

A Message from the Chair/Scrutineer—Dave Pickard



Hello and welcome to this edition of the DSCP newsletter my first as the Independent Chair and Scrutineer! I have met a lot of people virtually over the last six weeks and have been impressed by the energy, commitment and desire to do the best for our children and young people. We have all had to live with the implications of Covid-19, personally and professionally and I and the Partnership, thank you for your continued dedication despite these significant challenges. Whilst there has been some promising news about potential vaccines, these challenges will remain with us for a number of months, although I am looking forward to some face to face contact eventually!

A significant part of my role is that of scrutineer of the effectiveness of the Partnership and the difference it makes. The DSCP went live in April 2019 and I am currently undertaking a quick review of how effectively it has delivered against the objectives detailed in the implementation plan. This will focus on three areas:

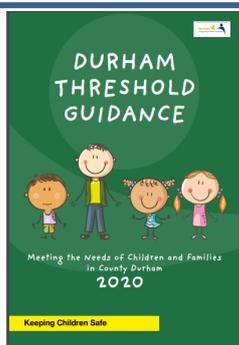
- ◆ What is working well?
- ◆ What can be improved immediately?
- ◆ Areas that may require further work.

I would welcome your help and advice with this. If you have any views that will make a difference to the effectiveness of the partnership or make your working in a multi-agency arena better, please get in touch with me via the DSCP email address at; dscpsecure@durham.gov.uk.

This newsletter contains some excellent information and guidance on a number of subjects and some of the associated difficulties! I would like to highlight the growing recognition of contextualised safeguarding, which is to be welcomed, we all need to work together to address the challenges it poses. Again, your views will be gratefully received.

Finally, whilst acknowledging it is only November, I would like to wish you a very Happy Christmas! I appreciate many of you will be working over this period, but I do hope you have the opportunity to spend quality time with loved ones either in person or virtually!

Thank you again for what you do and the difference you make and I hope to hear from you with your thoughts.



Threshold Guidance- Meeting the Needs of Children & Families in County Durham

During 2020 through extensive consultation the Threshold Guidance has been refreshed and hopefully simplified, to make it easier to understand and use for all. Follow the links below to view both the main document and an animated version made by and for children. There have been a number of briefing sessions on it over recent weeks, and it is planned that going forward a recorded version will be available via the DSCP website, so watch this space.

[Threshold Guidance](#)

[Animated Version](#)

Contextualised Safeguarding – Re-writing the Rules of Child Protection

Our Vision - A future where young people feel safe beyond their own homes because their communities and our safeguarding system can, and will, protect them from harm.

Our Mission - Continue to learn about young people's experiences of harm and safety outside the home. Work in partnership with professionals and communities across County Durham, use this learning to increase protection in young people's peer groups, schools and neighbourhoods.

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships. As individuals move from early childhood and into adolescence they spend increasing amounts of time socialising independently of their families. During this time the nature of young people's schools and neighbourhoods, and the relationships that they form in these settings, inform the extent to which they encounter protection or abuse. Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts.

Here in Durham, under our Contextualised Safeguarding Development Group we are in the process of developing a more holistic model to address these issues in terms of assessment and a practice toolkit, with some of the following being key:-

- ◆ We need to think about the spaces and locations and services in the community.
- ◆ We have an excellent team around the school model, but need to expand on this.
- ◆ We need to ensure that CS is included in the development of the new Signs of Safety assessment and work within the pilot teams.
- ◆ We need to ensure commissioning are on board and understand the risks of spaces and locations when placing children vulnerable to exploitation.
- ◆ We need to better utilise network meetings to help keep children safe who are vulnerable to child exploitation.

We are utilising the extensive work of Dr Carlene Firmin, who is the national lead and principal authority in this area. Her paper on this subject and the below Ted Talk are both worth looking at.

[Contextualised Safeguarding Framework](#)
[Carlene Firmin Ted Talk](#)

A Personal Update from our Young Peoples Commissioner

I'm Amy Waites the Young People's Commissioner working with the Durham Safeguarding Children's Partnership ensuring the voice of the child is always considered within the partnership. I've been in post for a year now and have loved getting involved in many activities and doing direct engagement with young people. I believe it's important young people have a voice to ensure their opinions and views are being heard so that professionals can be confident that objectives meet their needs and improve outcomes for young people.

One of the things I got involved in during my first year was an engagement project in December 2019 with young people around the 3 key priorities; Mental Health, Domestic Violence and Poverty (which was underlying the others), although my main focus was around the priority of Mental Health. The aim of this engagement project was to find out and better understand whether young people feel involved with services that feed into the Partnership including; how young people feel involved with services, areas of good practice, and where improvement might be needed to contribute to the DSCP objective to empower young people. From this work it was highlighted that on the whole young people did feel involved with services, however a concern which was brought up was around the transition from children's mental health services to adults. I know from my scrutiny role that there is already work going on across various partnership groups to address this issue.

As my role has developed in the past year, I've been able to get more involved in wider range services and issues that are important to young people, such as the impact of coronavirus and our recovery from the pandemic. I'm also looking forward to meeting with the new Durham County Youth Council members to develop a relationship with them to support them in their vision and objectives. Importantly, I'll continue to be involved in scrutinising the DSCP and ensuring young people's voices and views are not just heard but acted upon.

Locality Early Help Conversations



A new way for professionals to request 'Early Help' for families was introduced in October 2019 with the launch of a dedicated telephone number where professionals could discuss their worries about families with an Early Help Triage Worker. The new on-line digital 'Request for Early Help Form' was also introduced for professionals to submit their worries on-line. This has been a huge success with both routes to request Early Help being utilised and there has been a shift from an initial 50% split between the telephone and on-line route to more recently, 25% of professionals choosing to telephone in requests compared to 75% choosing to use the on-line digital form. It is encouraging that professionals are gaining confidence in using the on-line method whilst still having peace of mind that they can make a telephone call and have a quality conversation with an Early Help Triage Worker.

As part of the new process to request Early Help, multi-agency 'Locality Early Help Conversations' commenced in three localities in October 2019 and this was rolled out countywide at the beginning of March 2020. These Locality Early Help Conversations were postponed in light of COVID-19 but have started to take place virtually since June 2020. Locality Early Help Conversations provide an opportunity for genuine collaboration across the Early Help System in County Durham facilitating a more proportionate response to meet the needs of children, young people and their families, reducing duplication, maximizing use of our collective local resources and building family and community resilience. More recently SEND and Inclusion, CAMHS and Attendance Improvement representatives have joined this multi-agency conversations providing information, advice, guidance and, where appropriate, offers of support to families.

Recent data shows that between 1 October 2019 and 12 October 2020 40% of requests made for Early Help had a Locality Early Help Conversation. Of this 40%, 46% had Voluntary and Community Sector support identified as part of their offer, 45% were offered support through our Family Centre offer and 36% offered support by a range of partners. This is evidence of the broader Early Help System being used effectively to support families.

A '1 Year On Review' is currently underway and stakeholders from across the Early Help System are being asked to complete an on-line questionnaire to feedback their experiences for them and the families they work with which will be used to inform continuous improvement of the process.

Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedures Update

An updated version of the Procedures went live on 9 November 2020, and can be accessed via the DSCP website([here](#)). You can also register for email alerts whenever the manual is updated ([here](#)).

There has been a large amount of work completed with the current update across most sections, but principally around practice, terminology and the Signs of Safety Framework. Some of the most notable changes have been – Responding to Abuse and Neglect, Referrals, Assessment, Good Practice re Voice of a Child, Children Missing Education, Harmful Sexual Behaviour and Concealed Pregnancies ([See Overview Briefing](#))



DSCP Training Provision



2020 has been a particularly challenging year for the Training function of the DSCP after Covid-19 struck affecting the entire training calendar. Initially training was suspended for 2 months, but the decision was soon taken to move all training to an online format.

In the early days of lockdown in March and April, bitesize recorded slideshows and 7-minute briefings were developed to cover immediate safeguarding concerns, such as the redeployment of staff to front-line customer contact where they may not have had previous safeguarding training. Specific topic areas were identified of concern both locally and nationally – Domestic Abuse, On-line Safety and Children going Missing (who might be vulnerable to exploitation).

Our comprehensive e-learning packages were well utilised by staff who had time to focus on their professional development. This e-learning continues to form a crucial pre-learning component to many of the courses that we deliver, enabling the in-person training to focus on a greater depth of knowledge.

Over the summer the key work areas for training were developed for on-line training delivery via MS Teams. The 1st priority areas were: Safeguarding Processes, Neglect, and Signs of Safety Awareness, and were the first sessions to be offered from September 2020. The entire training provision has had to be rewritten and adapted for virtual use.

A new group, Workforce Learning & Development now oversee the governance of the training offer to make sure that the quality and consistency of training is maintained at appropriate standards, incorporating any new information from reports and learning from Practice Reviews. New systems have been put in place, with a focus on analysing and collating quality data on the impact of training, both through immediate evaluation of the course by attendees but also through encouraging our partners to make training a key element in supervision of staff – both in terms of attendance and to reflect on the benefit of that training on our collective practice.

Going forward we are looking to add to the training offer with courses on Parental Substance Misuse, Parental Mental Ill-Health, Parental Domestic Abuse, Child Criminal Exploitation, Child Sexual Exploitation. Our partners are also supporting us through the development of training for Child Protection Conferences, Team Around the Family, LADO, and Safer Workforce, again online.

We have hosted the launch of the Durham Harm/Worry Matrix risk assessment tool with our partner agencies. It is envisaged that we will continue to look at this kind of innovative approach to harness technology to enable us to work smarter in supporting the training needs of our partner agencies.

| MONTH | DATE | TRAINING EVENT | MONTH | DATE | TRAINING EVENT |
|----------|----------|-----------------------------|---|----------|-----------------------------|
| January | 05/01/21 | Parental Mental Illness | March | 03/03/21 | Parental Mental Illness |
| | 06/01/21 | Parental Substance Misuse | | 08/03/21 | Parental Substance Misuse |
| | 08/01/21 | Safeguarding Processes | | 11/03/21 | Neglect |
| | 13/01/21 | Neglect | | 16/03/21 | Child Criminal Exploitation |
| | 15/01/21 | Child Criminal Exploitation | | 18/03/21 | Child Sexual Exploitation. |
| | 26/01/21 | Child Sexual Exploitation | | | |
| | 28/01/21 | Neglect | | | |
| February | 09/02/21 | Parental Mental Illness | TRAINING SCHEDULE - EARLY 2021 CLICK TITLE FOR LINK TO DSCP TRAINING FLYERS ON UPCOMING EVENTS AND BOOKINGS. | | |
| | 11/02/21 | Parental Substance Misuse | | | |
| | 18/02/21 | Child Criminal Exploitation | | | |
| | 22/02/21 | Child Sexual Exploitation | | | |
| | 24/02/21 | Safeguarding Processes | | | |
| | 26/02/21 | Neglect | | | |