

Independent Review of Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership

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Context

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together 2018 dissolved the requirement for Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCB) and required three key partners - the Police, Health (CCG) and the Local Authority - to set up Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements in their area.

The three statutory partners for Barnet, determined under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, comprise the London Borough of Barnet, the North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group, and the North West Basic Command Unit of the Metropolitan Police. The new arrangements are referred to as Barnet Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP). Barnet's new arrangements as the local Partnership came into effect in September 2019.

The agreement for the BSCP is to have a rotating Chair from the three statutory partners, initially with the Local Authority Chief Executive taking on the role and passing over to the police lead after the first year. In order to provide independence and external oversight to the BSCP arrangements, the Partnership plan sets out the requirement to have an annual review undertaken by independent scrutineers.

Specification of the Review

This is outlined below and is taken from the original brief for the review.

The role of the independent scrutineers is to provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area, including arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases.

The scrutiny must be objective, act as a constructive critical friend and promote reflection to drive continuous improvement.

The independent scrutineers will consider how effectively the arrangements are working for children and families as well as for practitioners, and how well the safeguarding partners are providing strong leadership.

The scrutineers will devise their own methodology, however, it is expected that this will include:

- Scrutiny visits to Barnet annually or bi-annually (twice a year) in March and/or September. It is expected that these visits will involve a two-day visit to meet with leaders, staff, children and young people.
- This will need to be a multi-disciplinary team, with expertise in social care, health and police.
- A written report at the end of each of these visits setting out: areas of strength, areas for development and recommendations.

- A review of the Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership's (BSCP) annual report before it is published.

The scrutineers are required to evaluate against the requirements set out in Working Together, in the three areas of purpose, processes and leadership.

I. Purpose

The extent to which the arrangements are delivering against their purpose, which is to support and enable local organisations and agencies to work together in a system where:

- children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted
- partner organisations and agencies collaborate, share and co-own the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children
- organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively
- there is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats
- learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice
- information is shared effectively to facilitate more accurate and timely decision making for children and families.

II. Process

This will cover to what extent the safeguarding partners, with other local organisations and agencies, have developed processes that:

- facilitate and drive action beyond usual institutional and agency constraints, and boundaries
- ensure the effective protection of children is founded on practitioners developing lasting and trusting relationships with children and their families.

This will also consider the extent to which the arrangements link to other strategic partnership work happening locally to support children and families. This will include other public boards, including Health and Wellbeing Boards, Safeguarding Adults Boards, Channel Panels, Improvement Boards and Community Safety Partnerships.

III. Leadership

This will cover to what extent the lead representative from each of the three safeguarding partners plays an active role, as well as the extent to which all three safeguarding partners have equal and joint responsibility for local safeguarding arrangements.

Process/methodology of review

The review methodology was developed and undertaken as a tool for understanding strengths and areas for improvement in the way the Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) works together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area. RedQuadrant undertook the review. RedQuadrant provided three Independent scrutineers with experience and backgrounds within children's services, police and health and who have also worked in multi-agency safeguarding partnership settings. To undertake the review, a comprehensive list of documents and policies from the Partnership was provided. The team of independent scrutineers met with a range of partners and practitioners, individually and in focus groups, to ascertain a range of views from partner agencies on the impact of the new Partnership arrangements (see appendix 1).

The focus of the review and questioning in the meetings was based on some key areas, considering whether:

- The three core partner leads are actively involved in strategic planning and implementation
- The wider safeguarding partners (including relevant agencies) are actively involved in safeguarding children
- Children, young people, and families are aware of and involved with plans for safeguarding children
- Appropriate quality assurance procedures are in place for data collection, audit and information sharing
- There is a process for identifying and investigating learning from local and national case reviews
- There is an active program of multi-agency safeguarding children training.

*Taken from Six Steps for Independent Scrutiny: Safeguarding children arrangements.
Institute of Applied Social Research, University of Bedfordshire, Pearce, J (2019)*

We would particularly like to thank the BSCP Business Unit for the organisation of the review, supplying the documents requested and setting up the meetings with key individuals. We would also like to thank all the staff who have taken part, for their thoughtful and frank evaluation of the current Partnership, ideas, and suggestions for improvements.

Purpose

Implementation/agency engagement

This first year of the new arrangements has been experienced as a measured transition from the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board to the partnership arrangements. Participants in the review have been very positive about the new arrangements, identifying on reflection

that the Safeguarding Board was unwieldy and oversubscribed with a sense for some that attendance was without purpose or the necessary authority to take forward actions.

The Partnership is demonstrating an intention to share the responsibility and improve all services to children and families through a multi-agency approach in compliance with statute. In the first year, there has been the added challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic, with all the subsequent safeguarding concerns emerging from this.

Those members of the Partnership who contributed to this scrutiny report shared their experiences of the Covid-19 situation. They commented positively that multi-agency working had improved as people have worked together to manage the challenges to safeguarding children brought on by the pandemic. Review participants also commented on the progress made in multi-agency working through the improvement plan prior to Barnet's 2019 Ofsted inspection (which judged Barnet as good). The membership of the Leadership Forum and the subgroups is balanced across the partner agencies with equal commitment and contribution to the safeguarding and welfare of children and young people within Barnet. As the transition is still recent, there remains a sense within some parts of provider services that the Local Authority remains the lead organisation.

The change in board manager was also identified as an improvement in partnership activity, which happened at the beginning of the first lockdown period.

The consensus in the review of the current safeguarding partnership is an improvement on the safeguarding board model. Particularly important is having the Leadership Forum membership from a core group of key senior and strategic leaders from police, local authority and health who have a shared vision for safeguarding, are accepting of challenge and committed to improving the lives of all children in Barnet. This Forum has strong leadership and is more balanced in agency response, providing more challenge and open discussion, with equality and balance in the sharing of safeguarding responsibilities.

The Leadership Forum has oversight and some shared membership of three subgroups which conduct the responsibilities of the former safeguarding board with specific areas of focus, identified in the terms of reference for the groups. Through the implementation of the BSCP arrangements, there is a significant number of members from all partner agencies who have been involved in Barnet multi-agency work for a number of years. This experience has provided a Borough memory to the work, which offers the opportunity to compare the effectiveness of different approaches.

Provider management involvement in the subgroups facilitates the information link to the delivery of the services and provides the opportunity to work directly with children and young people and hear their voices. This is supported through member links with the Children and Young People's Plan, which cites a renewed commitment to successful outcomes for children, young people and families, and Professional and Young People Forums which are reported to be well attended by all agencies.

The sharing of information and working together message could be strengthened through increased shared training and by frontline staff to having more of a voice on the Partnership.

Quality assurance/data and audit

How does the Partnership know how effectively the partners are working together to safeguard children, and how do you measure the impact of the Partnership? Alongside the annual independent scrutiny visit and independent chair of the Learning and Thematic Review Group, there needs to be effective, respectful challenge from partners of each other's performance. There also need to be mechanisms and processes in place so that the three key partners have the necessary evidence to inform this challenge.

The Performance Quality and Assurance panel, its Chair and leadership are the engine room for the Partnership and contribute greatly to the work of safeguarding children in Barnet. There is a wide membership of agencies attending this group. It has a crucial assurance function, reviewing multi-agency performance data and a range of annual reports including from the MASH, LADO, Vulnerable Adolescents Community Partnership, 0-19 Strategic Partnership and Education. This group also takes an active role in monitoring and advising many of the BSCP activities, including multi-agency audits, the training programme, Section 11 audits, Professional and Young People Forums and thematic deep dives. It also receives regular reports from the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector subgroup. The Performance and Quality Assurance (PQA) panel meets quarterly, and could consider whether this is sufficient for this considerable workload.

The group recognise that they need to do more to measure the impact and outcomes of multi-agency work, both for practitioners and children and young people in Barnet. The groundwork for this has been laid, with the new multi-agency performance dashboard, but this work needs to be further developed, including bringing together multi-agency service user feedback. The Partnership needs to be clear on its priority areas and set clear delivery targets that can be measured. There are safeguarding proxy measures/performance indicators that could be supplied by agencies, which allows the Partnership to both challenge practice but can also provide assurance. The BSCP needs to be clear what partnership data it requires and for what purpose so that partners can provide it, although there are difficulties breaking down some data into Barnet-specific data from police and health. Data also needs to be accompanied by analysis, otherwise how do you know how effectively the Partnership is working, and/or where there is improvement or deterioration?

The multi-agency audits and deep dives are good and evidence effective quality assurance arrangements. The multi-agency audits are led and driven by the Quality Assurance and Workforce Development team in Family Services. They have developed 7-minute briefings to cascade learning from these activities, which are a great way of briefly disseminating learning. However, it was disappointing that from the small group of professionals spoken to as part of the review, most did not know about these.

There should also be an agreed audit schedule which should regularly include re-audits of priority areas or to evidence improvements if the audit has found areas of concern. To further strengthen these arrangements, consideration could be given to PQA receiving single agency audits from partner agencies, which have been undertaken on safeguarding areas of work. It is also worth considering developing different types of audit mechanisms, quality conversations or using questionnaires of frontline staff using Survey Monkey or similar, for example to ascertain their knowledge and confidence in using newly implemented policy or strategies. Finally, the Partnership could consider a more interactive process for the Section 11/175 audits, which could be run alternating with the current strategic process. This process would allow greater insight into frontline staff's understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and whether these are understood; it could also provide challenge to the partners' strategic/operational understanding.

Where possible children and young people and their families should be involved in multi-agency audits to ensure that there is feedback from service users. Audits should also involve frontline practitioners to improve their learning.

Threshold document/information sharing

The threshold document was well embedded and understood amongst partner agencies. It was recognised that a great deal of work was undertaken by Family Services to promote this and to ensure agencies and schools were aware of the process to refer children into the MASH. Agencies cited examples of being able to challenge and escalate issues within MASH if they had concerns about cases or application of threshold. The MASH Steering Group, which is accountable to PQA, collects useful data on the effectiveness of the multi-agency front door arrangements. Partners raised that they did not always know the outcome of their referrals and receive communication of any action being undertaken.

There is an updated information sharing agreement which is signed by partners and includes the MASH, Early Help and Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Panel, as well as information sharing for BSCP activities.

Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Working Together, 2018 states: '*Locally, safeguarding partners must make arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases which, in their view, raise issues of importance in relation to their area. They must commission and oversee the review of those cases, where they consider it appropriate for a review to be undertaken.*'

To deal with the requirements of this section of Working Together and as part of their safeguarding arrangements, Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership has established a Learning and Thematic Review Group (LTRG). The response to serious child safeguarding cases is one of the Partnership's cross-cutting themes.

LTRG meets bi-monthly and the membership, including the three statutory partners, is quite broad from across the Partnership. A review of the recent (last three) minutes of the meetings shows good attendance by a number of different agencies with the right people being mostly present. The minutes demonstrate good discussion. However, one meeting did not appear to be quorate in relation to all three statutory partners being present. The group have established sound terms of reference; within this, there is the facility to invite other agencies and experts as and when the group requires.

There are also Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) panels that take place as required, as do the Rapid Review process and meetings.

LTRG has an independent chair who is experienced and able. This is a good appointment by the Partnership. It helps bring in scrutiny of the most serious child safeguarding cases. LTRG carries out all of its statutory responsibilities and has made good iterations to its progress during the year. Work has included reviewing the process for rapid review referrals and decision-making both in line with the best practice outlined by the National Panel, but also by viewing what others are doing around the country.

LTRG has conducted six rapid reviews in the year. Two of these have led to Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews being commenced, and they have appointed an independent author to undertake both. These reviews are in progress, so the completed, or almost completed, reviews were not able to be viewed. One of the rapid reviews has become a local learning exercise.

A learning exercise around vulnerable adolescents has shared learning with frontline practitioners through an excellent 7-minute briefing and informed the new Vulnerable Adolescent Strategy. The Vulnerable Adolescent Strategy has been viewed and is a very comprehensive document. The activity that takes in place in relation to safeguarding adolescents across the Borough is also commendable. The draft workplan, if agreed, will continue developments and make the difference to implementing the strategy successfully.

There has also been a 7-minute briefing in relation to child sexual abuse which is an informative document. Additionally, LTRG has considered safeguarding issues around elective home education, male circumcision practices and diplomatic immunity.

LTRG is in the process of developing its mechanisms to ensure that the learning and the recommendations from SCRs and case practice reviews are fully implemented and embedded into practice.

Multi-agency training/engagement

Multi-agency training was viewed as a strength by partners – it was reported to be responsive and of good quality. There is a broad annual programme of training which multi-agency partners can access for free, including the voluntary, community and faith sector. It is designed to build capacity and develop skills across the Barnet workforce, ensure a basic

level of safeguarding training is achieved and to encourage a shared understanding of multi-agency working across partner agencies. This training is organised by the Workforce Development team within Family Services, who both directly deliver training and commission specific training. A small contribution towards this is made from the BSCP budget.

In response to Covid-19, more virtual training has been developed on relevant topics such as bereavement, mental health, online safety and safeguarding in virtual working, which shows a good ability to flex when necessary to changing training needs. It is understood that in October there was a scoping session with partners to review what they find most useful from the training offer and what they would like in the future. This has resulted in increased targeted communication in order to raise awareness about the training offer (particularly with smaller voluntary organisations), working with more partners to co-deliver training, and opening organisations' existing training offers out to the Partnership to develop skills across the system. Agencies and staff spoke highly of the training offered. However, there was not consistent take-up by all agencies, including some providers in health and police. The multi-agency training offer was seen as a positive opportunity for most services and take-up is generally good, but in some frontline health provision, the focus has been on staff attending in-service safeguarding training at levels 1 - 3 and whether there is still capacity to attend any other training. There were mixed thoughts from the provider focus group regarding the value of the multi-agency training for frontline staff.

There is scope for development in terms of better evidencing impact and evaluating multi-agency training.

Engagement – hearing the voice of children and young people is a real strength in Barnet, as is their logo 'All about me' reminding staff about the centrality of the child. BSCP has a wide range of mechanisms for listening to children and young people including the Professional and Young People Forums (PYPF), which bring together young people and practitioners to discuss and share learning on a specific theme. The healthy relationship forum looked an excellent morning with 60-70 present. The Youth Zone venue seems an excellent facility for hosting this. The use of surveys to get views of young people is also very good, including the Youth Perception Survey, which asks young people in Barnet about their experiences of living in the Borough, opinions of services and what their biggest concerns are. There is also the Children in Care and Care Leavers Survey and voice of the child team who work with the youth ambassadors to consult on particular topics. This feedback gives the BSCP a clear view of the safeguarding priorities for children and young people in Barnet. However, we did not receive evidence about how children were informed about actions which had been taken to address their concerns, along the lines of 'You said, we did.' It could be worth considering further ways for the Partnership to hear the voice of service users, i.e. families and those more vulnerable children.

The Partnership would also benefit from wider community engagement to promote safeguarding, for example around safer sleeping for babies, domestic abuse or neglect campaigns, or other areas of priority for the Partnership. These could be undertaken by engagement with other agencies, i.e. public health (after Covid-19), NSPCC or CSP. It would also be great to promote the Partnership by regular newsletters to raise awareness and use as another vehicle for dissemination of learning.

Process

Subgroups

The subgroups are linked through membership; the members of the Leadership Forum also sit on the PQA panel and LTRG which itself supports the integration of information within the groups collectively referred to as the BSCP. Key members of BSCP are also present on provider service groups, including MASH.

The three main subgroups are:

- Performance and Quality Assurance Panel (PQA)
- Learning and Thematic Review Group (LTRG)
- Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Group (VCFS)

The groups work well together, and professionals recognise the value of transparent sharing of information, identifying strengths and weaknesses of their services to support and challenge each other openly and honestly to improve on safeguarding provision.

The priorities as contained in the annual report remain on track despite the added concerns and management of Covid-19, such as children's mental health and associated issues for vulnerable families. There has been increased effort to maintain effective safeguarding activity across the Partnership, which has been considered in the groups.

The VCFS Group links with BSCP and supports the work by engaging in multi-agency audits, deep dives and Professional and Young People Forums (PYPF) and regularly reporting to the Performance and Quality Assurance panel. The audits are by way of a checklist that assures the services are compliant with safeguarding requirements. One member of the Leadership Forum (the Assistant Director: Education, Strategy and Partnerships) sits on the VCFS Group. Challenges for this group are to have the right membership to represent all the services that may be providing for families and all diverse groups having the opportunity for representation and to share in the discussions.

The PQA group leads on the scrutiny and assurance function of the Partnership, as well as monitoring and providing strategic oversight to BSCP activities. The fixed membership has an 'opt-in' membership to inform specific issues as they arise. The group monitors the current data dashboard and provides for a multi-agency analysis of the data within the quarterly meetings.

The Voice of the Child is key to all the work of the Partnership and, through the PQA, is actively sought by surveys. Findings are fed into the Life Chances Strategy, the Corporate Plan and Children and Young People Plan to ensure all activity is child focused. This was viewed as positive work, although the small percentage of young people who did not feel safe and had a negative response needs to be considered and sought. The increase in children being excluded in recent months is a concern, alongside the drop in children feeling unsupported in schools.

LTRG is independently chaired, which offers the capacity for objective learning amongst the agencies with membership from the three member agencies and legal representation to advise. In the August meeting, the terms of reference were updated. This was necessary to account for the role of the LTRG in leading Rapid Reviews and local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs), as well as responding to National Reviews and other learning opportunities, and to account for the changes in the CDOP processes which is now transitioning to five borough arrangements. The mechanism of this group ensures that learning is integrated into training in all the services and to youth fora via the multi-agency training and specific Young People events and seven-minute briefings. These are well attended, but not it can be difficult for frontline practitioners to make time for all the training and development events offered.

The Partnership will also identify deep dive task and finish groups as required, although at the time of this report there had been no requirements for this work identified.

BSCP demonstrates a commitment to having the right representatives on the Leadership Forum and subgroups to link strategic planning to the provision of services and ensuring effective communication between these groups and to the child and family. Subgroups were well attended with the right representation at the right level. Roll out of this offer could be strengthened by considering how the work is publicised to frontline practitioners who may not be accessing the multi-agency training.

Wider partnership including schools

There was a strong sense of partnerships between agencies, good co-operation and working relationships at strategic and operational level noted throughout the review. Agencies spoke highly of the support and information available through the BSCP Business team and the use that practitioners made of the BSCP website, which was felt to have accessible and relevant information.

The VCFS Group (Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector), has a membership of larger community groups from Barnet and umbrella organisations which represent the VCF sector. It aims to bring the voice and knowledge of VCF organisations to the Partnership, as well as to improve safeguarding practice across the sector and increase engagement with Partnership activities and training. We understood it has recently been reinvigorated in Barnet with a new strategy and terms of reference. We considered that this is an excellent

initiative and strength for Partnership working. This group demonstrates the recognition that many services are provided by 'other than statutory bodies' and the inclusion of this vital link will provide assurance that all provision to families and children is accounted for and part of quality assurance. We particularly like their safeguarding checklist. The voluntary sector representatives within the focus group were concerned about their capacity to deliver on safeguarding priorities and areas such as responding to the safeguarding checklists.

Schools are represented in the Partnership via Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS). Schools spoken to as part of the review spoke highly of the support and advice they receive from the Safeguarding lead in the BELS. Schools also spoke about recent better communication through Covid-19 with lists of vulnerable children open to Family Services being shared with them. They also said the LADO service was responsive, helpful and efficient. In order to promote safeguarding, there were termly safeguarding newsletters, breakfast DSL meetings/drop-in sessions; there were termly Directors briefings for all Headteachers, chairs and vice-chairs of Governors, with safeguarding being a standing agenda item for these briefings. The service also provided support prior and following an Ofsted visit and an audit tool for measuring safeguarding compliance in school. The Safeguarding Lead is involved in a number of the BSCP subgroups and was able to give an excellent example of multi-agency working around contextualised safeguarding. Four schools in the Friern Barnet area, including an independent school, raised concerns about young people being targeted when leaving school. A piece of work combining TfL, local businesses, police, YOS and other partner agencies made significant changes to address these issues and safeguard these children. There was some evidence of schools involved in multi-agency audits, but this could be strengthened.

We note that probation services and Cafcass no longer sit on the BSCP boards although they are invited to training and other Partnership events. A Cafcass representative has been invited to join PQA from 2021.

There is no formal structure for involving and ensuring that frontline practitioners/schools know and understand the work of the Partnership and can offer a feedback loop between the strategic and operational levels. There has been considerable positive work undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic which has put all services under significant pressure; the strength of the Partnership and working together has supported these new ways of working and the coordinated responses to children and families in Barnet. The virtual nature of meetings and training has shown greater participation and engagement.

Working with local boards

During the development period, before the three statutory partners agreed on the new arrangements, a discussion did take place on whether to link in with nearby Borough Safeguarding Children Boards. The Police BCU, for example, covers three London Boroughs. The CCG now covers 5 London Boroughs. The areas are not co-terminus. It was felt quite

strongly though that the Partnership wanted to focus on the children and families in Barnet and to do that successfully a Barnet specific safeguarding partnership was needed.

The Partnership links with the Barnet Safeguarding Adult Board are strengthening, with some clear joint thematic workstreams such as transitional safeguarding.

A key local board that the BSCP work with is the Children's Partnership Board which is made up of senior representatives from partner organisations. They have oversight of an excellent Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2023 which establishes the vision, key priorities and outcomes for children and young people in Barnet, providing a strategic framework for partnership activity in the Borough. This Plan has a vision where outcomes and priorities focus on how partners can support families to be resilient and strengthen communities. The Plan's outcomes and priorities have been informed by work as a UNICEF UK child-rights partner.

This Children's Partnership Board reports into the Barnet Local Authority Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee for oversight, scrutiny and decision making.

The work of the Children's Partnership Board is crucial for all work with children, and safeguarding is just one strand of this. There are separate terms of reference for the BSCP and the Barnet Children's Partnership Board; the work of the Children's Partnership Board is crucial for the BSCP work plan as a number of outcomes are achieved through the work of BSCP.

However, there is some confusion, at an operational level, as to the distinction between the Children's Partnership Board and Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership. This confusion must be the same for non-professionals who live and work in Barnet. It may be felt that it does not matter as long as the work is being done to safeguard children through either Board. However, it is important that BSCP is not just thought of as a part of the Barnet Children's Partnership Board, as it is a statutory function in its own right, so better communication may be necessary to clarify this.

Working Together, 2018 states: '*To be effective, these arrangements should link to other strategic partnership work happening locally to support children and families. This will include other public boards including Health and Wellbeing Boards, Adult Safeguarding Boards, Channel Panels, Improvement Boards, Community Safety Partnerships, the Local Family Justice Board and MAPPAs.*'

BSCP does have links with all these boards' activities mostly through operational activity and, in particular, through information sharing. The chair of the PQA is linked to a number of these boards and provides the 'golden thread' back into the BSCP. It may, however, be worth considering setting out in a document who and how the BSCP is linking with all these other individual partnership boards and them with the BSCP.

The board manager and partners should also be alert to activities undertaken by other local boroughs/partnerships, and any pan London work that they can be a part of that supports safeguarding children in Barnet.

Leadership

Strategic planning/priority areas

The purpose of the BSCP arrangements is to support and enable local organisations and agencies to work together in a system where:

- Children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted;
- Partner organisations and agencies collaborate, share and co-own the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children;
- Organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively;
- There is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats;
- Learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice;
- Information is shared effectively to facilitate more accurate and timely decision making for children and families,

The Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) Business Plan 2020/2021 vision for children and young people in Barnet is the concept of Resilient Families and Resilient Children. Their ambition is to drive forward a strong partnership that enables children and families to thrive and achieve.

The business plan has six core cross-cutting strands, which the BSCP boards and team collaborate to deliver:

- Strengthening leadership and partnership
- Tailoring our work to local themes
- Driving continuous practice improvement
- Responding to serious child safeguarding cases
- Listening to the voice of the child
- Evidencing the impact of the BSCP

The BSCP is overseen by a small Leadership Forum with membership from the three statutory partners and a rotating chair. It oversees the annual report and business plan. It receives quarterly updates from the Performance and Quality Assurance Panel and Learning and Thematic Review Group, as well as scrutinising and actioning system-wide reports. The Leadership Forum's use of a transparent Forward Planner is excellent.

Working Together, 2018 states that: *In situations that require a clear, single point of leadership, all three safeguarding partners should decide who would take the lead on issues*

that arise. It was not clear during the scrutiny visit who would take the lead in this situation. Barnet is rotating the chair of the Leadership Forum (LF); it is currently the Police member on the forum, but this is different from the lead for safeguarding on behalf of the Partnership. An option could be to declare that when the chair of the LF, they are this single point of leadership and the roles combined. This role as and when needed, should be supported by the safeguarding partnership board manager.

Budget

'The safeguarding partners should agree the level of funding secured from each partner, which should be equitable and proportionate, and with each relevant agency, to support the local arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area. The funding should be transparent to children and families in the area and sufficient to cover all elements of the arrangements.' (Working Together 2018)

The Leadership Group have set a monetary budget of £166,050, which covers all outgoings, including the employment of the partnership manager, support member of staff and a six-month 0.5 FTE graduate placement. The budget also covers this independent scrutiny and the Independent Chair of the LTRG. The carrying out of CSPRs is assisted by a £30,000 carry over from previous years.

Prior to the new arrangements being put in place a piece of work was undertaken pan-London to look at partnership contributions. This work indicated that the budget for the BSCP was the second-lowest amongst London Boroughs, despite Barnet having one of the largest populations.

The budget allocates £23,000 for training which is overseen and managed by the LA. We endorse the statement shared with us by Barnet's Executive Director for Children's Services that '*This is extremely good value for money*'.

There may be ways to increase the budget by charging attendance for non-budget contributors or non-relevant agencies and for non-attendance. It could also assist if agencies provided support in-kind to undertake training, we also suggest looking at ways of perhaps sharing online training with other boroughs.

The income is exactly the same as the outgoings of £166,050. A number of agencies contribute, although the highest percentage is supplied by the LA which contributes 56% of the budget. The CCG and other health providers contribute 39.5% of the budget. The Police contribute 3%, and therefore their contribution to the budget is not equitable and proportionate. There is no contingency for CSPRs. The Partnership needs to consider the sustainability of the current arrangements. What would happen if the LA reduces its commitment in resources including funding or support in kind or if key individuals move on who are crucial for leading, driving and coordinating the partnership response?

Scrutiny

Independent scrutiny is covered very briefly in the Working Together 2018 guidance. The BSCP has arranged for annual independent scrutiny to take place in the form of this visit from Red Quadrant. BSCP externally commissioning scrutiny from a multi-disciplinary review team is an innovative step that has not yet been widely adopted.

The goals set out for the independent scrutiny were to comprehensively review the activities of BSCP, to ensure statutory duties are being met and to identify areas for further development going forward. This report outlines that this has taken place.

The Learning and Thematic Review Group has an independent chair who provides scrutiny and constructive challenge both on individual cases and responding to national reviews/learning, as well as holding partners to account on the implementation of the LTRG action plan.

We are unsure that the LTRG chair and an annual visit is sufficient to provide a level of ongoing scrutiny for the BSCP. In the current arrangements, it is not clear who holds the safeguarding partners to account, including the Lead member for the local authority. Scrutiny arrangements could be enhanced by making use of regular touch base visits and/or commissioning scrutiny to assist with a deep dive or other thematic work throughout a yearly business cycle.

Conclusion

We can confirm with confidence and assurance, that the Multi-agency Safeguarding Arrangements for Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership are compliant with Working Together, 2018. The arrangements ensure that children in Barnet are safeguarded and their welfare promoted. There appears to have been a smooth transition to the new arrangements in the last year, embedding these and engaging partners through the new structure, putting in place robust governance and foundations. The review found that the new arrangements are not just a re-badge of the previous safeguarding children board. There is a well thought out new structure that has been designed to ensure that safeguarding is prioritised, discussed, and acted on in the right groups to provide the appropriate response. Subgroups were well attended with the right representation at the right level. All three of the statutory partners are committed to the shared vision and workplan, including providing support and commitment throughout all the groups and subgroups. There is good sharing of information at the strategic level and in links with other partners.

There is an individual willingness to work to effective inter-agency communication – despite the challenges of Covid-19, diminishing resources and ever-changing landscapes across the Partnership - and this has continued and improved during the lockdown period. The BSCP has a clear and impressive ambition for the children, and young people of Barnet and priorities are informed by learning from local and national case reviews and emerging needs

in the communities. Children and young people are given the opportunity to have their voices heard, and their views are acted upon.

The Partnership will be able to build on a history of robust collaborative arrangements at a strategic level, but it is acknowledged that there is more to do to ensure that this is embedded throughout all agencies with safeguarding responsibilities and at every level of organisations.

Recommendations

A number of suggestions to strengthen and improve the partnership arrangements are made as part of the body of the report, for consideration by the partnership. The following recommendations are areas that the review team considered needed to be developed by BSCP during the next year.

- 1.** Leadership Forum to consider the arrangements for the leadership of the overall Partnership and review the arrangements for scrutiny/challenge and whether these are sufficient.
- 2.** Make partner contribution equitable and proportionate specifically from the police, including consideration of in-kind contributions.
- 3.** Clarify governance arrangements with other partnership groups and strengthen joint and cross-borough working on shared priorities.
- 4.** Review and improve mechanisms for measuring the impact on frontline practice and outcomes for children and young people from learning from case reviews, audit and multi-agency training.
- 5.** Develop two-way communication with frontline practitioners to hear their feedback and engage them in the work of BSCP.

Appendix

Documents

1. Leadership Forum terms of reference
2. Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
 - Performance and Quality Assurance Panel terms of reference
 - Leadership Forum and Performance and Quality Assurance Panel Forward Plan
 - Learning and Thematic Review Group terms of reference and referral pathway Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector terms of reference
 - Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector strategy and action plan
 - Information Sharing Agreement
3. Minutes of previous meetings (papers discussed can be provided on request):
 - Leadership Forum 2019/20: March 2020, June 2020, September 2020
 - Performance and Quality Assurance Panel: April 2020, July 2020, October 2020
 - Learning and Thematic Review Group: June 2020, August 2020, October 2020
 - Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Group 2019/20: June 2020, September 2020
4. Annual reports and business plans:
 - Annual report 2018/19
 - Draft annual report 2019/20
 - Business plan
 - Business plan tracker and action log
5. Case reviews and action plans
 - Child G single-agency review and action plan
 - Child G review materials: bruising and non-accidental injury protocol and pathway
 - SCR E action plan
 - SCR F action plan
6. Multi-agency performance data
 - Multi-agency data dashboard July 2020
 - Multi-agency data dashboard October 2020
7. Multi-agency audit
 - Child sexual abuse multi-agency audit
 - Child sexual abuse seven-minute briefing
 - Vulnerable adolescent's multi-agency audit
 - Vulnerable adolescents seven-minute briefing
8. Section 11 and Section 175 audits
 - Section 11 audit report

- Section 11 audit tool
- Section 175 audit report
- VCFS Safeguarding Checklist report

9. Thematic work

- Harmful practices deep dive update
- Covid-19 response report Vulnerable adolescents report to LTRG

10. Listening to the voice of the child

- Professional and Young People Forums
- Young People's Perception Survey
- Children in Care and Care Leavers Survey

11. Multi-agency training programme

- Multi-agency training programme evaluation 2019/20
- Multi-agency training scoping session

Individuals involved with the review from Barnet

- Chief Executive Officer, London Borough of Barnet
- Director of Children's Service, LBB
- Independent Chair, Learning and Thematic Review Group
- Associate Director Safeguarding and Designated Nurse, North Central London CCG
- Head of School Improvement, Barnet Education and Learning Service
- School Exclusions and Safeguarding Lead, Barnet Education and Learning Service
- BSCP Partnership Manager
- Head of Safeguarding, North West BCU
- Assistant Director – Education, Strategy & Partnerships, LBB
- Director of Quality and Safety, North Central London CCG
- Head of Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Workforce Development – Children's Services, LBB
- Chair of VCSF subgroup/Voluntary sector representative
- Detective Superintendent – Head of Safeguarding, North West BCU
- Designated Doctor for Children's Safeguarding for the Borough of Barnet, Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust
- Chair, Barnet Safeguarding Adults Board
- Business Manager, Barnet Safeguarding Adults Board
- Director of Children Social Care – Family Services, LBB
- Strategic Lead for Partnership Engagement & Vulnerable Adolescents at Risk, LBB
- Director of Children's Social Care – Early Help and Protection LBB
- Practice & Learning Manager, Workforce Development Team, LBB
- Learning and Development Officer, Children's Workforce Development Team
- Written input from Legal representative who advises the BSCP

Focus groups

- Police focus group
- Health providers focus group
- VCFS Subgroup
- Frontline practitioner focus group
- London Borough of Barnet focus group
- Schools focus group