how to deal with them.
- 2.14 The overarching purpose of the **Safeguarding Adults Board** is to help and safeguard adults with care and support needs. It leads adult safeguarding arrangements across its locality and oversee and coordinate the effectiveness of the safeguarding work of its member and partner agencies. There are a number of areas of overlap with the SSCB, both in relation to the transition of vulnerable young people to adulthood, and also in respect of vulnerable adults who are parents and carers of children.

Challenges for the public sector

- 2.15 Public sector organisations face the dual challenges of managing with reducing resources whilst facing increased demand for their services. Board members have recognised this and determined to work collectively to minimize any unintended consequences for children and young people – and for partners - when making difficult decisions about the future of services. Shropshire Council's Chief Executive has been asked formally by the Board to exercise leadership in this respect, and is supported in this task by the Children's Trust.
- 2.16 In this challenging climate, partners have worked hard to develop a range of effective early help services which can support children and their families at an earlier stage, reducing demand for the more specialist and expensive services. The Joint Strategic Needs Analysis, produced by public health and overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board, plays an increasingly important role in assisting partnerships and local organisations to identify and respond to need. The recent developments in aligning the work of Shropshire's 5 multi-agency partnerships (the Health and Wellbeing Board, Community Safety Partnership, Children's Trust, Safeguarding Adults Board and the LSCB) are already beginning to make an impact.

Challenges for local partners

- 2.17 Partners recognise the challenges they face and are working to respond. Many are restructuring their services. Despite the constraints, there remains a clear commitment to safeguarding children, and progress is continuing in the following areas:
- Developing a comprehensive approach to early help



- Aligning work on the national 'troubled families' agenda (known in Shropshire as Strengthening Families)
- Developing a single point of access to early help and more specialist services
- Strengthening the Children's Services 'front door'.

2.18 Despite the pressures, some partners have managed to increase the resources available to safeguarding children, which is hugely commendable.

3 The Local Safeguarding Children Board

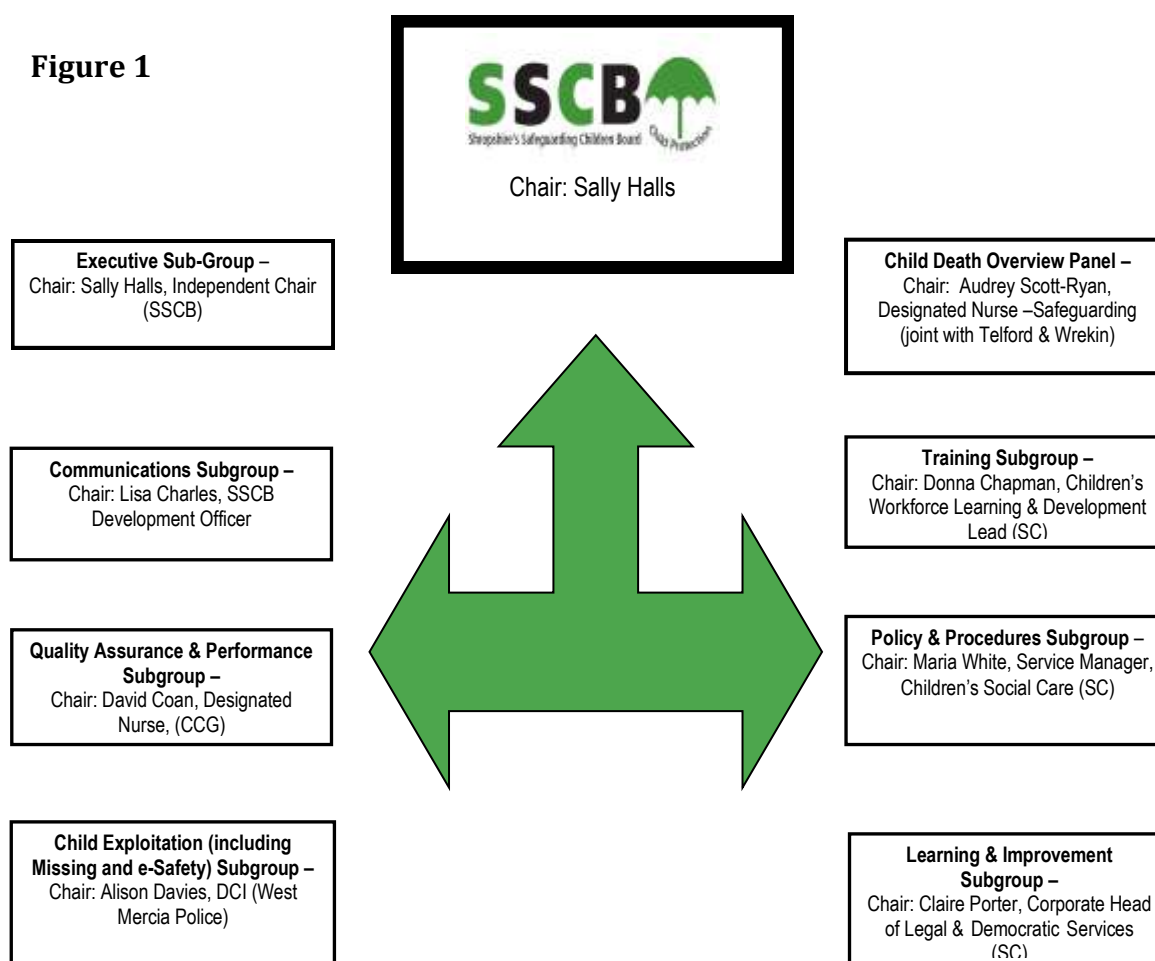
- 3.1 The Board's primary role is to hold agencies to account by challenging performance and making clear where improvement is needed.
- 3.2 The LSCB itself is not directly accountable for the operational work of partners, nor does it have the power to direct other organisations. Each Board representative from a partner organisation retains their own existing line of accountability for safeguarding.
- 3.3 Membership of the LSCB is prescribed, together with arrangements for governance and resourcing. LSCB members are senior managers who are able to:
- Speak for their agency
 - Hold their agency to account and challenge its practice
 - Make decisions about safeguarding as required and allocate resources
 - Ensure that safeguarding is given strategic priority within their own agency.

This is set out in detail in Chapter 3 of [Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015](#).

- 3.4 The LSCB core budget for 2014-15 was £195,480. A breakdown of this, showing contributors and expenditure, is included as Appendix 2, together with further details about Shropshire's LSCB arrangements, including governance and accountability, membership and attendance.
- 3.5 In order to meet its objectives, the LSCB is informed by performance data and carries out a range of activities which includes:
- assessing the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families, including early help
 - assessing whether LSCB partners are fulfilling their statutory obligations
 - quality assuring practice, including through joint audits of case files involving practitioners and identifying lessons to be learned
 - monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of training, including multi-agency training, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- 3.6 The SSCB carries out much of its work through a number of subgroups and task and finish groups, supported by the LSCB Business Unit. These are illustrated at Figure 1. The Executive subgroup has the responsibility of monitoring and co-ordinating the work of the LSCB; the subgroups support the work of the Board through progressing the relevant actions and fulfilling the functions of the SSCB, including specified activity as directed by the Board and

the business plan. Progress on the objectives and tasks within the LSCB Business Plan are monitored through Executive subgroup meetings and reported on a regular basis to the Board. Subgroups are well supported by a wide range of agencies, including schools, colleges and voluntary sector organisations as well as the larger statutory organisations who also contribute to the main Board. The terms of reference for all subgroups have been updated and strengthened and the work plans have been revised to ensure they align with fulfilling the objectives of the SSCB Business Plan 2014-2017.

Figure 1



3.7 There are also a number of reference groups related to the LSCB which contribute significantly to progressing the safeguarding agenda in Shropshire. These include:

- the health safeguarding governance group, which brings together safeguarding leads from across all the NHS providers working in Shropshire and beyond its borders;
- the private providers' forum, which promotes safeguarding of looked after children placed within Shropshire from elsewhere;
- the schools safeguarding forum, which provides a close link with schools across all phases, from early years to further education.



Ensuring effectiveness

3.8 Every LSCB is expected to maintain a learning and improvement framework which is shared across local organisations which work with children and families. This framework enables organisations to be clear about their responsibilities, to learn from experience and improve services as a result, as well as give the LSCB a comprehensive overview of the quality, timeliness and effectiveness of safeguarding practice across the partnership, enabling it to challenge where improvements in performance are required. The SSCB's Learning and Improvement subgroup takes a lead on behalf of the LSCB in promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement across its partner organisations, working alongside the Quality Assurance and Performance subgroup.

3.9 Shropshire's Learning and Improvement Framework has three strands:

- Quality assurance and performance activity
- Multi-agency learning and improvement from case reviews, Serious Case Reviews, Case Reviews, Child Death Reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews
- External reviews of LSCB effectiveness and self-evaluation (MARAC, SCIE, Peer Reviews, risk register).

Quality Assurance

3.10 A framework for audit has been developed to build a cumulative picture of practice, share good practice and plan for further improvement where needed. The overall aim of the audit programme is to ensure that agencies' safeguarding work is effective and of high quality, demonstrates continuous improvement and results in consistently good outcomes for children.

3.11 The framework sets out three tiers of activity – oversight and analysis, practice, and compliance. The associated tools enable a better capture of this information:

Oversight and Analysis

- ✓ Multi-agency audit;
- ✓ Deep dive;
- ✓ Audit is undertaken by relevant Quality Assurance & Performance subgroup members and frontline practitioners, file audits per term (September – December, January – April, May– July).

Practice

- ✓ This involves evaluating how effectively services are embedding safeguarding practices and integrated working into the delivery of safeguarding children;
- ✓ Outcome focussed;
- ✓ Frequency and numbers of audit: 10 files in September – December, 10 files in January – April, 10 files May– July.



Compliance

- ✓ Compliance is interwoven across all of the tiers of the quality assurance and audit framework;
- ✓ Section 11 audits - Section 11 of the Children Act (2004) imposes a duty on specified agencies to ensure that their safeguarding work complies with the requirements laid out in the statutory guidance "*Making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*".

3.12 Assurance from partners about the quality and effectiveness of their safeguarding arrangements is sought and provided through annual reporting and other measures. This includes information about training, service accessibility and any information relating to external inspection and regulation. This allows the LSCB to challenge the arrangements, identify areas for improvement, monitor that work and then seek further assurance about sustained change.

3.13 Work continues on developing a core dataset for the LSCB. The list of key performance indicators to be considered for inclusion on the SSCB scorecard has been reviewed and a 'dashboard' developed of key performance information which is presented at each Board meeting, supported by an exception report highlighting key areas for the attention of partners.

3.14 Performance information is included that reflects:

- SSCB's priorities for 2014 – 2017;
- The Children's Safeguarding Performance Information Framework (DfE, 2012);
- *Framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children* (Ofsted, 2012/13);
- Proposals from the West Midlands Improvement and Efficiency Board;
- Partnership working activity.

Section 11 audit

3.15 Agencies are requested to complete the Section 11 audit on an annual basis with the most recent submission of Section 11 audits being reported to the SSCB in March 2015. The SSCB has recognised the need to build capacity to quality assure the audit returns with more rigour. The Board has agreed to commission an online auditing tool to facilitate the ease of completion and analysis of the Section 11 audits, freeing up capacity to focus on quality assurance. The audit tool itself will be revised so that it is consistent with the approach of other LSCBs in the West Mercia region to provide comparative analysis and potential regional themes and to aid those partner agencies that span more than one LSCB.

3.16 The online audit tool will be commissioned in 2015 and the SSCB Annual Report 2015-2016 will report on progress, analysis of 2015 audit returns and mechanisms for quality assurance.



Case reviews

- 3.17 The Learning and Improvement subgroup incorporates the functions of a serious case review (SCR) panel and also considers a range of cases that fall below the criteria for an SCR. The subgroup takes the lead in ensuring that learning derived from the Board's activities, as well as from national reviews, research, etc. is translated into practice. This subgroup also works closely with the LSCB's Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP).
- 3.18 Case reviews are conducted regularly, both on cases which meet statutory criteria, and also on other cases which can provide useful insights into the way organisations are working together to safeguard and protect the welfare of children. These include:
- Child Death Reviews;
 - Serious Case Reviews;
 - Learning reviews (e.g. of an incident which falls below the threshold for an SCR).
- 3.19 A case consideration form has been introduced to enable practitioners to refer a case to the LSCB if they consider that it:
- meets the criteria for a serious case review;
 - falls below the threshold for a SCR but would benefit from a case review in order to learn lessons; or
 - does not meet either of the above points but would be a useful case to audit or include in a themed multi-agency audit.

This has resulted in the following reviews being completed in 2014-2015:

- 1 serious case review
 - 3 multi-agency audits with 1 resulting in a follow up learning event
- 3.20 SSCB has developed and publishes learning and improvement briefings on the website to disseminate learning from national serious case reviews, local case reviews and information regarding new legislation and guidance for professionals and volunteers.

Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

- 3.21 Shropshire LSCB's Child Death Overview Panel is conducted jointly with Telford and Wrekin LSCB. The CDOP has specific functions and works within the statutory requirements for LSCBs. These include:
- Reviewing all deaths (up to 18 years) to determine if the death was preventable
 - Collecting a minimum data set for each child death
 - Frequent meetings to review data for lessons learnt / trends / concerns
 - Monitoring the appropriateness of professional's response
 - Refer to Chair of LSCB if any case requires further investigation
 - Monitoring the support / assessment offered to families
 - Identifying any public health issues and feeding into national data set



- 3.22 This year the CDOP worked with colleagues from Herefordshire and Worcestershire to review and update the *West Mercia Multi-Agency Protocol for the Management of Sudden and Unexpected Death in Infants and Children*. This protocol is vital in ensuring all agencies are aware of their role and responsibilities when responding to an expected death of a child, a process often referred to as 'Rapid Response'. The focus of this process remains the care of the bereaved family, ensuring that whilst their child's death is investigated thoroughly, it is also done with the upmost care and sensitivity.
- 3.23 The CDOP Panel provides an opportunity for multi-agency discussion and recommendations in order to reduce avoidable child deaths. Topics includes; reducing smoking in pregnancy, availability of cots in holiday caravans, road safety, antibiotic use in the community, young drivers and safer sleeping
- 3.24 During the year, CDOP worked in partnership with Sandwell CDOP to provide some quality assurance regarding use of the national scoring tool. This involved exchanging several anonymised cases to ensure that our CDOP was using the scoring tool consistently with other CDOPs. This piece of work was accepted for presentation at the national CDOP Conference in Warrington in December 2014 and also at the British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (BASPCAN) Congress in April 2015 in Edinburgh.

Policies, Procedures & Protocols

- 3.25 One of the ways that the LSCB coordinates safeguarding arrangements in Shropshire is through the development of policies and procedures for use by professionals, which is carried out in conjunction with the other LSCBs in West Mercia. *Working Together 2015* is supported by the [West Mercia Consortium Child Protection Procedures](#), a comprehensive electronic manual which translates the broad principles of the national document into specific guidance for those working with vulnerable children. This includes provision for cross border working, and the procedures also contain large volumes of practice guidance.
- 3.26 There have been a number of areas of development over the year, including:
- ✓ Revision of the SSCB *Sexually Active U18's Protocol*;
 - ✓ Development of a strategy for children affected by domestic abuse;
 - ✓ Revision of the *West Mercia Joint Protocol for Missing Children*.
 - ✓ Revision of the SSCB *Self-Harm Pathway*

Planning and Commissioning

- 3.27 In the current financial climate an ever increasing number of services are being commissioned by agencies in order to meet local needs in a more cost effective manner. As a result the LSCB is strengthening its oversight of local commissioning arrangements. Agencies are asked to report how their commissioning arrangements give due regard to safeguarding in accordance with Standard 2.3 of the Section 11 audit and through regular assurance reports.



Multi-agency training provision

- 3.28 LSCBs are responsible for developing policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area of the authority, including policies and procedures in relation to training of persons who work with children or in services affecting the safety and welfare of children. SSCB both commissions and provides multi-agency training. *Working Together 2015* also sets a requirement for LSCB's to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of training for all professionals in the area.
- 3.29 Despite numerous fiscal and organisational challenges SSCB has consistently delivered training that has been well received by delegates. The training remit continues to expand and training is reviewed in response to legislation, guidance and national and local reviews.
- 3.30 In total from April 2014 to March 2015 SSCB has delivered **42 multi-agency training sessions plus 1 e-learning module to 948 delegates**. These figures are higher in-comparison to 2013/14 figures, showing the SSCB multi-agency training continues to meet the needs of the workforce. (2013/14; 35 multi-agency learning sessions reaching 699 delegates). The link to the full multi-agency training report for 2014-2015 is in Appendix 4.
- 3.31 During 2015-2016 the SSCB expects to see:
- An increase in the number of submissions of single agency training data to the SSCB.
 - An improved return rate from delegates for the 3 monthly post course evaluation process.
 - Issues of underrepresentation at multi-agency training to have been addressed.



4 Performance and effectiveness of the LSCB

- 4.1 The LSCB set out its intentions for 2014-15 in a business plan which was published together with last year's annual report. The plan set out a number of areas of activity which were agreed following assessment of the effectiveness of the LSCB and its partners, consideration of information and evidence, and reflecting areas of weakness and challenge set out in last year's LSCB annual report. The SSCB Business Plan identifies five strategic objectives:

Strategic objective 1

- Shropshire has an effective LSCB which fulfils its statutory responsibilities and promotes a culture of collective accountability, respectful challenge and continuous learning.

Strategic objective 2

- Shropshire has high quality safeguarding systems and practice in place which are effective in helping, protecting and caring for children and are delivered by a knowledgeable, experienced and well trained workforce

Strategic objective 3

- Shropshire has effective arrangements for identifying and responding to the needs of children and young people living in homes where the parenting abilities of their parents/ carers are compromised due to domestic abuse, substance misuse or mental ill health, including promoting early help to prevent escalation of risk and harm.

Strategic objective 4

- Shropshire has effective arrangements for responding to key safeguarding risks (particularly missing children, child sexual exploitation and trafficking), and through education and training aimed at increasing awareness and resilience.

Strategic objective 5

- SSCB is active and influential through effective engagement with other strategic partnerships, statutory and other partners, front line practitioners, children and young people, parents, carers and the wider public.

- 4.2 Within this framework, the Board determined three main priorities for action during the year:

- Compromised parenting (to include domestic abuse, parental substance misuse and parental mental ill health)
- Missing children (including child sexual exploitation and trafficking) and
- Communication.

Progress on its objectives and priorities is monitored by the Board and reviewed annually.



1. Priority – Compromised parenting

This priority was chosen because evidence from serious case reviews and elsewhere demonstrates that children living in households where there is domestic abuse, and/ or parents/carers who suffer from poor mental health, or misuse drugs or alcohol, are more likely to suffer significant harm. This is also the case in Shropshire, with one or more of these factors being a feature in the lives of children on child protection plans or entering the care system.

What have we done in 2014-2015?

- Revised the **Joint Working Protocol** between Substance Misuse Services and Children and Family Services along with the development of a proposal for monitoring the effectiveness of the protocol.
- **Compromised Parenting training** has been delivered to 54 delegates.
- Begun work on developing a **strategy for children affected by domestic abuse**. A task and finish group of key partners has been established and is currently working on referral pathways for practitioners who are in contact with children and young people, adult victims and perpetrators with children.
- Held a **SSCB Conference** in November 2014 on the theme of Compromised Parenting, which included a keynote speech from Dr Liz MacDonald, Chair of the Royal College of Psychiatry, Section of Perinatal Psychiatry and a leading expert in this field; a theatre performance by Saltmine Theatre Company and focussed agency workshops. 179 delegates attended and the feedback was extremely positive. Further details can be found in the multi-agency training report - see link in Appendix 4.
- Early Help implementation and effectiveness – see more on page 44
- Secured funding, in partnership with the Community Safety Partnership and the County Domestic Abuse Forum, to provide a Voluntary Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse Programme.
- Embedded the Solihull Parenting Approach in Shropshire; 'Understanding your Child' courses are running for different cohorts of parents.

What difference have we made?

- A selection of feedback from delegates regarding the Compromised Parenting conference:
 - "Better understanding of lived experience of children exposed to parental substance misuse"*
Children's Services – Case Management Team
 - "Heart rending, however, demonstrates how the right services at the right time can make a difference. Ensure young people in families affected by loss have access to services/referral on"*
Drug and Alcohol Action Team
- *Feedback from a parent who undertook the 'Understanding your Child' course - 'I feel my daughter is able to accept advice or help more readily than she was before I came to this group. She talks to me more openly about her feelings and any troubles she might have.'*

What will we do next?

- Launch the SSCB Strategy and practitioner toolkit for responding to children affected by domestic abuse.
- Launch the Voluntary Perpetrators Programme and receive an effectiveness report.
- Together with the Health and Wellbeing Board, Safeguarding Adults Board, Community Safety Partnership and Children's Trust, run a workshop in November 2015 on the subject of emotional well-being and mental health.



2. Priority – Children who go Missing (Including Child Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking)

A number of children in Shropshire are reported missing on at least three occasions a year and some have dozens of missing episodes. These children account, between them, for a significant proportion of the West Mercia Police missing person investigations and a large proportion of these figures involve children in care, particularly those residents in children's care homes. Shropshire looks after 310 children, an increase of 14.8% on last year, and there are approximately 486 looked after children placed by other local authorities with private providers based in Shropshire.

Understanding of the complex issues associated with going missing, the increase in vulnerability to other risks such as Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and the subsequent response by professionals and their agencies is, therefore, vital.

What have we done?

- Revised the **West Mercia Joint Protocol for Missing Children** in response to the Department for Education's (DfE) new ['Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care'](#), January 2014 and the Association of Chief Police Officer's change to the definition of 'Missing', which was implemented across West Mercia in September 2014.
- The **notification form used by private care providers** to inform the local authority of a child moving to their establishment has been revised, agreed and implemented. It now includes a risk assessment for CSE.
- Published a SCIE Learning Review which determined the effectiveness of the CSE Strategy and CSE Panel. Learning has been shared with frontline practitioners through multi-agency training and briefings.
- Delivered **CSE training** to practitioners, elected members and the Licencing Group.
- Continued to **deliver Empower** (a 2 day 'keep safe' programme for young people at risk of CSE).
- Locally identified the **links between missing, missing from education and CSE**, with new guidance for schools for children on part-time timetables being issued in April 2014.
- Undertaken an annual **online e-Safety survey for young people** and analysed the responses.
- Held a **multi-agency e-safety Conference** in March 2014 for over 120 delegates, with keynote input from South West Grid for Learning and the Beck Bednar Foundation.
- Benchmarked agency responses to CSE against the *See Me, Hear Me* framework.
- Launched the *Say Something if You See Something* campaign for the commercial sector and raised awareness of CSE in the community.
- Established CSE 'locations' meetings linking to Safer Neighbourhood Bronze Level Tasking Groups.
- Contributed to the revision of the Taxi Licensing Policy and delivered child protection *train the trainer* course to the Licensing and Public Protection Team for dissemination to all taxi drivers in 2015-2016.

What difference have we made?

- A total of 50 cases have been referred to CSE Panel in the last 12 months, an increase on last years' figure of 11 referrals, demonstrating increased awareness.



2. Priority – Children who go Missing (Including Child Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking) cont...

- A further 8 sessions of the Empower Programme¹ have been delivered to 42 girls. The follow up information gathered from the agencies who referred these girls to Empower, has largely been positive. Most have made significant progress and their risks have reduced. The winning formula of the programme is that it is delivered *with* the young women not *to* them. They are not lectured, they are consulted with for their views and understanding, and encouraged to challenge and question the scenarios that are put to their characters.
- On the whole, the work that has been done over the years by SSCB and partner agencies on e-safety for young people has had a positive impact. Survey findings from February 2015, when compared with survey findings from February 2014, showed that less young people are meeting up with people they don't know in the 'real world' and children and young people are now more likely to report their concerns to parents, teachers and friends than previously.
- SSCB continued to support the e-safety element of the Create IT Awards – a schools competition to produce online media with e-safety messages for children and young people and their parents.

What we will do next:

- Work with the West Mercia Consortium of LSCBs to monitor the effectiveness of the West Mercia *Joint Protocol for Missing Children*.
- Ensure that CSE awareness reaches more schools, young people, commercial sector and the community.
- Implement a youth CSE campaign through delivery of the *Chelsea's Choice* theatre production to schools and the NWG 'Say Something' Youth Campaign.
- Continue to gather intelligence and data to inform the work of SSCB and its partner agencies in order to respond appropriately to children who go missing and/or are exploited, ensuring that links are made to the JSNA.
- Work with PACE (Parents against Child Exploitation) the leading national organisation, to provide support to parents whose children are at risk of CSE.
- Transfer the CSE Panel to operational services.
- Build capacity within the SSCB Business Unit to identify gaps in service provision and implement effective strategies to address them, to include victim support and work with perpetrators.
- Develop the involvement of children and their families in the CSE Panel process.
- Celebrate the positives from the e-Safety survey findings and work with young people to develop further e-safety interventions to address their concerns.
- Work with children's care homes and private providers to enable improved management of issues and incidents (e.g. children who go missing) thereby reducing exposure to vulnerability and reducing the demands on Public Services.

¹Empower is a an awareness project designed for young women aged between 13 to 17 years old who have been assessed to be at risk of, or involved in unhealthy, abusive or exploitative relationships.



3. Priority – Communication

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015) gives LSCBs a statutory responsibility to communicate and raise awareness about safeguarding children: *'communicating to persons and bodies in the area of the authority the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, raising their awareness of how this can best be done, and encouraging them to do so'* (page 66).

This not only means that SSCB member agencies, independent agencies and employers should be made aware of their safeguarding responsibilities but also that members of the local community have an understanding of their own responsibilities and the work that the LSCB is undertaking to keep children safe from harm.

What have we done in 2014-2015?

- Continued development of the SSCB website, including uploaded videos of young people talking about e-Safety.
- Supported the Create IT Awards e-Safety category. Entries were made using various forms of software with the aim of conveying e-safety messages to parents and/or pupils.
- Continued Development of Learning and Improvement Briefings for practitioners.
- The **Say Something if You See Something (SSSS)** campaign was launched in March with significant raising awareness activity throughout the month which included:
 - The creation of a SSSS Communications Campaign Pack for partner agencies.
 - Police Officers distributing posters to the 36 hotels in Shropshire with 8+ rooms.
 - Production of a flyer for raising awareness of CSE in the community which was included in the Shrewsbury Town Football Club programme (5,000 crowd)





3. Priority – Communication cont...

- Supporting the #Helping Hands national campaign.



- Raising awareness of online exploitation through e-safety conference for professionals (100 delegates)
- Twitter campaign via Shropshire Council Twitter account with the following statistics reported:
 - Average reach per tweet – 21,392
 - Campaign reach – 427,821

Voice of practitioners

- SSCB heard the views of practitioners with regards to a learning review which was chosen to pilot the SCIE system methodology. This required practitioners in the case group to have individual conversations whereby they are asked for their 'view from the tunnel' in order to understand what was influencing their decision-making and perception of the case at the time. This proved invaluable when reviewing the case and highlighted a number of practice and systems issues which enabled practitioners to reflect on their practice and learn lessons throughout the process of the review.

Feedback from parents

- The following comment was received from a parent in relation to the parents' e-safety section of the SSCB website: *'I've been researching into how to keep my daughter's privacy safe as it's been a growing concern of mine. She's only 10 years old and is already spending more time than me on the internet! The difficulty I have is that I'm not that savvy when it comes to technology..... however, it's something that I've forced myself to learn as children seem to have access to this so much earlier in life. So I want to thank you for putting this page together. I have found it to be especially helpful:*

http://www.safeguardingshropshireschildren.org.uk/scb/par_esafety.html

Good and accurate information is hard to come by so information like yours is really appreciated!'



3. Priority – Communication cont...

Community engagement

During April and May 2015 the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board and the Children's Trust organised three workshops across the county. The purpose of the workshops was

- To encourage staff working in agencies close to local communities to "Take up the challenge from the SSCB that the welfare and safeguarding of Shropshire's children is 'Everyone's business'", and
- To inform staff and explain the development of strategies and initiatives to deliver early help for families with children and the national Troubled Families programme.

The workshops were well attended and reflected the diversity of agencies from the statutory and voluntary sectors working with families in local communities. The staff attending were encouraged to bring with them examples of the work their agencies do with families in the local communities of Shropshire.

The work being done to develop a tool to evaluate need and provide help with identifying thresholds was described and the three Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board priorities of addressing compromised parenting, missing children and communication were explained.

Other presentations focused on the progress made in delivering the Troubled Families programme launched by the Prime Minister in 2011 and intended to ensure that families characterised by repeated generational patterns of poor parenting, abuse, violence, drug use, no adult in the family working, children not being in school and family members being involved in crime and anti-social behaviour are "turned around" - families with multiple problems who would benefit from an integrated and whole family approach.

Success depended on effective engagement with and by staff in agencies working close to local communities and engagement and increased awareness within the communities. Research shows that when communities are aware they are likely to report circumstances that would benefit from concerted help: a "see something – say something" approach.

Shropshire Council Councillors had been briefed on the approach and steps are being taken to engage with Parish and Town Councils which are close to their communities to encourage their involvement.



3. Priority – Communication cont...

There was a very positive response to the messages being given and there were enthusiastic and lively debates. Participants had a real interest and appreciation for being made aware of strategic policies and the arrangements for their practical delivery through local services. There was keen support for being part of making a difference for vulnerable children and an eagerness to learn about the development of thresholds and moving the principles forward with “something earlier – something simpler.”

Table discussions in groups involved staff from diverse agencies and generated lively discussion as participants considered case scenarios and identified statutory and voluntary agencies and professionals who might provide the early help in the circumstances described.

All the posters designed to inform about child sexual exploitation and what to do if it was suspected were taken away to display in prominent positions where members of communities as well as other professionals would see them.

Report provided by David Spicer, Chair of Ryton XI Towns Parish Council

What we will do next:

- Review the Communications Strategy.
- The effectiveness of time limited communications campaigns which direct people to the website will be measured on their completion and analysed by the Communications subgroup with performance reports being presented to the Board.
- Consider a new SSCB website host and involve young people in the development of pages for children and young people.
- Raise awareness of the new SSCB website with young people, parents and the community.
- Implement and monitor the effectiveness of a series of CSE campaigns for the commercial sector, parents/carers and the community, including Chelsea's Choice for all secondary schools and alternative education provisions.
- Develop a junior LSCB in conjunction with FE Colleges.
- Continue to hear the voice of the child through regular development sessions for SSCB members.



- 4.3 At the last review (in January 2014), partners concluded that, whilst the SSCB could evidence that much progress had been made on its priority areas over the last three years, there was still scope for further developments and as such these three areas should remain a priority during 2014/15. Progress and priorities will be further reviewed in September 2015.

In addition, partners also recognised that there needed to be additional focus in the following areas:

i) Developing a more co-ordinated approach to the safeguarding of disabled children within Shropshire.

A task and finish group was established to lead on this piece of work in 2014 with the following aims:

- To explore the collation of baseline data of children with a disability in Shropshire.
- To raise awareness amongst professionals of the additional vulnerabilities of children with disabilities to all forms of abuse.
- To propose a series of recommendations which will seek to address any gaps in provision of service against the 53 standards for safeguarding of disabled children set out in the *Safeguarding Disabled Children Practice Guidance 2009*.

The task and finish group is due to report its findings to the SSCB in 2015 and progress will be reported in the SSCB Annual Report 2015-2016.

ii) Hearing the voice of children and young people in order to inform practice and to monitor performance of services.

Whilst some progress has been made, this remains an important area for development in Shropshire, at the LSCB itself and across the partnership.

iii) Developing and strengthening the LSCB

In October 2014 a new joint SSCB and Children's Trust Business Manager post was created to increase capacity for the Board and to develop closer links across the SSCB and Children's Trust. This has already proved beneficial in terms of improved communication and better alignment of business. Further developments have included:

• **Reviewing structure and representation**

To support the drive for improved effectiveness, the Board has agreed further improvements to the structure of the wider LSCB, reviewed partner representation and revised the terms of reference of all the subgroups. Work continues to ensure that LSCB members are able to represent their agencies and help to take work forward in a meaningful and effective way.

• **Developing the culture**

Board culture has been developing to reflect a more challenging and rigorous approach. This needs to be sustained and further enhanced in order to continue to improve effectiveness and impact. A challenge log continues to be used to monitor impact. A risk register is under development to highlight and mitigate areas of risk

that may compromise SSCB's ability to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and fulfil its core functions effectively.

- **Strengthening governance**

Shropshire has retained a Children's Trust and there is also a Health and Wellbeing Board in place. A formal protocol has been developed which sets out the relationship between the LSCB and the Children's Trust. Areas for future focus in relation to governance include closer working with the Health and Wellbeing Board, Safeguarding Adults Board and the Safer, Stronger Communities Partnership to ensure that common areas of interest and responsibility are developed appropriately and are mutually reinforcing (for example, the multi-agency response to domestic abuse, supporting vulnerable adults who are parents, and the transition from children's to adult services for vulnerable individuals). This is being taken forward through the development of a 'Pentagon of Partnerships' meeting of Chairs and Business Managers. This group is planning a joint workshop in October 2015 focused on emotional well-being and mental health, which is a common theme across all Boards.

An SSCB Community Member's Reflections

It has been a valuable 18 months since becoming a community member of the Board.

Whilst it is clear that the Board is tackling a huge variety of issues, I do feel that more work needs to be done in respect of talking to the young people directly about how they feel supported in the community.

Young people in the community need to feel that they are being listened to and not dictated to.

An excellent demonstration of this was the e-safety campaign. Children & young people delivered first-hand information to the Board that they had collected themselves. Frontline information from the young people is vital and some of the subject areas that they brought certainly gave the Board something to think about.

Being part of the Children with Disabilities Task & Finish Group has also been very valuable and seeing the Chair's passion for improving services for children with disabilities is inspiring. This is an area that has previously been overlooked. This is an important area of work for the Board which must be resourced appropriately in order to drive it forward and address important issues.



Next steps

- 4.4 Progress against the SSCB Business Plan 2014-2017 and the impact of work completed to date was considered at an SSCB development session in which Board partners also considered the challenges that SSCB faces and reviewed the SSCB's priorities for 2015-2016.
- 4.5 Areas that the SSCB has identified as being in need of further work include:
- Developing the quality assurance of Section 11 audit self-assessments;
 - Capturing and responding to the voice of the child;
 - Ensuring robust management oversight and supervision arrangements are in place in partner agencies;
 - Improving engagement of community members in LSCB meetings, enabling them to feel more confident to raise questions and challenge from a community perspective.
 - Strengthening the multi-agency auditing process to ensure a systematic programme of audits reflecting the 'child's journey' through the system is undertaken and results reported to each Board meeting.

These have informed the SSCB Business Plan for 2014-17 (Appendix 3), and will be further reviewed in September 2015.

- 4.6 A planned LGA Peer Review of Shropshire's safeguarding children arrangements will take place in June 2015 as part of the preparation for the unannounced Ofsted inspection for children's services and the review of the LSCB. The findings of the LGA Peer Review, recommendations and improvements to outcomes for children and families will be reported in the SSCB Annual Report 2015-2016.



5 Performance and effectiveness of local arrangements

5.1 In order to evaluate the effectiveness of arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Shropshire, evidence is drawn from a wide range of sources which are analysed together to assess the whole system:

- Engagement with children and young people
- Monitoring and reviewing services
- Performance management and quality assurance of safeguarding services and practice.

Engagement with children and young people

5.2 One example of how SSCB has engaged with children and young people was through the first SSCB development session for members. This featured presentations from young people on e-safety, which included a number of videos that they had created with messages for children, parents and professionals.

The young people told SSCB:

- Young people have x-box, laptops and mobile phones in their bedrooms, maybe they should be downstairs in the living room, so parents are able to monitor their children's usage and who they are talking to?
- The e-safety videos which are shown in schools aren't effective enough, as cyberbullying and sexting still goes on in schools, therefore they wanted to make a video which was straight to the point and was very strong.
- Pupils are given talks and videos to watch, but they concentrate on the negatives and not the personal consequences, therefore more education on personal consequences would be good. They felt that more frequent preventative input in schools would be helpful.

Board members were challenged on their approach to preventative education and the SSCB e-safety working group will be completing a number of actions as a result of the young people's input.

Monitoring and reviewing services

5.3 Local authority services have not been externally reviewed during 2014-15, although a number of other services have been. The various inspections indicate areas of good practice and a number of areas for improvement in order to achieve a consistently good quality of service to children, young people and their families.



Child deaths and serious incidents

- 5.4 During the year CDOP met 5 times and reviewed a total of 20 cases across Shropshire. As seen in previous years, the age range with the largest number of deaths is within the 0-28 day range, with the majority of these deaths being babies who have never left hospital. The numbers decrease with age which mirrors the national picture. CDOP did not identify significant modifiable factors which could have prevented these deaths.

Serious Case Reviews (SCR)

- 5.5 LSCBs are required to undertake reviews of serious cases when abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected; the child has either died been seriously harmed and there is cause for concern as to the way in which the authority, their board partners or other relevant persons have worked together to safeguard the child.
- 5.6 SSCB and agencies from Shropshire were involved in a serious case review initiated by another LSCB, concerning a looked after young person who was placed with an independent care provider within the county. The case highlighted the vulnerabilities of looked after children when placed far from home.

Findings from the SCR were as follows:







- There was insufficient thorough investigation of repeated allegations of physical abuse made by the young person. This included missing opportunities to speak to the child alone and to speak to the siblings about the allegations.
 - Once looked after insufficient curiosity and enquiry in to the root causes of the young person's behaviour led to a lack of understanding about the lived experience of the child and an absence of hearing the child's voice.
 - There was unacceptable delay in the provision and funding of services, particularly in relation to the young person's mental health needs, and evidence of insufficient monitoring of prescribed medication to reduce risk of overdose.
 - There was a lack of co-ordinated robust assessment to help understand the needs and increased risk taking of the young person, and the reviewing arrangements of their care plan lacked sufficient scrutiny.
 - Robust monitoring to ensure safe, responsive, good quality care is being provided is essential. The option of secure accommodation must be regularly and robustly considered when the frequency and intensity of violent behaviour and absconding increases.
- 5.7 The multi-agency action plan continues to be monitored by the Learning and Improvement sub-group. Progress is being made in respect of challenge from the police and the local










authority to responsible authorities where placements are deemed to not be suitable for a young person. Improvements are also being made in understanding the health needs of looked after children, particularly in the timely commissioning of mental health assessments.

Quality Assurance of Child Protection Conferences

5.8 Child protection conferences bring together all relevant agencies with a role to play in protecting individual children. A range of quality assurance activity is undertaken to ensure quality and consistency in core child protection processes. This has included auditing aspects of child protection conferences. Key findings are set out in the table below.

	Total number of Conferences	13/14	14/15
		371	426
		% Yes	% Yes
	Social workers reports completed 3+ working days before the conference	72%	67%
	Parents saw the report 3+ working days before the conference.	64%	62%
	If negative to Q2, had parent/s been made aware of Assessment Services' view?	57%	89%
	Report gives evidence based Analysis / Summary	96%	95%
	Clear, Outcome Focused report and Recommendations	85%	90%
	Key Family Members present	69%	80%



	Child/ren were present	32%	23%
	Appropriate social work representation	98%	95%
	All Key Agencies present or provided report including Police, GP etc.	33%	57%
	All monthly core groups conducted?	97%	90%
	All agencies attended and contributed meaningfully to the core groups (Please give details)	96%	91%
	Agencies have followed the Child Protection Plan satisfactorily	96%	91%
	Agencies have been able to secure sufficient resources to follow the plan?	96%	91%

5.9 Overall, there has been a significant increase in the frequency of having all relevant professionals at CP conferences. This has increased over the last year from 36% to 57%. However, GPs remain consistently underrepresented in their contributions to child protection conferences. Out of the total 243 conferences where professionals were not adequately represented, 44% of the absences were recorded due to GP absence.



- 5.10 In 2015-16 a more sophisticated analysis of individual core agencies and review of the process and mechanisms by which agencies can attend and provide reports will be implemented.
- 5.11 A slightly reduced percentage (62%) of parents are seeing the social worker's report to the case conference 3 working days beforehand. The SSCB understands that, where reports have not been available in the 3 days prior to a conference, the parents are made aware of the contents before the conference the majority of the time.
- 5.12 Performance data will be reviewed and more meaningful performance indicators presented in 2015-16.

Multi-agency auditing

- 5.13 SSCB quality assurance and performance monitoring showed that there was a rapid rise in the number of children subject to a 2nd child protection plan in a two year period from June 2013 (2 children) to March 2014 (40 children). The SSCB commissioned a multi-agency audit in order to understand the reasons for this, with specific reference to its priority area of 'compromised parenting.'
- 5.14 The audit was carried out in September 2014, and showed:
- There was some evidence of good analysis of risk.
 - Whilst some of the children's views were captured in social worker's reports to conference, there was little evidence of hearing the voice of the child directly at case conferences.
 - Some cases demonstrated that little had changed since the previous period of child protection planning and the second or subsequent plan simply replicated what had been in the previous plan.
 - More could be done in understanding the child's journey and hearing the voice of the child.
 - Child protection plans could be sharpened and SMARTer.
 - Core groups could be strengthened as there was evidence that they need to be more effective in monitoring the child protection plan.
 - The recording of decision-making at child protection conferences, particularly in relation to de-planning and consequent 'step-down' plans need to be more robust and implemented effectively.

These findings were fed back to managers and practitioners.

- 5.15 Since then, the number of children subject of a second child protection plan in two years has decreased by 3% when comparing year end figures.



Allegations against professionals

- 5.16 *Working Together* (2015) underlines the importance of the arrangements for dealing with allegations against adults who work with children. LSCBs have responsibility for ensuring there are effective inter-agency procedures in place for dealing with allegations against people who work with children, and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of those procedures. County level and unitary local authorities are expected to have a local authority designated officer (LADO) involved in the management and oversight of individual cases.
- 5.17 The management of allegations should be seen in the wider context of safer employment practice, which has three essential elements:
- Safer recruitment and selection practices;
 - Safer working practices;
 - Management of allegations or concerns.
- 5.18 Allegations against staff may come to attention under a different title, i.e. 'allegation', 'concern' or 'complaint.' Regardless of the route in, any information or referral which suggests that a member of staff has harmed a child, committed a possible offence or may be unsuitable to work with children, will be dealt with by the SSCB procedures – *Management of allegations against adults who work with children* - and discussed with the LADO. The LADO should provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations, liaising with the police and other agencies and monitoring the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a thorough and fair process.
- 5.19 The first six months of the year saw an increase of 36% of LADO referrals on the previous whole year figure. This can be attributed to an increased awareness of the LADO reporting process across private providers, improved recording and tracking systems within the authority and improved access to a dedicated LADO. The number of joint evaluation meetings, (otherwise known as 'position of trust' meetings), also increased by over 100% on last years' figure.
- 5.20 An increasing number of employers have suspended a member of staff when an allegation has been made, thus demonstrating that employers understand the reasons for suspension – to protect the child, the employee and the organisation. The number of police investigations taking place has also increased, demonstrating that certain types of referrals are being appropriately managed within the criminal justice system.
- 5.21 Areas for development by the LADO in 2015-16 include:
- Continuing to raise awareness within educational establishments and with private providers to ensure that staff turnover does not affect appropriate referrals being made;
 - Exploring the reasons for a lack of referrals from Health sector and faith organisations;
 - Collecting data on the organisation within which an employee who is the subject of an allegation is located, to increase opportunities for data analysis.



Health organisations

- 5.22 Health organisations are subject to 'section 11' duties set out in *Working Together 2013*. Health professionals are in a strong position to identify welfare needs or safeguarding concerns regarding individual children and, where appropriate, provide support. They are regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and local commissioning and delivery is overseen by NHS England. There has been some welcome investment in specialist capacity across the NHS system, for example **Shropshire Community NHS Trust** now has a Nurse Specialist (Safeguarding Children) to support the Named Nurse role, who commenced in post in November 2014.
- 5.23 **Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group** is the local NHS organisation which is responsible for meeting the health needs for most of Shropshire's population. Comprising of a membership organisation of 44 GP practices, the CCG commissions and monitors the quality and care of children services including:
- Community health services for children
 - Mental health services for children at Tier 3
 - Specialist health services for people with learning disabilities
 - Acute hospital services.
 - The CCG has been granted full delegated responsibility by NHS England for some primary care services in 2015/16. This included GP practices.
- 5.24 **Shrewsbury and Telford NHS Trust** was given an 'outstanding' rating by the CQC in their recent inspection for the Trust Safeguarding Procedures and Policies. The report highlighted that the Trust had outstanding safeguarding procedures in place including the fact that the safeguarding team had links in every department where children were seen and there was good sharing of safeguarding information. The Trust was also deemed to have excellent liaison by having both an on-site Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) and a Health visitor co-ordinator on site who liaises with Accident & Emergency and the Children's Ward for health visiting services and schools.
- 5.25 QA activity has shown a number of areas in need of improvement. These include:
Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital (RJAH) - information sharing regarding children on child protection plans and improved attendance at safeguarding meetings.
- 5.26 Shropshire is engaged with piloting the Child Protection Information Sharing project. This is expected to improve communication between NHS organisations and the local authority, resulting in improved protection for children.
- 5.27 As a result of work carried out in 2013-14, the LSCB has been particularly interested in the following:
- The plans for the transition of the health visiting service to the local authority;
 - The contribution of health professionals, particularly GPs and midwifery services, to the core child protection processes;



- The development, capacity and impact of CAMHS at all tiers, including the interface with schools;
- The use of section 136 for young people;
- Engagement of health services with early help, including EHAF
- Work to be undertaken around self harm

5.28 The health visiting service is currently commissioned by NHS England which is currently in local negotiation with Public Health to look at commissioning arrangements from October 2015. The establishment of a Family Nurse Partnership in Shropshire has been beneficial. **The plans for the transition of the health visiting service to the local authority** appear to be proceeding satisfactorily. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 has led to the transfer of the school health service commissioning responsibility to public health. The new commissioning arrangements will be reported on in 2015-2016.

5.29 There is still room for improvement in the **contribution of health professionals, particularly GPs and midwifery services, to core child protection processes**: monitoring shows that GPs remain consistently underrepresented in their contributions to child protection conferences. Out of the total 243 conferences where professionals were not adequately represented, 44% of the absences were recorded due to GP absence.

5.30 **The development, capacity and impact of CAMHS at all tiers, including the interface with schools** remains an issue, although there have been a number of encouraging developments. Improving mental health is a priority of the Health and Wellbeing Board, a key action in the Shropshire's Children, Young People and Families Plan 2014 and part of the Early Help Strategy 2013. Reaching out to mental health providers and service users, to increase choice of mental health provision and support is one of the key priorities for the CCG and the importance of 'parity of esteem' is identified within the CCG's 2015/16 mandate and operational plan.

5.31 The schools safeguarding group presented a report to the SSCB highlighting the views of head teachers and designated child protection leads in relation to existing mental health provision for children and young people in Shropshire across the four tiers of mental health provision.

5.32 Issues for schools included:

- Being overwhelmingly concerned that timescales for CAMHS to work with children are too long.
- Schools felt that thresholds for access to CAMHS were too high. Where cases are turned down this can be without a specialist assessment and with no access to an alternative for help.
- Most schools felt that they were being expected to do work with children when it is beyond their capability to do so safely.

5.33 As a result, in 2014/15 the CCG completed an extensive review of the CAMHS service to identify and further understand the concerns and issues raised by service users/their



families and professionals. The audit and review used different types of analysis to result in the identification of common themes to be addressed, which include:

- Increasing/ improving access, choice and personalisation
- Early promotion of mental wellbeing and preventing mental ill health
- Decreasing waiting times
- Improved transitions
- Parity of esteem between people with mental health and physical health
- Increasing availability of evidence based therapies.

5.34 The Shropshire CAMHS Transformation Plan is being developed, led by a multi-agency group which includes contribution from schools and from service users. Its aims are:

- To ensure joined up strategic commissioning across the four tiers of child and adolescent mental health services and into adult mental health services for children and young people up to the age of 25 years and above where appropriate.
- To ensure that strategic commissioning activity leads to the development and delivery of joint outcomes.
- To develop joined up solutions to any issues across the four tiers of child and adolescent mental health services and into adult mental health services for children and young people up to the age of 25 years and above where appropriate.
- To ensure that the views of service users and potential service users are taken account of and inform the work of this group.

5.35 Progress is being overseen by Shropshire Children's Trust, which has delegated responsibility from Shropshire Health and Wellbeing Board for mental health in relation to children and young people. Ensuring the effectiveness of existing work with schools is already within the remit of this group and will be a key element within the local transformation plan.

5.36 **Use of section 136:** As part of the mental health crisis care concordat all the partner agencies in the health and social care local economy have devised a plan to enhance mental health crisis care for children and adults. As such a national plan has been submitted and a group regularly meet to discuss progress and monitor compliance. For more details see <http://www.crisiscareconcordat.org.uk/areas/shropshire/>

5.37 The use of police cells to detain children and young people with mental health problems has dropped following the development of a more suitable place of safety ('136 suite'), which is welcome. The figures for the numbers of children and young people aged under 18 held under section 136 show an increase over the years to the highest total in the most recent financial year of 26. From February 2014 to January 2015, 94% of under 18s held under section 136 received follow up from CAMHS. Following recommendations for 136 detentions all children should be transported via ambulance with police in attendance. 72% of young people were transported by ambulance under section 136 to the Redwoods Place of Safety, (latter percentage is across both Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin).

Detention area	2010-11	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-14	2014-2015
Police cell	15	13	12	4	1
136 suite	Not In use	7	12	21	26

5.38 The LSCB will be seeking assurance during 2015-16 regarding:

- Improvements in access to and impact of CAMHS
- Health (including mental health) provision for looked after children placed in Shropshire from elsewhere
- Effective information sharing and engagement with child protection processes across the health system.

Education and Schools

5.39 Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities (in relation to their education functions and governing bodies of maintained schools and further education institutions, which include sixth-form colleges) to *exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at a school, or who are students under 18 years of age attending further education institutions*. The same duty applies to independent schools (which include Academies and free schools) by virtue of regulations made under section 157 of the same Act.

5.40 As a result of work carried out in 2013-14, the LSCB has been particularly interested in the following:

- The contribution of schools to the early help and child protection services;
- The oversight of vulnerable groups, including those who are educated at home, or are missing from education;
- Safeguarding arrangements in independent schools;
- Progress in implementing PSHE which addresses issues of sexual exploitation.

5.41 There have been some significant developments across the education system in Shropshire during 2014-15, with strong leadership by the council's Education Improvement Services (EIS) and the Schools Safeguarding Group (which includes representation across the entire education spectrum from early years to FE). All maintained secondary, primary, special schools as well as academies, free schools, early years' settings and child care providers are monitored regularly to ensure compliance with safeguarding requirements, as follows:

- Annual auditing enables the service to maintain an overview of schools and other providers for compliance and to identify non-compliance, therefore enabling targeted support to be offered
- Targeted support is recorded and monitored quarterly
- Ofsted reports are reviewed to further ensure compliance

- From September 2015 reports will be made through a quality assurance framework to the Learning and Skills Safeguarding group to enable effective monitoring of provision
- In addition, all schools are inspected by Ofsted in relation to behaviour and safety. Inspectors gather evidence from children to assess whether they feel safe when in school. Parents are also asked to feedback as to whether they feel their child is safe at school. Out of the 20 schools inspected from April 2014 – February 2015, 95% of the total number of parents who replied agreed that children were safe in school, with only 5% reporting they disagreed or didn't know. All inspection reports judged that children felt they were safe whilst in school and knew how to report their concerns to staff.
- Of the 20 schools that were inspected no school was inadequate, but three were graded as 'requires improvement' in relation to 'behaviour and safety'. Analysis of the reports indicated there were no safeguarding concerns and the issues were related to behaviour of some pupils in lessons. Had there been any safeguarding concerns, the LA's safeguarding team would target appropriate support.
- Continuous monitoring enables EIS to identify schools who may be non-compliant and ensure appropriate action is taken. Currently 100% of schools are compliant with training requirements.

Section 11 compliance audits:

5.42 Schools are 98% compliant with criteria

Key areas identified by schools for non-compliance were RSE and Equal Opportunities training.

5.43 Early Years settings are 42% compliant

Through the annual auditing process and the recent support given by Children Centres' workers, an increased number of practitioners are compliant in all areas compared with 2013 -2014. A significant increase in compliance is expected for 2015 -2016 as a result of the allocation of two Children Centre workers since September 2014.

Section 9 Practice audit

- 5.44 This is the termly process for schools and early years' settings to review the minimum of three files held on identified vulnerable children. Identified concerns are addressed through individual actions, early help, multi-agency working or other targeted support.
- 5.45 A revised quality assurance framework has been developed with the aim of co-ordinating the assessment and monitoring of the quality and overall effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in Shropshire schools and assessing their impact on outcomes for children. The quality assurance framework will ensure safeguarding compliance of all schools and early years' settings from September 2015 and assist with identifying areas for targeted support. The data will be used to make informed judgements for the Education Access



Services, the Education Improvement Services and HR so that schools may continue to be presented with appropriate and consistent safeguarding challenges.

Extended relationship with Independent Schools

5.46 The Independent Schools safeguarding group was set up in March 2014, to raise the importance of safeguarding for all young people in Shropshire. Two members were elected at the first meeting to represent the Independent schools on the Schools Safeguarding group.

5.47 In 2005-2006, LA monitoring showed attendance of independent schools at appropriate child protection training was 8% (2 independent schools); in 2011 – 2012 this had increased to 25% (6 independent schools), and in 2014 – 2015 had increased substantially to 75% (19 independent schools).

NB: Some independent schools have in-house trainers and also access training from other agencies, so overall figures are likely to be higher.

School attendance

5.48 Absence from school can leave children vulnerable; analysis of and support for school attendance and effective intervention to tackle non-attendance is therefore significant in supporting the safeguarding of children.

5.49 Primary and secondary school attendance in Shropshire saw an upward trend to a combined total of 95.8% and continues to be above the national average. The overall attendance at special schools has also increased; pleasingly, it is now above the national average for special schools. In line with national trends, children with special educational needs have lower attendance than those with no special educational needs; schools are encouraged and supported to address this. Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) children continue to be Shropshire's largest ethnic minority group and have lower attendance than their peers who are not GRT. In common with the national picture, more GRT families coming into Shropshire are choosing to home educate their children rather than enrol them in a school. All Shropshire schools have an LA Education Welfare Officer assigned to them apart from the single Free School and member schools of the Shrewsbury Academies Trust.

Exclusions

5.50 School exclusions historically have been low in Shropshire. Compared with the corresponding period last year, primary, secondary and special school fixed term and permanent exclusions have seen a slight reduction. The placing of permanently excluded pupils in new schools continues to present challenges; however, the Education Access Service (EAS) has developed services to support this process following fair access principles, which are becoming embedded across the schools.



Children missing education

- 5.51 The local authority has a statutory duty to ensure that all children resident in Shropshire are engaged with education; those children not attached to an education provision or who have moved and whose whereabouts are not known are classed as children missing education (CME).
- 5.52 Certain groups of already vulnerable children are at particular risk of missing education, including: pupils at risk of harm or neglect; children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families; children of the armed forces; missing children and runaways and those in the youth justice system.
- 5.53 Currently there are 243 CME cases (13 are not Shropshire children) on the CME register, this is an increase on the same period last year. During the year an additional 13 cases have been closed. Of these 8 were children with child protection concerns and 15 were GRT (a reduction on last year); there were no looked after children. Some of these cases will be purely a data exercise (i.e. incorrect or no transfer evidence has been provided) and this has to be tracked; however there are cases of concern in this cohort and the tracking and placing of these children takes priority.

Part time attendance

- 5.54 Alongside children who are in the category of CME there are those pupils who do not access full time education whose vulnerability is increased, for example the majority of school age children presented to the CSE panel have reduced or non-attendance at their education provision. The EAS is working in partnership with schools and other agencies to ensure that no young person slips out of sight.
- 5.55 To further address this and ensure children are safeguarded the EAS has devised a process, implemented in January 2014, that requires schools to: inform the LA of any part time education arrangements; keep every child on the school register, regardless of circumstances unless parents have decided to educate their child at home; avoid unlawful 'grey' exclusions and respond quickly to early signs of raised anxiety or dips in their attendance. Currently there are 53 pupils recorded as attending mainstream schools on a reduced timetable, 6 of whom are primary aged children.

Elective Home Education

- 5.56 In Shropshire it is usual to have up to 200 electively home educated pupils on the EHE register but it is likely there are more who are not registered with the local authority. Many of the pupils registered are in receipt of an education appropriate to their needs and there is a good relationship between the local authority and the families. These families engage with a LA programme of EHE monitoring, advice and support which will always include discussion with the young person receiving home education. However, there has been an increase in

families who refuse to engage at all with the LA, and currently there are 5 families and a total of 10 children known to be home educating who do not engage with the LA.

- 5.57 There will usually be a number of cases where the decision to withdraw children from school is a cause for concern, where education provision is unsatisfactory and those where the only report on the education delivered is from parents. As part of service redesign in September 2014, an Engagement Officer was appointed and the development of this role is helping to address this issue and contribute to safeguarding this group of children.
- 5.58 There are 6 children currently on Shropshire's EHE register where education is deemed by the LA to be unsatisfactory. Where this is the case, efforts are made to re-engage the children with education through enrolment at a school. School Attendance Orders (SAO) are also sought through the courts to ensure these children are in receipt of a suitable education. Currently, there are four School Attendance Orders progressing through the courts, all relating to secondary age children.
- 5.59 The LSCB will be seeking assurance during 2015-16 regarding the safety of children outside mainstream education provision.

Public Protection

- 5.60 Public protection services in Shropshire are delivered by West Mercia Police, the National Probation Service, Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company, and West Mercia Youth Offending Service. All of these organisations work across a number of local authority and LSCB areas, which has an impact on their capacity and resourcing which needs to be addressed during 2015-16.
- 5.61 As a result of its work in 2013-14, the LSCB has been particularly interested in progress in the following areas:
- The impact of the reorganisation of the Probation Service, including the contribution of the two new partners (NPS and CRC) to the LSCB and Shropshire's safeguarding arrangements;
 - The availability of 'voluntary' programmes to support perpetrators of domestic violence;
 - The contribution of these services to the identification of offenders who potentially pose a risk to children, and to the 'hidden harm' agenda.

West Mercia Police

- 5.62 Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police Strategic Alliance is now well established. The vision for the Alliance remains Protecting People from Harm. The structure described in the annual report for 2013-14 provides the foundation for ongoing development of service.



- 5.63 The last twelve months nationally has seen considerable focus on protecting people from harm, with child sexual exploitation, child protection, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, domestic and sexual violence at the forefront of reporting.
- 5.64 The publication in August 2014 of the *Independent Enquiry in to Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham 1997-2013* conducted by Alexis Jay OBE, coincided with the Alliance's commitment to significant investment in resources and staff to focus on the highest harm areas of policing. This commitment has resulted in additional investment to create three dedicated CSE investigation teams across the Alliance, based within Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire, and Telford and Shropshire. This local response is supported by further investment centrally, as the West Midlands Regional Organised Crime Unit introduces CSE Analyst and Co-ordinator posts. Child Sexual Exploitation will remain a priority for the Alliance, as will the Alliance's response to domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault, as detailed in the Control Strategy for 2015-16. This reinforces the Alliance's commitment to retaining the appropriate focus on the investigation of serious offences against children, and working with partners to ensure that every opportunity is taken to safeguard those at risk of harm. It also reaffirms that the appropriate resources will continue to be invested in the safeguarding of children and young people through this period of financial challenge.
- 5.65 The increasing investment in the West Midlands Regional Organised Crime Unit, the need to identify more efficient means of working and share best practice in order to avoid costly duplication of effort, and the clear evidence of cross border CSE offending between Warwickshire, West Mercia and West Midlands Police areas mean that closer regional collaboration between agencies should be explored at every opportunity. A number of forums exist in which such matters are being progressed, but there remain opportunities to enhance this move towards more efficient and effective working.
- 5.66 There has been considerable inspection activity regarding quality of policing in relation to public protection. The Alliance has been subject of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) inspections on recording and management of crime, effectiveness and efficiency, including the police response to Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Honour Based Violence, and culminating in a HMIC Child Protection Inspection of West Mercia Police in November 2014, published in March 2015. The Alliance invited the College of Policing to carry out a peer review regarding the police response to CSE in January 2015. Positive inspection findings include reference to recording of crime, response to honour based violence and forced marriage, and FGM; trusted adult response to children, information sharing with partners and investigative response to complex crime involving children as victims. Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police will continue to update the SSCB with progress against recommendations from these inspections and reviews. This is complemented by an additional strategic resource to support the delivery of improvement plans, and provide an additional level of expertise for supervisors.
- 5.67 One particular element of the HMIC Child Protection inspection focused on children in police custody. As a result, systems to monitor this area and report to the SSCB on performance



have recently been developed. This data shows the number of persons under eighteen years of age who are held in police custody for more than four hours following charge between 10:00pm and 6:00am, and reasons for that. Four such cases fitting those criteria were identified in the Shropshire area between November 2014 and July 2015.

5.68 Every incident that police attend which relates to domestic abuse is subject to a Domestic Abuse Stalking and Honour Based Violence risk assessment (DASH).

5.69 Question 10 of the DASH risk assessment asks '*are there any children, step-children or dependents either in the household or elsewhere?*' Where the response is positive there is then a requirement for the officer to obtain and record the following information:

- children present;
- children who witnessed incident;
- children seen safe and well;
- children subject to child protection plan;
- which school do they attend.

5.70 Every DASH risk assessment is subject to review and prioritising by risk and referrals are made to other agencies as appropriate. Every domestic related crime or incident where children are part of the family unit (whether present or not at the time) results in a referral to Children's Social Care.

5.71 Operation Encompass is also in operation within West Mercia and specifically Telford and Shropshire. Where children of school age are identified, a referral is also being made directly to Education so that the safeguarding officer at the educational establishment is aware of the incident. In the majority of cases this information is shared by 09:00 hours the morning after the incident. Where risks are such that a more expeditious response is required, effective contact is made with Children's Social Care Emergency Duty Team.

5.72 Shropshire Policing Area has established a small team of officers who will work on an initiative aimed at improving resilience in Care Homes, with a particular focus on private providers. Over 400 children from across the United Kingdom are placed in Care Homes within the County. Each child will have individual safeguarding needs and this has a significant impact upon public service demand, particularly in situations where Care Homes are not staffed and equipped to meet those needs. The aims of the initiative are to work with care homes and providers to reduce exposure to vulnerability, reduce the potential for criminalisation of children in care and reduce the demands on policing services.

5.73 Development work is underway with partners to drive the introduction of Multi- Agency Safeguarding Hubs across the Alliance, in order to provide a more effective service to children and adults at risk.



National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Company

- 5.74 In July 2014, the government's Transforming Rehabilitation programme split the 35 Probation Trusts into two parts - a National Probation Service (NPS) and 21 Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs). Warwickshire and West Mercia merged to become Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company (WWMCRC) which has since become privatised. The NPS structured into divisions and a Midlands Division was created which covers West Mercia.
- 5.75 A protocol has been drawn up to establish this new way of working and to ensure that both the NPS and CRC continue to fulfil their responsibilities to safeguard the welfare of children.
- 5.76 A national inspection of safeguarding within probation work found a range of shortcomings which have been accepted locally and are the subject of an action plans within the NPS.
- 5.77 Strategic deficits included limited management oversight and audit mechanisms for safeguarding issues, minimal influence on Safeguarding Board agendas and an absence of direction in relation to safeguarding in standalone Unpaid Work requirements.
- 5.78 Operationally, systems for cross checking with Children's Social Care were not always robust, some staff showed a restricted understanding of their safeguarding role and of referral processes; home visits were not routinely used to assess or monitor risks to children. Risk to children in domestic abuse situations was often poorly assessed and referrals to Children's Social Care were often not followed-up.
- 5.79 Locally, although the former West Mercia Probation Trust was not part of the inspection, no specific evidence is available to suggest that the findings are not applicable to practice in the National Probation Service. Action plans have therefore been installed to address the identified concerns. These are being monitored both internally and by the SSCB.
- 5.80 In addition, in August 2014, the Inspectorate published an inspection of Adult Offending Work; an aggregate of six inspections focused on protecting children. Significant safeguarding findings were deficits in:
- Levels of home visiting
 - Sending of standard checks to Children's Social Care
 - Attendance levels at or reporting to child protection conferences
 - Evidencing management oversight
 - Attention to ongoing risk to children
- 5.81 NPS raised a concern with SSCB in respect of checks with children's services to enable risk analysis to be undertaken. Checks were not always received in a timely manner and this information is needed prior to sentencing. COMPASS took over the processing of probation checks within Children's Social Care and the response time has vastly improved, ensuring that more children are now safeguarded.



Youth Offending Service (YOS)

5.82 The YOS is a multi-agency service responsible for the supervision of children and young people subject to pre-court interventions and statutory court disposals. The YOS in Shropshire also covers the Telford and Wrekin council and LSCB area.

5.83 An Inspection of the work of Probation Trusts and Youth Offending Teams to protect children and young people took place in August 2014. The Inspection Report was considered by the Youth Offending Service Management Team and the findings and recommendations were the subject of a report to the SSCB.

Key Recommendations

5.84 YOT Managers should:-

- Ensure that staff work together with other relevant agencies to assess, plan and intervene to protect young people
- Involve parents/carers where appropriate in the protection of young people
- Ensure that police intelligence is used effectively in joint working to protect young people
- Demonstrate an improvement in safeguarding outcomes for young people who have offended through their contribution to the work of LSCBs.

5.85 YOT Representatives on LSCBs should work with other members to:

- Ensure that multi-agency arrangements for information sharing work effectively and consistently
- Establish and monitor outcome data that demonstrates effective joint working to safeguard young people
- Promote better understanding across social care staff of the roles and responsibilities of YOT staff.

5.86 Meetings are planned with the Head of Service/Assistant Director for Children's Social Care in each local authority across West Mercia to take forward any issues relating to information exchange and joint planning between the YOS and Social Care.

Children who abuse others

5.87 During the period 01/07/13 to 30/06/14 there were 48 young people who were suspects of sexual offences, 3 of these young people were suspected of 2 offences each. Most offences were relating to inciting a minor to take part in a sexual act.

Of these 48:

- 3 were charged
- 34 cautioned
- 2 received community resolutions



5.88 Further work and analysis is planned to scope the nature and context of young people perpetrating sexual offences which is to be reported to the Board during 2015/2016.

Multi - Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

5.89 MAPPA is a partnership of a number of agencies who work in different ways to jointly manage the most serious offenders that we have in our communities. Agencies who take part in MAPPA include West Mercia Police, HM Prison Service, National Probation Service, Shropshire Children's Services, Mental Health Trust, Safeguarding Adults teams, Housing Services, and the Youth Offending Service. For specific cases, staff from other agencies including hostels and housing associations can be invited to participate.

5.90 Agencies share all their information about the highest risk offenders and agree a joint risk management plan, designed to minimise the risks of harm to past victims, to potential future victims, and to the general public. Child protection is in sharp focus through this process. Often cases referred to MAPPA relate to serving prisoners and MAPPA can assist planning for their resettlement into the community when their sentences come to an end. This can include specifying where they must live, places and people they must stay away from, and therapeutic work they must undertake.

5.91 The MAPPA Annual Report 2013-2014 identifies 1,329 MAPPA eligible offenders as of 31st March 2014. This figure is across the whole of West Mercia, (Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, Herefordshire and Worcestershire) and currently no local data is available for analysis.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

5.92 A MARAC is a coordinated partnership approach to tackling the most high risk domestic abuse, consisting of a voluntary meeting where information is shared between local agencies and a coordinated safety plan or risk management plan efficiently and effectively pulled together. The MARAC is made up of representatives from both statutory agencies, including Police, Probation, Children's Services, NHS and non-statutory organisations, including housing associations and domestic abuse specialist services. The report *Saving Lives and Saving Money* (2010), explains:

At the heart of a MARAC is a working assumption that no single agency or individual can see the complete picture of the life of a victim, but all may have insights that are crucial in their safety. This is because domestic abuse takes place behind closed doors and presents itself to the outside world in many ways: through calls to the police, through visits to A & E, through calls to domestic violence helplines, through poor attendance at school, and through friends.

5.93 Shropshire MARAC data for 2014-2015 shows that 175 cases of domestic abuse were discussed, 26 of these were repeats and overall 207 children were affected. Currently agencies say they do not have the capacity to carry out analysis of this data in order to formally report outcomes. This is being challenged by SSCB in order that the effectiveness of MARAC can be monitored.



5.94 During 2015-16 the LSCB expects to see evidence of:

- A reduction in offences against children and young people
- Effective support and intervention with young people who pose a risk to others
- Improved and consistent engagement by public protection agencies with child protection processes
- Evidence of effective contributions by all public protection agencies to the 'hidden harm' agenda.

Shropshire Council

5.95 As a top tier local authority, Shropshire Council has particular responsibilities under section 11 of the Children Act, and the Director of Children's Services has a particular leadership role across the multi-agency system. In previous years the Council led a review of early help services and has since been at the forefront of developing a coordinated range of provision aimed at ensuring that children and families receive an early offer of effective help.

5.96 As a result of its work in 2014-15, the LSCB has monitored closely:

- The impact of budget reductions on safeguarding services
- The rate of referrals and re-referrals to children's social care
- The impact of the early help strategy
- The rate of children with a second or subsequent child protection plan.



Effectiveness of Early Help

As at 26th February 2015, there were approximately **960** children/young people with a targeted Early Help plan in Shropshire.

From April 2014 – December 2014 there were:

- **543** Early Help Targeted Referrals
- **577** Early Help Assessments completed
- **737** new episodes of support (through a targeted Early Help plan)
- **304** Initial Webstars¹ completed
- **107** Early Help Closure Summaries completed

Audits

Three Early Help audits have been undertaken as follows; ***Effectiveness of Early Help, Stepping into Early Help, Quality of Assessment tools***. The findings were as follows:

- Practitioners captured the voice of the child much more consistently when the new Webstar Score was used. However, there were quality issues, regarding the context and analysis of the wider needs within the Webstar Assessment.
- Assessments completed that were supported by a consultation from an Early Help social worker or primary mental health worker were good quality assessments and had good plans.
- There were good examples of multi-agency approach, using clear assessment, plan and review process together. However, there was a need for more collaborative working in some cases.
- Early Help processes are well used and used appropriately. The threshold for Early Help was appropriate with 'Children getting the right support at the right time'.

1.1.1 Early Help and Resource Panel

Panel reported to be slightly less effective (54%: a decrease of 4.3%) than in 2013. Follow up on this has identified the issue as being one of expectation for another service to always be allocated, when panel outcome has challenged the assessment of need, and or responsibility of the referring agency.

¹ Webstar is an Early Help tool to ascertain a measure of wellbeing, at the start of an Early Help intervention.



A practitioner feedback survey conducted in December 2014 demonstrated an improvement in practitioner's confidence compared with the results from the Back to Basics review in 2012.

Outcomes summary

The Webstar and Think Family tools show positive outcomes are being achieved for children/young people, parents and carers and families. The main Webstar outcomes where children and young people improved were in feeling accepted, valued, part of their community and being responsible.

The main Webstar outcomes where parents improved were feeling healthy, accepted and valued.

The main issues identified for families were around relationships and of these, 91% of families improved following the Early Help intervention.

Development of single 'front door'

In November 2014 COMPASS, Shropshire's single point of co-ordination into Children's Services Early Help, and the Initial Contact Team, for child protection referrals, came together to form one single point of access for all child welfare and safeguarding concerns.

Plans for 2015-2016

- The vision for Early Help to 'help people help themselves promoting engagement of the community and voluntary sector to identify and meet the needs of the local community' will be furthered strengthened by the development of the commissioning portfolio of early help.
- Making use of Troubled Families performance data to inform service development and future commissioning of early help.
- Further methods of gathering feedback are being explored to ensure views are being captured from a broad range of service users as follows:
 - an online survey for young people and parents/carers
 - user-friendly pre-paid postcards for children and young people
 - follow up calls 3 months later to see whether changes have been sustained
 - a service user activity event to elicit child and young people's feedback



Children's Services 'front door'

- 5.97 There has been an increase in the rate of referrals during the year, although this remains below its statistical neighbour group and the All England average. However, during 2014/5 the proportion of re-referrals rose, increasing from 21% to 27.2%.
- 5.98 In 14/15 the recording of outcomes of referrals was developed by Children's Social Care to include the "professional conversation" as an outcome, whereas previously a large number had been simply recorded as No Further Action (NFA). As a result, the statistics for NFA fell from 44.5% at the end of March 2014 to 7.7% at the end of 2015. The outcome of a referral "professional conversation" reflects an agreed action by the referrer and social worker to continue to work with the child/family either in universal service or exiting Targeted Early Help. Performance data showed increased referrals into Early Help and a mirrored decrease into ICT. These collective developments and approach have resulted in increased referrals and also re-referrals where professionals come back to discuss progress. SSCB has challenged this reporting measure as an outcome of a referral, together with a lack of information about contacts with regards to professional conversations. Neither gives information about the outcome for a child. As a result, outcomes of referrals will be reported differently in 2015-2016.
- 5.99 When comparing like for like, the % of referrals not proceeding to assessment has fallen in 2014/15 (from 44.5% to 39%), which shows thresholds that are increasingly well understood.
- 5.100 Between November 2014 and February 2015, using performance data Children's Social Care continued its redesign of the 'front door' to bring the Initial Contact Team and COMPASS together. In 2015/2016 agreed plans are in place for 'front door' services to be joined by Police, National Probation Service, Community Rehabilitation Company and Health, developing for Shropshire a multi-agency front door where information sharing and joint decision making can take place in a timely and coordinated way.

Child protection processes

- 5.101 In 2014/15 903 strategy discussions took place, 395 (43.75%) of which were from case management teams (these are existing cases in case management team where levels of risk and concern meant a strategy discussion was appropriate for child protection).
- 5.102 In-service changes in the development of case management teams (April 14) also impacted as the new teams reviewed a high number of child in need, (CIN) cases (redistributed into case management teams) that had previously been held as CIN but on review met the threshold for S47 following strategy discussion where concerns were identified that a child was at risk/likely risk of suffering significant harm.
- 5.103 There has been a decrease in the number of Section 47 enquiries that are resulting in the need to progress to an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) and an increase in those that close. This pattern needs more analysis to ensure the appropriate threshold is being



used for undertaking Section 47 enquires. This will be subject to multi-agency audit as well as internal review by team and individual managers.

Rate of child protection

5.104 Shropshire's rate per 10k of children subject of a child protection plan has increased more quickly than comparators, from 18.7 in 11/12 to 50 in 13/14. The rate for end of 14/15 was 55.5 and is now in line with comparators.

5.105 Work is on-going to ensure that children who are made the subject of child protection plans are 'the right children at the right time.' This means ensuring evidence of significant harm in each case and that where the significant harm continue beyond 9 months (2nd review) and there is no evidence of sustained improvement in outcomes for the children that proactive action is taken via a legal planning meeting to consider the threshold for pre proceedings.

Subsequent Child Protection Plans

5.106 Children's Social Care have been doing work on ensuring that individual children in families meet the threshold for registration to ensure that a family sibling group approach is not being applied for the need for a child protection plan rather ensuring, in line with Working Together, each individual child meet thresholds for significant harm.

5.107 In September 2014 the findings of a multi-agency audit of cases where a child became the subject of a second child protection plan within two years were reported to the SSCB. This showed that there was insufficiently focused work being carried out with some children and families, and indicated a need for more focused planning and clearer criteria for progress. Since this time the number of children subject of a second child protection plan in two years has fallen.

Looked After Children (CLA)

5.108 As of 14th November 2014, Shropshire's population of looked after children was 317; by the end of March 2015 it was 310. Overall this evidences a slight reduction and significant stability in the CLA population. This is a result of the edge of care process and support being put in place.

5.109 Shropshire's CLA strategy has focused on:

- reducing the need for children to be looked, offering early help services to prevent increased risk of need and harm
- reducing the % of CLA accommodated under s20 (voluntary care) offering alternatives when faced with family breakdown
- reducing the period of time that children are looked after (permanency planning)
- Increasing options for a care placement for children who can remain in contact with their family and community where it is safe to do so.



- 5.110 Early help developments include support from social workers to partner organisations to help manage risk at lower levels. More support is being provided to the children on the edge of care, with targeted resource aimed at 8-16year olds. These include residential short breaks, outreach and family group conferencing.
- 5.111 Of the 29 children who received planned short breaks during 2014-15, only 2 subsequently became looked after, and of the 13 who received crisis short breaks, 6 became looked after in the six month pilot period. A further audit is being undertaken of the same cohort to monitor sustained prevention of care.
- 5.112 For children received into care there is a new focus on permanency, ensuring their care planning is concluded without delay, and promoting permanency options such as adoption and special guardianship.
- 5.113 In 14/15, there was a reduction in the number of children looked after under a voluntary (Section 20) arrangement from 40% in April 2014 to 36% in March 2015. This indicates a successful strategy to provide a range of alternative support to children and families to remain at home in the care of their parent(s).

Private Fostering

- 5.114 2014-2015 saw an 11% decrease in the number of new private fostering notifications received during the year (from 9 to 8).
- 5.115 Although children were visited in accordance with regulations, none of these visits were completed within 7 days, largely due to delay in allocation. Of the arrangements that began before 1st April 2014 and were continuing after that date, 100% of scheduled visits were completed in the required timescales. This is an increase in performance from 60% in 2013-2014.
- 5.116 An additional priority area is to gain feedback from the children and young people who are privately fostered, to understand their experiences and develop the service further.
- 5.117 This performance is not acceptable, and the LSCB will expect to see improved performance during 2015-16.



6 Conclusion and assessment of effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

- 6.1 Evidence suggests that Shropshire agencies are generally effective in keeping children safe across Shropshire, and that more children and families are receiving help at an earlier stage. In common with the national picture, there are increasing numbers of children being referred, but this rise has not been as steep as elsewhere. Overall, however, there is an increase in children within the child protection system, and a rise in the numbers of children becoming looked after. Further development of effective early help services should assist with keeping children safe and improving their wellbeing without recourse to child protection processes.
- 6.2 The LSCB has worked hard to ensure that agencies work effectively together to keep children safe. Evidence presented suggests that this has generally been successful, with particularly positive impacts in key areas such as early help and CSE.
- 6.3 A number of challenges for SSCB have also been identified in this report.
- 6.4 Developing a consistent approach to hearing the voice of children and young people, parents/carers and professionals is an area for development in 2015-2016. In order to deliver effective safeguarding measures SSCB needs to continue to use this feedback effectively to influence service delivery and provide challenge to partners. This will be developed further in the short-term through assurance reporting from partner agencies with an increased focus on the voice of the child and the development of a student LSCB that will be fully operational by April 2016.
- 6.5 The quality assurance processes of the Board need to be strengthened to allow service user feedback to be coupled with robust data analysis and audit findings. This will provide robust evidence of impact regarding the effectiveness of safeguarding systems and practice in Shropshire. Quality assurance reporting aligned to the journey of the child will build on SSCB's established performance framework to ensure that SSCB is able to evidence that children and young people receive the right service at the right time.
- 6.6 In bringing together progress against evidencing impact and areas of risk the SSCB has reviewed its activities and identified the need to have fewer, more focused, priorities. This will ensure that resources can be more effectively targeted at embedding learning and evidencing impact. The following priorities for 2015-2016 have been agreed:
 - Neglect
 - Domestic Abuse
 - Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing

The Board will also be developing its approach and responses to FGM and the PREVENT (radicalisation) agenda.



- 6.7 In addition, in order to be truly effective, the SSCB has increasingly to work across boundaries with colleagues from other partnerships within Shropshire, and with other LSCB and LA areas.
- 6.8 The Board has long maintained a focus on looked after children placed within Shropshire from elsewhere. New challenges associated with CSE, FGM and the PREVENT agenda demand that this is further developed. An initial focus will be the development of policies and procedures across the entire West Mercia and West Midlands region, with further areas for cooperation and collaboration to be identified and progressed during the year.
- 6.9 Within Shropshire, SSCB is developing collaborative working with a number of statutory and non-statutory partnerships, influencing priorities and commissioning, and identifying common purpose, cross-cutting themes and ways in which the partnerships can 'add value' and improve outcomes for children and families. An initial area for collaboration is in promoting emotional and mental health and wellbeing. Further areas of joint working will include the development of the 'Think Family' approach and tackling the 'hidden harm' of domestic abuse and substance misuse.

Appendices

All appendices can be found on the SSCB website by following the links below:

- Appendix 1** [SSCB Constitution](#)
- Appendix 2** [About the LSCB & Budget](#)
- Appendix 3** [Strategic Business Plan 2014 – 2017](#)
- Appendix 4** [Multi Agency Training Annual Report](#)
- Appendix 5** [Glossary of terms](#)



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