Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership

Safeguarding in Luton

The Annual Report for Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership

2022/2023

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INTRODUCTION

The Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) Annual Report 2022-23 covers the work of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangement in Luton from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and is the third such annual report. It has been prepared by the LSCP Strategic Business Manager on behalf of the statutory safeguarding partners.

The overarching principles and vision that the safeguarding partners work within are to:

- Have an informed understanding of safeguarding arrangements and performance in single agencies and an authoritative oversight of the quality of front-line multi agency practice.
- Have effective governance arrangements and operating structure, with clear lines of accountability with other strategic partnerships, and be able to demonstrate its influence on the work of those partnerships. To have a strong culture of challenge that is the responsibility of all partnership members.
- Ensure learning from audits, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and other reviews is identified and used to develop and improve practice, service provision and outcomes.
- Ensure the provision of high quality multi agency safeguarding training and evaluate the impact on practice of such training.
- That children and families are central to everything we do and that we need to seek and respond to their views and to understand their lived experience.

Statutory guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)*, sets out that the safeguarding partners annual report should provide transparency for children, families and practitioners about the activity undertaken by safeguarding partners in the previous twelve months. It must also set out what the partnership have done as a result of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including learning and improvement from local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR), and how effectively the arrangements have been in practice.

The Luton safeguarding partners have been committed to work together effectively in a multi-agency approach to identifying where action can be taken to improve the services provided to children and their families. A structured programme of highlight reports and multi-agency audits has identified areas of good practice as well as those for further improvement. Together with analysis of data, scrutiny of performance information, consideration of inspection outcomes, and learning from recent reviews has informed the LSCP strategic plan. The partnership has been working on its identified priorities, which includes joint work with the Local Safeguarding Adults Partnership and four priority areas of focus alongside the other two Pan Bedfordshire safeguarding partnerships. These priorities are:

LSCP Business Plan - Safeguarding children and young people priorities:

- Domestic abuse (Pan Beds and joint with adults)
- Neglect (Pan Beds)
- Emotional wellbeing and mental health (Pan Beds)
- Child Sexual Exploitation (Pan Beds)

Other Learning from reviews and audits:

- **Contextual safeguarding** - Serious Youth Violence, Gangs Association, Criminal Exploitation and Missing, Online Abuse
- **Through effective systems and processes –** Transitions, Early Help and Thresholds, Information sharing, Integrated Front Door, SEND and absence, and Cultural Competence.

Alongside this the LSCP has a Pan Beds focus on the work streams around Voice of the Child, Cultural Competence and Safeguarding in Education.

Partnership structures and governance

- Effective Policy and procedures
- Impact of Training Undertaken
- Evidence of impact from Independent scrutiny.

The report considers how well the safeguarding partnership has responded, as a multi-agency safeguarding system, to deliver on their priorities and to identify emerging safeguarding themes as a learning organisations and to make improvements where required. It recognises the progress Luton has made throughout the year whilst also highlighting those that remain and which we will continue to address together in 2023/24.

SAFEGUARDING PARTNERS' IMPACT & REFLECTIONS

BLMK Integrated Care Partnership

There has been some improvement in communication between partner agencies. There is a good robust partnership in place across the health landscape. The ICB has been able to support health providers to escalate concerns about children and their outcomes into Luton Children's Social Care. Safeguarding learning has been fed into the local Learning and Improvement group for further discussion, reflection, and dissemination among partners, including local authority, police, housing, and voluntary organisations. This also helps to inform the individual safeguarding policies. Whilst collaborative working between partner agencies has improved, communication pathways still need to be more robust so that safeguarding concerns for children and families are understood and actioned effectively.

The ICB has sought to work closely with partners, for support with early intervention and good outcomes for children and their families. The front door audit has been useful for recognising those areas where improvement is needed in collaborative working particularly in the early stages when a family presents to services, needing help and support. The ICB has supported primary care colleagues and health providers to update their safeguarding policies in their respective organisations so that their work is guided by current legislation.

Bedfordshire Police

As a partnership we have sought to work together and support each other across the system and at all levels of our organisations to continue to identify and respond effectively to children

in need of safeguarding. Within this work there is an aim of driving forward child focussed and self-reflective practice with a strong challenge both within and across all agencies that make up the partnership. This work has occurred within the context of the challenges and pressures of post Covid arrangements, as well as within resource and capacity issues. However, despite this we have seen practitioners and strategic leaders striving to work in partnership to effectively promote welfare and ensure the safety of children in Luton.

We will continue to focus on learning and improving, and look to better understand the impact that our work together as partners has on supporting children to be safe and well and reach their full potential. However, we know that we cannot be complacent and we need to continue strong communication, robust challenge alongside an aspiration to improve and retain a focus on the welfare of children across our and all organisations working with children.

Luton Council - Children's Services and Education

The local authority and its safeguarding partners has driven forward effective multi-agency practice in Luton particularly around our agreed priority areas of neglect, mental health and wellbeing, child exploitation and missing children, domestic abuse. Safeguarding in the Digital environment, harmful practices and voice of the child has been a golden thread across all priority areas. Our revised multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA) have provided opportunities for both placed based learning and development and also collaboration across the wider Pan Bedfordshire partnerships.

Luton Council's Children's Social Care (CSC) continued to deliver services throughout COVID and coming out the pandemic s our recovery plans for CSC was ensuring business as usual. Ofsted advised in the ILAC inspection, that they were effective and that they did not find any children at significant risk of harm. This finding demonstrates improved outcome through the work that has been undertaken from 2020 to present. However, we are faced with a new challenge of the cost of living crisis and as a result we are seeing Child Protection cases increase and cases of poverty rising. In April 2023, our practice week focused on Neglect and discussing how our work both in-house and with partner agencies can support families where there are concerns with regards to neglect which remains a key priority. At the recent SEND revisit inspectors from Ofsted and CQC commented about the impact of our partnership team and system workings and that they had not experienced the scale of enthusiasm and knowledge across the system her in Luton in another local area. Ofsted also commented that there is evidence that Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership is robust in multi-agency learning.

Signed by Statutory Safeguarding Partners

Chief Officers

Luton Borough Council – *Robin Porter*

BLMK Integrated Care Board – *Felicity Cox*

Bedfordshire Police *– Trevor Rodenhurst*

WHAT DOES THE SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP IN LUTON STAND FOR?

Our Purpose

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) as a safeguarding children partnership has retained its name as the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership's (LSCP). Its main objective is to assure itself that local safeguarding arrangements and relevant agencies act to protect young people from abuse and neglect. We do this by ensuring that children and young people in Luton are effectively safeguarded, properly supported and their lives improved by all agencies working together.

Our principles

The overarching principles that the safeguarding partners work within are to:

- Have an informed understanding of safeguarding arrangements and performance in single agencies and an authoritative oversight of the quality of front-line multi-agency practice.
- Have effective governance arrangements and operating structure, with clear lines of accountability with other strategic partnerships, and be able to demonstrate its influence on the work of those partnerships. Partnerships have a strong culture of challenge that is the responsibility of all Partnership members.
- Ensure learning from audits, case reviews, Serious Case Reviews, Significant Incidents and Safeguarding Adult Reviews is identified and is used to develop practice and service provision.
- Ensure the provision of high quality multi-agency safeguarding training and evaluate the impact on practice of such training

The three statutory partners are accountable for the safeguarding arrangements, with an independent scrutineer taking on a role to work with the safeguarding partners but also offer scrutiny on the arrangements and their impact on children and their families. The scrutineer holds partners and relevant agencies to account for their contribution, training and delivery of services to safeguard children and to challenge areas of practice where the standard falls short of expectations.

HOW DOES THE SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP IN LUTON WORK?

Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) is one of three safeguarding partnerships, which operate within the County of Bedfordshire. The demographics of Luton is unique when compared to the rest of Bedfordshire and is detailed in the section on population.

During 2022/23, **Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP)** has continued to operate under the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, which came into force in Sept 2019 with the three safeguarding partners, ***Bedfordshire Police, BLMK Clinical Commissioning Group*****,** and **Luton Council** (Local Authority) having a shared and equal duty. This year the LSCP decided to modernise and to cease calling itself a Safeguarding Children Board.

The LSCP provides the safeguarding arrangements under which the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies work together to coordinate their safeguarding services, identify and respond to the needs of children in Luton, commission and publish local child safeguarding practice reviews and provide scrutiny to ensure the effectiveness of the arrangements.

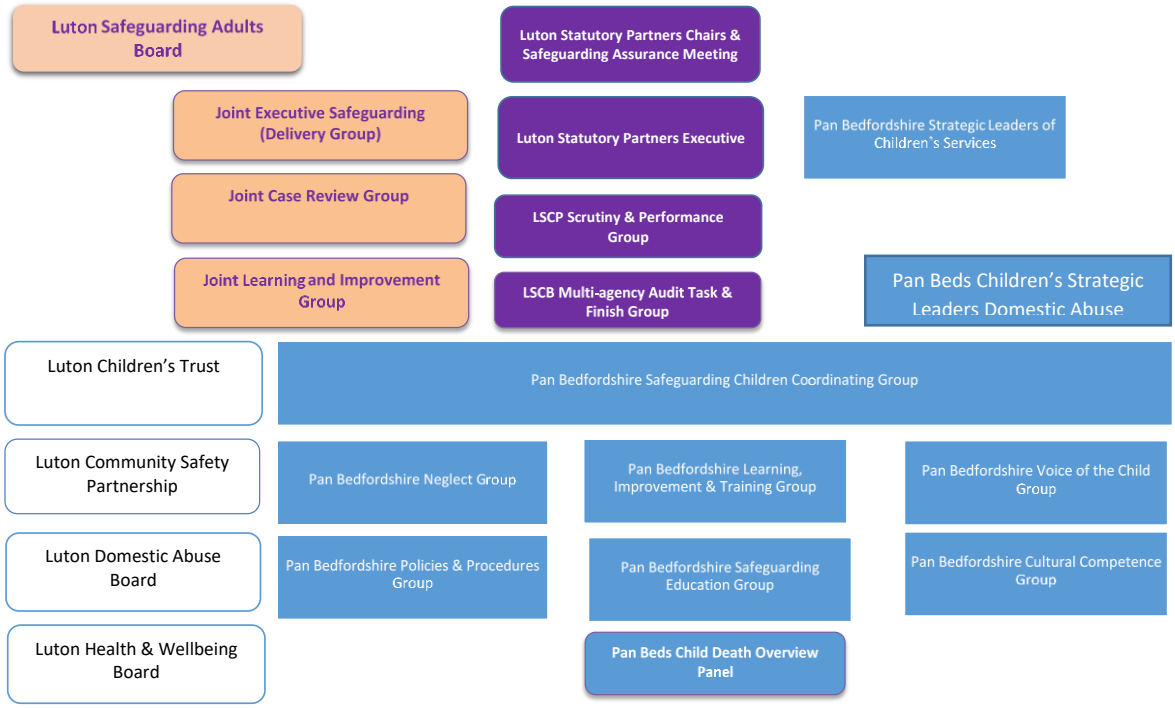
It is our role to ensure the arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in Luton is effective. This includes agreeing on ways to coordinate safeguarding services, acting as a strategic leadership group to engage and support others, and implementing learning from local and national serious child safeguarding incidents.

As statutory partners we meet monthly with the independent scrutineer to provide oversight and governance to the work undertaken by the Joint Safeguarding Executive and our sub groups to achieve our priorities. The statutory partners are accountable for assuring the robustness and quality of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) and demonstrating impact on practice as well as bring focus on the LSCP priorities and objectives.

The LSCP also brings together representatives from each of its relevant agencies and meets every three months as a Joint Safeguarding Executive alongside the Luton Safeguarding Adult Partnership to work on cross cutting themes. The activity against agreed priorities is progressed through its designated sub groups, and task and finish groups.

The LSCP is also part of a wider network of strategic partnerships, which exist in different forms across Pan Bedfordshire and includes the Luton Children's Trust, Domestic Abuse Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Partnership. The LSCP multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and relationship with the Pan Bedfordshire SCB sub-groups is shown on the page below which also shows the relationship with wider strategic partnerships as of April 2022.

LSCP Structure and Partnership Links June 2022 - 2023



LUTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP MEMBERSHIP

The Luton Statutory Partners (LSP) hold a monthly executive meeting to set strategic direction and vision. The Luton Wider Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) is made up of the following partners, relevant agencies and lay members who are residents of Luton who have links to the community and are able to bring information to and from the LSP. The WSCP meets three times a year with a themed agenda linked to the LSCP priorities.

- **Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group (BLMK CCG)***
- **Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service**
- **Bedfordshire Police**
- **Cambridgeshire Community Services**
- **East of England Ambulance Service**
- **East London Foundation Trust**
- **Education representation from primary school, high schools and further education establishments**
- **Lay Members**
- **Luton Borough Council including Children's Social Care, Housing & Public Health**
- **Luton and Dunstable Hospital Foundation NHS Trust**
- **National Probation Service**
- **Voluntary and Community Sector**

LUTON IN NUMBERS

Population 2021

- **213,500** residents in the town.
- One of the youngest populations in the country – **27%** of residents aged below 18.
- Super diverse town – **55%** non-White-British.
- Approximately **50%** population churn since 2011.

Economy

- Luton economy worth **£7.2** billion per year prior to the pandemic.
- **Among the worst-impacted places in the country during pandemic** – second highest number of vulnerable jobs during the pandemic of major towns and cities.
- Claimant count of **8.4%** - up from **3.4%** in March 2020 – the sharpest rise in the country.

Employment

- **75.3%** working age adults in employment.
- **24.7%** of working age adults economically inactive.
- **More than 1 in 4 workers** earning below the Real Living Wage.
- **23,000 employees on zero-hour** and agency contracts.

Education

- **1 in 10** working age adults have no formal qualifications.
- **67% of 16-64 year** olds educated to level 2 or above compared to 78% nationally.
- **6%** attainment gap between Luton pupils and the rest of England at key stage 2.

Housing

- The median house price in Luton is **£258,000 – 34%** increase since 2015.
- The Median house price is **8.5 times** the median gross annual earnings for residents.
- **22%** of Luton households are in the private rented sector.
- **15,000** additional homes required by 2031.

Outstanding Location

- Located at the centre of the Oxford-Cambridge arc.
- 22 minutes from London by rail.
- 10 miles from the M25 and situated by the M1.
- Home to London Luton Airport – the international gateway to England's Economic Heartland.

London Luton Airport

- 5th largest airport in the UK.
- Over 17 million passengers per year prior to the pandemic – down to 5.4 million in 2020/21.
- Contributes £1.8 billion per year to the UK economy.
- Provides more than 11,000 jobs directly, with more through supply chains.

Poverty

- **39.6%** of children growing up in relative poverty in March 2021.
- **6th most** deprived area in East of England by Indices of Multiple Deprivation.
- **4** wards in Luton are within the **10%** most deprived in the country.
- **26%** of working households in relative poverty.

Skills

- **36%** of Luton businesses have skills gaps in their existing workforce.
- **29.7%** of workers are in level 4 occupations, but only **23.6%** of employed residents are in these jobs.
- **48%** of vacancies in Luton are in Level 2 occupations.

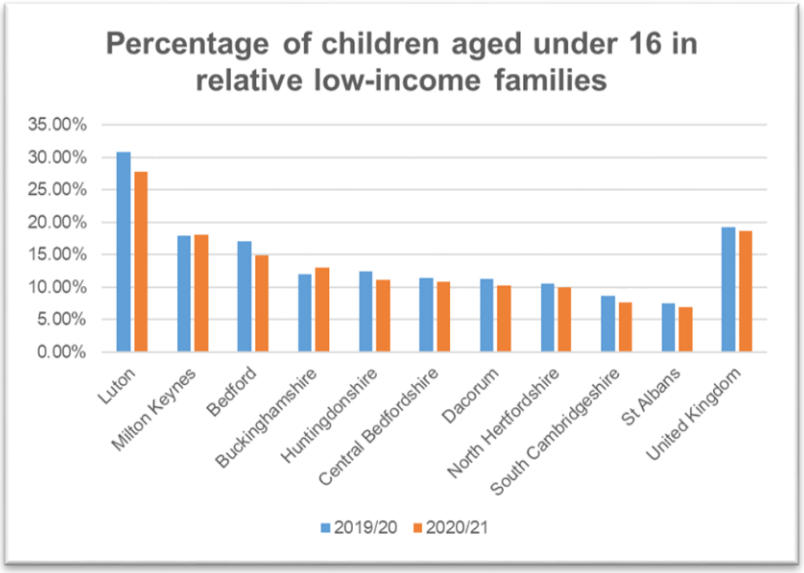
Health and Wellbeing

- Life expectancy gap of **6.9** years between women in Luton's most deprived and most affluent wards – for men this gap is **5.1** years.
- Male life expectancy in Luton one year less than the national figure.
- **381** children in care in Luton as of March 2022.
- **26%** of 10-11 year olds in Luton are obese.

SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE – KEY FACTS 2022-2023

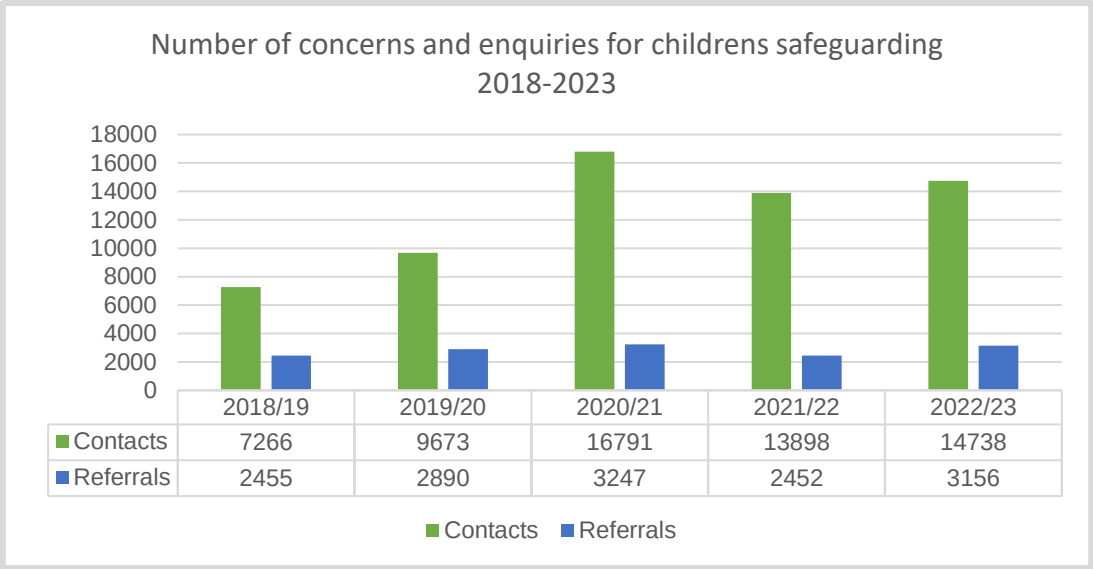
The information below helps to set the context of children in Luton. While the number of children living in relative poverty in Luton has reduced by 3.1% between reporting periods, Luton remains the area with the highest level of relative poverty and over double that of children in other parts of Bedfordshire[1].

Percentage of children aged under 16 in relative low-income families	2019/20	2020/21
United Kingdom	19.30%	18.70%
Luton	**30.90%**	**27.80%**
Neighbouring Local Authorities		
Milton Keynes	18.00%	18.10%
Bedford	17.10%	14.90%
Buckinghamshire	12.00%	13.00%
Huntingdonshire	12.40%	11.20%
Central Bedfordshire	11.40%	10.80%
Dacorum	11.30%	10.20%
North Hertfordshire	10.60%	10.00%
South Cambridgeshire	8.70%	7.70%
St Albans	7.50%	6.90%
Luton wards with highest relative low income percentage		
Dallow	45.9%	39.9%
Biscot	42.1%	37.9%
Northwell	31.6%	27.0%
Farley	30.2%	28.4%
South	29.6%	24.4%

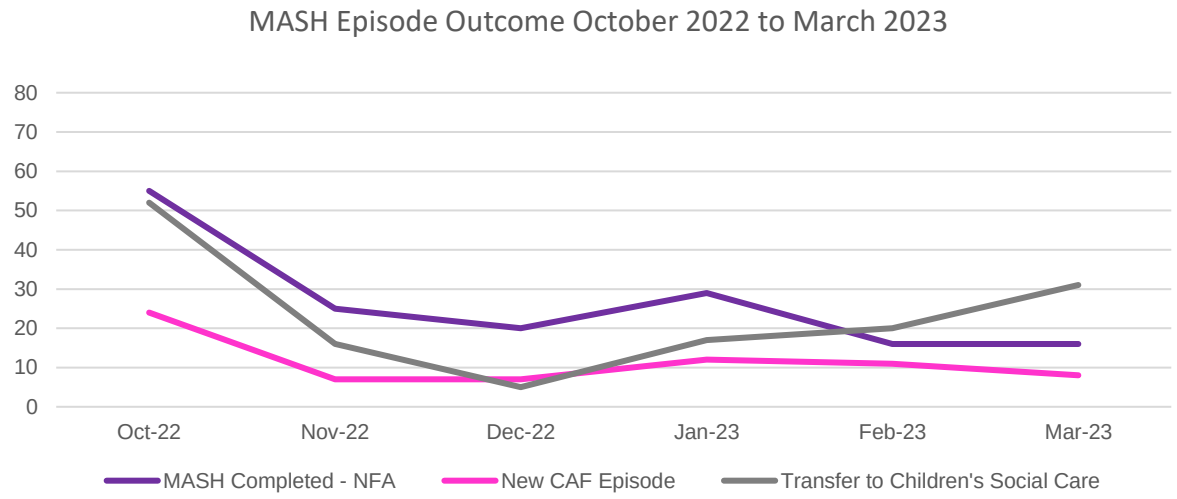


[1] ***Source:*** *Office for National Statistics, Mid-Year Estimates of population by single year of age, 2011 and 2021*

CHART 1: NUMBER OF CONCERNS AND ENQUIRIES FOR CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING 2018-2023

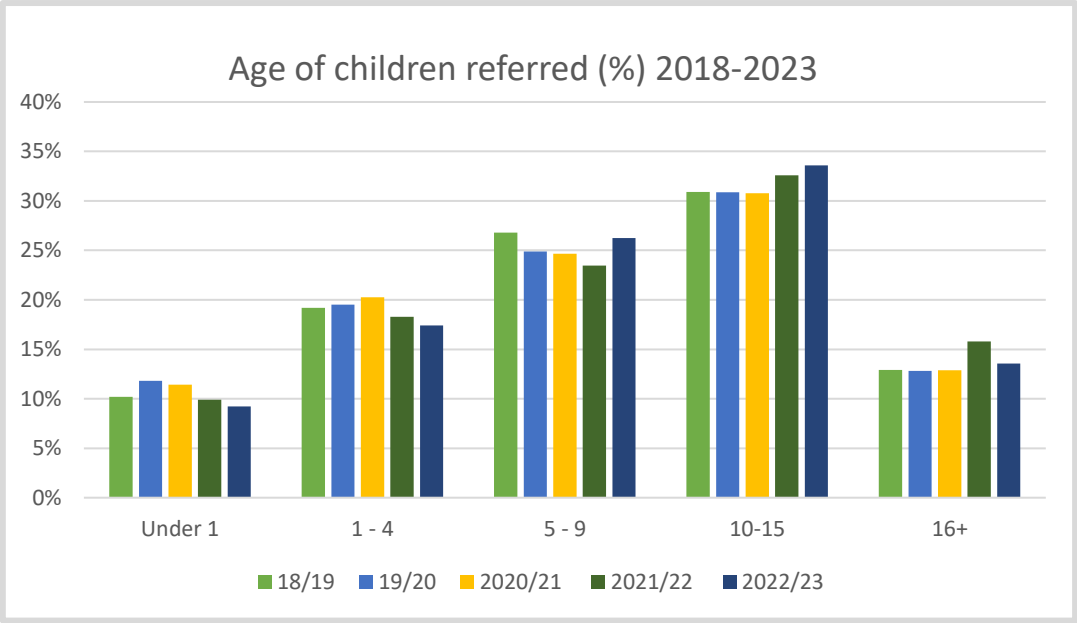


What does this tell us? – Following a significant increase in contacts to the MASH in 2020/21 during the COVID restriction (up by **57.6 %)**, contacts reduced by **15%** in 2022/23. The number of contacts which led to a referral to children's social care, **increased in 2022/23** from **17.6%** in the previous year **to 27.7%**. Changes to working practices where partners can consult the MASH before making a referral, and the revised threshold guidance launched in June 2022 were designed to support partners to make the right referrals at the right time. However, we still need to do more to improve both the conversation rate and the quality of referrals.

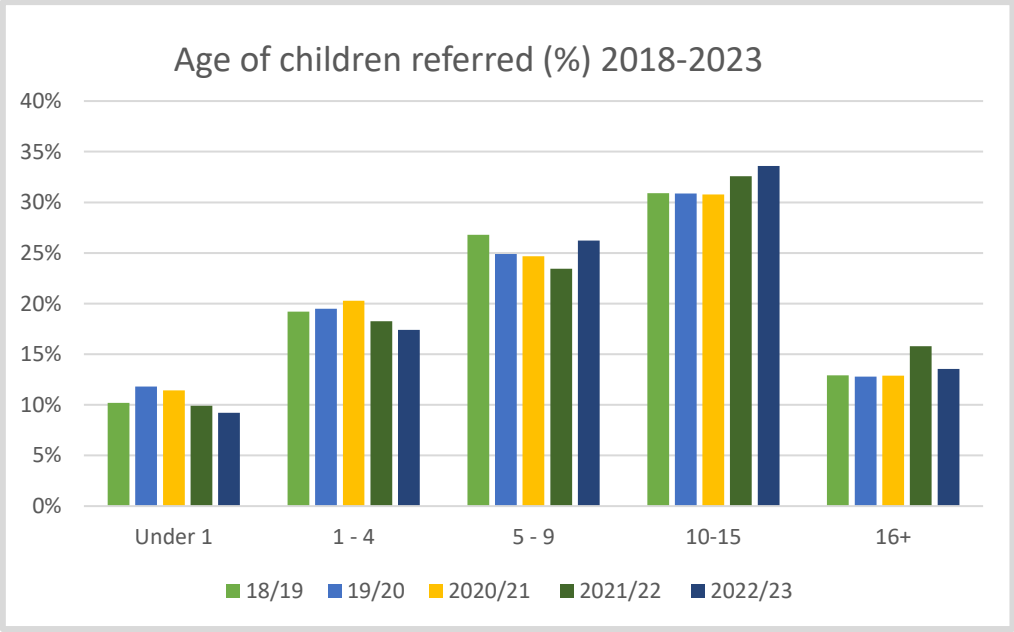


The number of MASH Episode outcomes reduced in Quarter 4 to **160** (*January 2023 – March 2023*) compared to Quarter 3 at **211** (*October 2022 – December 2022*). The outcome of '*MASH Completed – NFA'* was the most frequent outcome at **161**, followed by '*Transfer to Children's Social Care*' **141** and '*New CAF Episode*' at **69**. However, the last two months of the year have seen a '*Transfer to Children's Social Care*' overtaken '*MASH Completed – NFA'*. There is further work planned with the partners around the application of thresholds for intervention and levels of risk and need.

CHART 2 AGE OF CHILDREN REFERRED 2017-2023 (%)

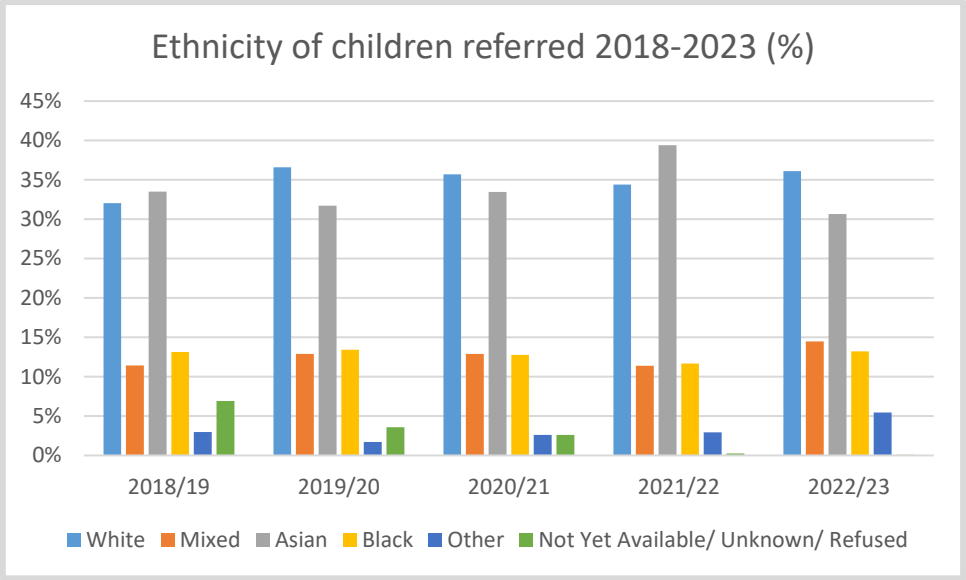


Key facts: The age of children referred to Children's Social Care by partners does not show any major change and is in broadly line with the wider changing demographics in Luton.



Key facts: The majority of children referred to the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) continue to be in the age group 10-15. The LSCP undertook an audit of the front door to establish whether the right cases are brought at the right time, or if there is a gap in services that prevent these children being identified earlier.

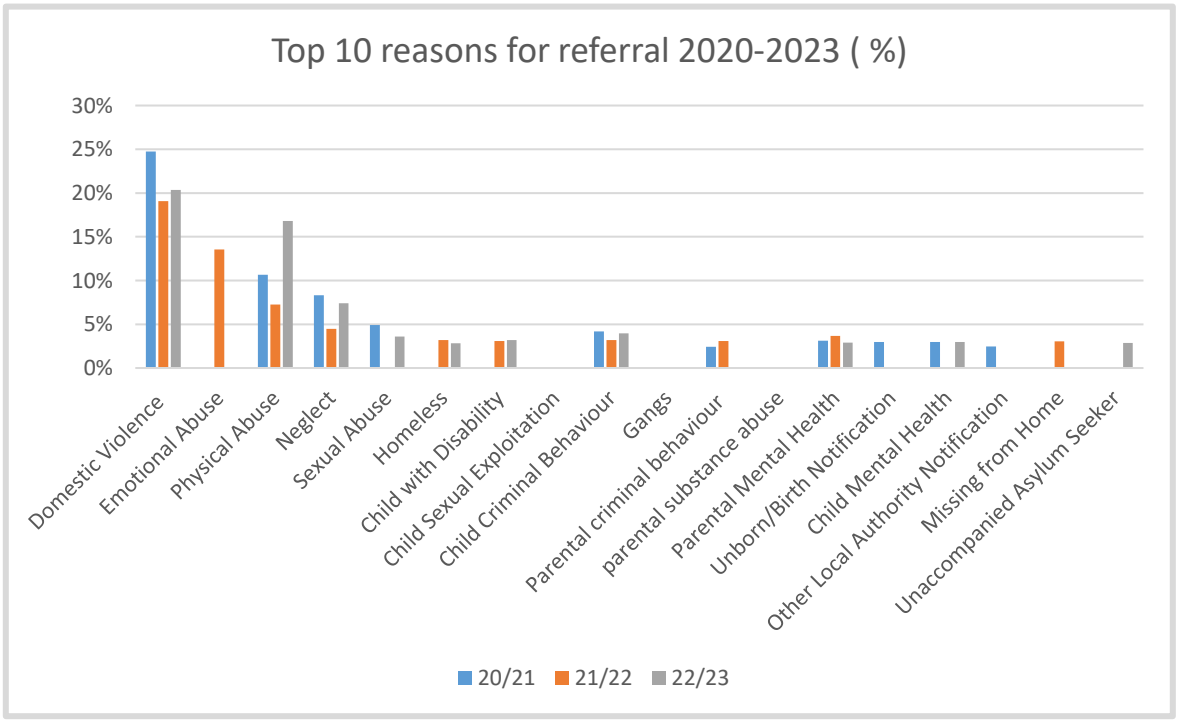
CHART 3 ETHNICITY OF CHILDREN REFERRED 2018-2023 (%)



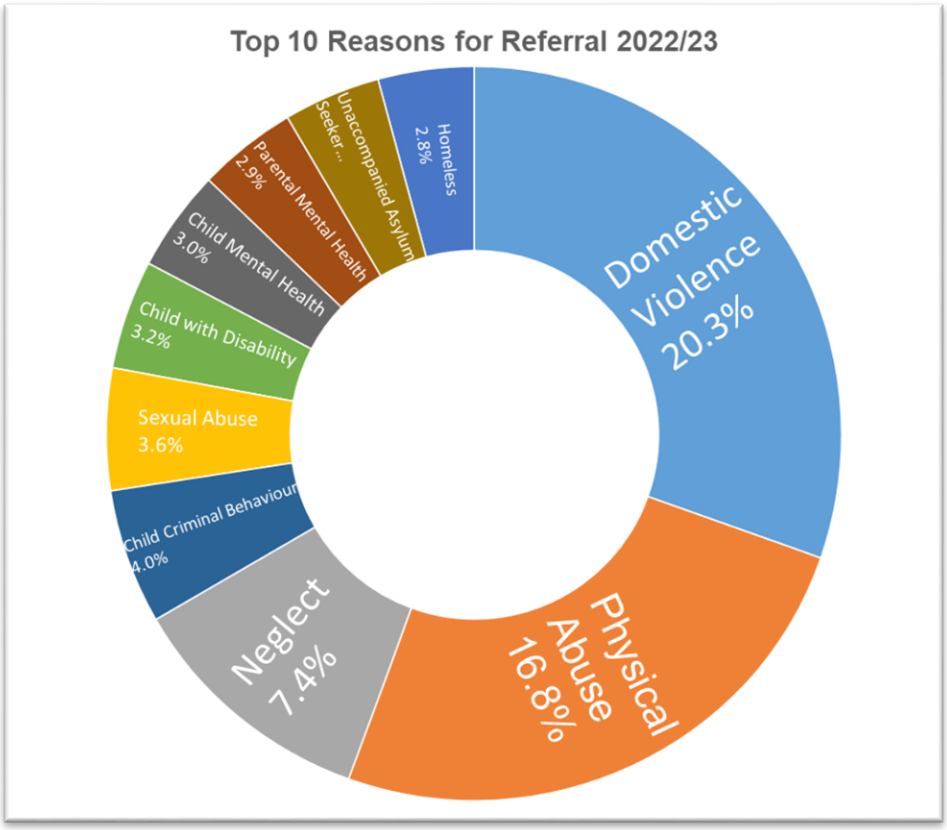
What does this tell us? - Analysing ethnicity over a five-year period represents how different referrals look compared to our population with children of dual heritage being consistently higher in comparison to the local demographics. Whilst referrals for children from Black backgrounds has been consistently lower, over the five year period, referrals for South Asian children in general have been increasing. Due to work around cultural competence by the partnership, the percentage of referrals where ethnicity is not available, unknown or refused has reduced significantly from **2.59%** in 2020/21 **to less than 0.1% in 2022/23**.

TOP 10 REASONS FOR REFERRAL

The LSCP is provided with the ten reasons for referral each year as shown below.



Domestic abuse has been the highest reason for referral for the last three years. There has been changes to the indicators on the top ten list in 2022/23 as shown below. Parental mental health, child criminal exploitation and homelessness remain in the top ten which is likely to correlate with family pressures experienced through the cost of living crisis post COVID.



Key facts in summary: In looking at the top ten reasons for referral there has been a shift in the top ten reasons for referral from those in the previous three years. Domestic violence remains the top reason and is starting to increase in 2022/23 compared to last year although it is still not at COVID period levels. Trend data shows an increase in physical abuse, neglect and sexual abuse. Physical abuse is now the second highest reason for referral with **530** referrals out of **3156** total referrals having doubled from 2020/21. Child sexual exploitation and gangs association remain low although child criminal behaviour has increased. Two new indicators in top ten in 2023/23 are sexual abuse and unaccompanied asylum seekers.

- The rate (per 10,000) of children that became the subject of a Child Protection Plan in the period (full year forecast based on current period) has remained stable at **64**.
- Less children becoming subject of a Child Protection Plan this year (**310**) compared to the same period last year (369) – 15.9% decrease
- **98.1%** Child Protection Plan visit in time; 4 weeks (20 working days)
- Children Looked After Statutory Visit Timeliness = **96.1%**
- **6.9% of children looked after with three or more placement moves**, improvement on **11.5%** previous year **and England average of 10%**
- **27.1%** of children looked after placed 20 miles or more from their home, compared to **29.4%** same time last year

- **63.4%** of children had an initial health assessment completed within timescale, Luton compares 4th highest performing in the Eastern Region
- Care leavers currently open to service (**269 young people**):
    - Age 17-18: in touch **97%**, suitable accommodation **92%**, EET **75%**
    - Age 19-21: in touch **98%**, suitable accommodation **95%**, EET **48%**

These are marked improvements in the safeguarding indicators. However, a challenge remains for the partnership in supporting practitioners to make best use of the *Effective Support Strategy guidance*, as well as the procedures for children in specific circumstances, to ensure the right referrals are made at the right time and are of the right quality. This includes the application of thresholds for children privately fostered as numbers remain low year on year and the year-end figure for 2022/23 was two.

EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS AGAINST THE LSCP PRIORITIES

PRIORITY 1 – DOMESTIC ABUSE

The LSCP shares a joint priority with the Luton Safeguarding Adult Partnership and the other two Pan Bedfordshire safeguarding children partnerships in Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire.

Pan Beds Domestic Abuse Strategic Group: The Pan Beds Children's Strategic Leaders Domestic Abuse Strategic Group provides oversight and traction in the development of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requirements across Bedfordshire and Luton. The purpose of the group is to:

- Ensure a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to address concerns about domestic abuse in Bedfordshire
- To provide consistency in approach, explore and agree joint working opportunities and common messaging
- To maintain a strategic overview of domestic abuse across Bedfordshire

As shown on the structure chart the LSCP is represented on the **Pan Beds Children's Strategic Leaders Domestic Abuse Strategic Group** as well as the **Luton Domestic Abuse Programme Group** who coordinate and provide strategic oversight of the local activity around domestic abuse in Luton on behalf of the Luton Community Safety Partnership. In 2022/23 highlight reports were provided on:

a. Agreement and launch of revised commissioning process for Domestic Homicide Reviews.
b. *Domestic Abuse, Recovering Together (DART)*[2] Programme has been re-commissioned.
c. Domestic Abuse Champions programme
d. Domestic Abuse Housing Award
e. Focus on Children and their lived experiences
f. Further measures around safe accommodation, non-fatal strangulation and consent to serious harm for sexual gratification not being a defence
g. Independent Domestic Violence Advocates have been employed and now looking to employ two KIDVAs[3]
h. Perpetrator Focus and work to reduce male violence against women and girls
i. Provision of safer accommodation
j. Survivors/victims voice with a Voice of Survivors group being implemented
k. Work has been started to provide domestic abuse training to staff within the Home Office provided refuge accommodation.

Domestic Abuse – Sixteen Days of Action: As part of the 16 Days of Action to End Gender Violence campaign, the Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership held a community led event in Luton Town Centre on 25 November 2022. This highlighted that there continues to be a terrible and tragic reminder of the devastating impact of gender based abuse and violence towards women and girls. There were 109 women and girls names on the #*TooManyNames* list of those who had lost their lives to male violence over the previous 12 months. The event sent a strong and clear message from all local partners that addressing gender violence is everyone's business and that no one individual or organisation can tackle the issue alone.

The Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership and the High Sheriff of Bedfordshire also launched their annual Domestic Abuse Recognition Awards scheme during this year's 16 Days of Action against Gender Violence Campaign.

Over the year the LSCP also assisted promotion of:

[2] https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/services-children-families/dart

[3] https://bedsdv.org.uk/get-help/embrace-child-victims-of-crime-kidva-support/

- Messages from Domestic Homicide Reviews, Safeguarding Adults Reviews, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and their impact for practice
- The linkages to Harmful Practices such as honour based abuse and FGM
- Opportunities to ask questions of local practitioners and experts by experience
- How to access further training opportunities
- How to report domestic abuse incidents.

PRIORITY 2 – LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

The LSCP ensures audits and reviews of cases yields learning both around good practice and improvements required to enhance and develop practice and service provision.

AUDITS

Luton LSCP undertakes multi-agency audit activity to monitor practice and utilises learning across the Pan Bedfordshire landscape as well as local place based learning. During 2022-2022 the following audits were undertaken.

LSCP Front door effectiveness audit: The purpose of the audit was intended to establish the effectiveness of multi-agency working, the level of compliance to the application of the multiagency thresholds as described in *Effective Support for Children and Young People in Luton document* and partner agency identification and service response to safeguarding children/young people in relation to children referred to the Luton front door for concerns regarding unmet need, risk and vulnerabilities. The audit focus examined the following domains:

- Quality of the referral and response by the front door
- Evidence of professional curiosity, understanding of surrounding issues
- Quality of decision making
- Effectiveness of sharing Information
- Resolving professional disputes and escalation
- Evidence of voice of the child and cultural competence
- Evidence of impact or recovery from previous Covid-19 arrangements as appropriate.

Methodology: Fifteen cases were randomly selected by the LBC Business Intelligence Team. Each agency then undertook a desk top virtual audit using the agreed audit template to assess the above areas of practice. The scope of the cases within the audit was from 1st February 2022 – 31st July 2022. The cases selected were referred during the scoping period and included factors such as domestic abuse, non-accidental injury, neglect, mental health and contextual safeguarding. The referrals were triple moderated as the quality of the referral was audited by the agency making the referral, by Children's Social Care and then by the multiagency audit group to agree a final rating for each case. In addition, the response to the referral once

received by Children's Social Care was audited and this showed improvement from the last audit.

Three meetings were held in November, with each meeting focusing on one of the age categories being 0-5 years old, 5- 11 years old and 12-17 years old. Time was allocated for a discussion with a short summary, and a reminder that the discussion should also endeavour to recognise good practice, as well as any gaps. All participants were invited to ask questions, and to reflect on the elements of good practice and gaps at a practice, organisational or system level.

Identified Themes: There was evidence of good partnership working and appropriate information sharing. There was evidence of appropriate decision making in most of the cases. The quality of engagement and discussion within the audit by all partners who attended over the three sessions was excellent and provided rich discussions.

The audit process may have been strengthened further by greater consistency in the partner representatives attending the three audit sessions. There is clear evidence of improvement following the last Front door Audit in 2020. **More cases were graded as good,** although there were a few cases with noted areas of improvement for either single or multi-agency practice. There was evidence of improved timeliness and the quality of information sharing, especially for the 0-5 age group, which was a gap in the previous audit.

Agency	Number of referrals made	Number rated 'Outstanding'	Number Rated 'Good'	Number rated 'Requires Improvement'
Bedfordshire Hospitals	**0**	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bedfordshire Police	**11**	**0**	**8**	**3**
Cambridge Community Services	**2**	**0**	**1**	**1**
LBC CSC Response	**12**	**1**	**10**	**1**
East London Foundation Trust	**5**	**0**	**4**	**1**
LBC Internal Referrals *	**5**	**1**	**1**	**2**
Nursery/Early Years	**1**	**1**	**0**	**0**
School	**6**	**1**	**0**	**5**

* *It was noted that those 'requiring improvement' were from departments that would not have had access to the history of the case therefore affecting the overall quality of the information in the referral.*

- **Referrals:** Good quality referrals received into MASH that identifies concerns and risk with a timely response by MASH evidenced. MASH delay is explained by a rationale e.g. waiting for information. There have been staff shortages and learning around completing referrals at the right time acknowledged by the Police in the IMU/PPU Hub.
- **Consent:** Evidenced where appropriate for some cases but not consistent. Parents are not always asked for consent to access information for siblings.
- **Oversight by MASH:** Recording was effective and directive with clear outcomes prior to a timely transfer to LBC CSC Assessment Service.
- **Strategy Discussions:** held in accordance with threshold, inconsistent in attendees and minutes not always completed in timescale, with limited evidence of minutes being shared with attendees. Some evidence of delays in holding Strategy Discussions

evidenced by unavailability of police. Do we need a formal strategy discussion when we have all the information? It was agreed by the panel how we arrange strategy meetings need to be revisited.

- **Single Assessments:** opened within timescales, some examples of good quality assessments although this is inconsistent. Assessments evidence some consideration of diversity but this is not in depth or considers the impact of this. Some examples of consideration of history and voice of the child being included but inconsistent. Cultural diversity and ethnicity is not consistently considered. Inconsistent evidence of outcome and closure letters.
- **Sharing Information:** Feedback from referrals were not always shared. Minutes of meetings and outcomes are shared with the partnership. Systems do not match up, contributions from the GP often are not shared with 0-19 Team (Health). Health staff are not always informed if children and young people are known to Children Social care especially when transferred in from another local authority.
- **Multi Agency/Partnership working:** There are areas of slight improvements required for practice standards. Sometimes agencies forgot other multi agency disciplinary staff were involved with the child/Family and planned work in silo. Partners were not always invited to Child in need or Child Protection meetings although they had involvement. There was good involvement from schools outside the area. Multiagency curiosity needs to be improved around the family or child's history. Education often feel they are not involved with Multi Agency or Partnership working. As a positive contextual Safeguarding meetings are now used instead of routine Child Protection meetings. The majority of cases included positive multi agency engagement.
- **Family Network Meetings:** were evidenced on all cases however, a high number were 'declined' but no rationale for this decision and little curiosity evident as to how to overcome this important piece of the assessment**.** The Family Network Meeting was not consistently used to form part of the assessment/decision making. Use of Family Network meetings was particularly successful around stepping down and closure.
- **Cultural competence/Professional curiosity**: The use of interpreters to be considered when English is not the first language. Relevant research needs to be applied taking in account immigration status etc. A higher level of curiosity regarding Cultural Competence and the use of tools regarding Complex and Contextual Safeguarding, Trauma Informed Practice and the Graded Care Profile in relation to repeat referrals through the front door would be help to improve practice.
- **Visits:** Evidence of visits being undertaken as expected with some quality write ups. Evidence of good quality direct work using appropriate tools that formed part of the assessment but this was not always consistent.
- **Management Oversight:** was recorded at the point of allocation and gives direction but this was inconsistent in quality. Oversight at pertinent points on some cases but again inconsistent in quality and effectiveness. Some examples of Head of Service oversight to support decision making. Management Oversight evidenced on each assessment and closure summary, again quality was inconsistent.
- **Supervision:** was recorded on all cases although inconsistent in regard to timeliness and quality. Supervision did not consistently address or challenge tasks that had been set and were unmet e.g. professional curiosity.

- **Plans:** good evidence of quality Child Protection Plans that were SMART. However, inconsistent quality of Child in Need Plans arising from the assessments although some improvements in Plans as cases progressed. More consideration on how the ECHP assessment impacts on the child's/family daily experience. Good practice identified in one case in particular with Children's Social Care using a specialist FGM tool with a child and mother. The consideration of safety planning is effective and addressing gaps especially during school holidays.
- **Chronology:** Evidenced on all Children's Social Care cases but quality was not consistent and information not always used to inform assessment. There was no evidence of use of multi-agency chronologies in line with the Pan Beds procedures.
- **Genogram:** evidenced on all Children's Social Care cases but sometimes ineffective in identifying support outside of immediate family and not all are consistently cultural.
- **Graded Care Profile:** When the risk of Neglect comes through the front door, if a GCP2 has been completed it needs to be uploaded and used alongside the assessment. The use of the GCP2 has limited use by any agency with regards to benchmarking the risk of Neglect and to support the families understanding of Neglect**.**
- **Think Family:** There appears to be a lack of professional curiosity around the history of a family. Fathers and wider networks are not always recognised or consulted. However, there were good examples of in depth direct work with siblings by Children's Social Care which were noted in most cases.
- **Childs lived Experience/Voice of the child:** Sometimes the needs of the child were not always captured. The Voice of the child exceeded good in the case involving FGM. Tailoring the needs of the child and young person, evidence of creative thinking and use of tools (Day in the Life of) by Cambridgeshire Community Services.
- **EHCP plans:** were not always considered, assessments and information are not always linked.
- **Escalations/resolving professional disputes:** Escalation was not always used when it should have been. As an example, the use of outcome letters from Children's Social Care needed to be escalated when not received and there was little evidence of this.

System Improvements Required:

- Neglect has been a key priority for a long time for LSCP and this needs to improve. There is a lack of completions of GCP2. Covid has impacted the training of newly recruited health visitors and social workers and this needs to be addressed. There is a planned partnership Pan Beds Neglect conference to take place in 2024. This work will be led by the Pan Beds Neglect Group.
- It was recognised the audit tool needs to reflect on think family/ whole family perspective. There is a need to 'Think Family' and consider other young people in the home when risks are identified which could have facilitated information-sharing.
- The escalation process needs to be strengthened and better understood by agencies. This is a restorative process requiring more evidence in use of practice. As an example, the use of outcome letters from Children's Social Care need to be escalated when not received

The learning from the audit has been fed into the Joint Learning and Improvement Group and an overview of all the cases reviewed has been presented to the Joint Executive Group. This improvement work is being overseen and reported through the governance structures alongside the Luton Statutory Partners Executive meeting.

The Luton Wider Safeguarding Partnership also held a workshop on the revised Joint Targeted Area Inspection Guidance (JTAI), received feedback from the Bedford Borough JTAI, and took away key messages for practice including the need for more placed based auditing.

SECTION 11 AUDITS

Part of the assurance for The Partnership on performance of the safeguarding system is the use of the Section 11 audit. The LSCP in conjunction with Central Bedfordshire SCP and Bedford Borough SCP, has historically collaborated and asked all partners to undertake a self-evaluation on specified standards. The audit for this year focused on two of the standards, voice of the child and training as below.

- ***Standard 4 – Service development takes into account the need to safeguard and promote welfare and is informed, where appropriate, by the views of children and families***
- ***Standard 5 – There is effective training on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children for all staff working with or, depending on the agency's primary functions, in contact with children and families.***

Following the roundtable event to evaluate partner evidence in relation to the above section 11 standards, the partners identified a set of actions to take forward as detailed here: The resulting single action plans will be scrutinised at next year's section 11 event to ensure they have been progressed. Further Information on the Voice of the Child and Training activity during 2022/23 which are detailed in their own specific sections.

LEARNING FROM RAPID REVIEWS AND CHILD SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE REVIEWS

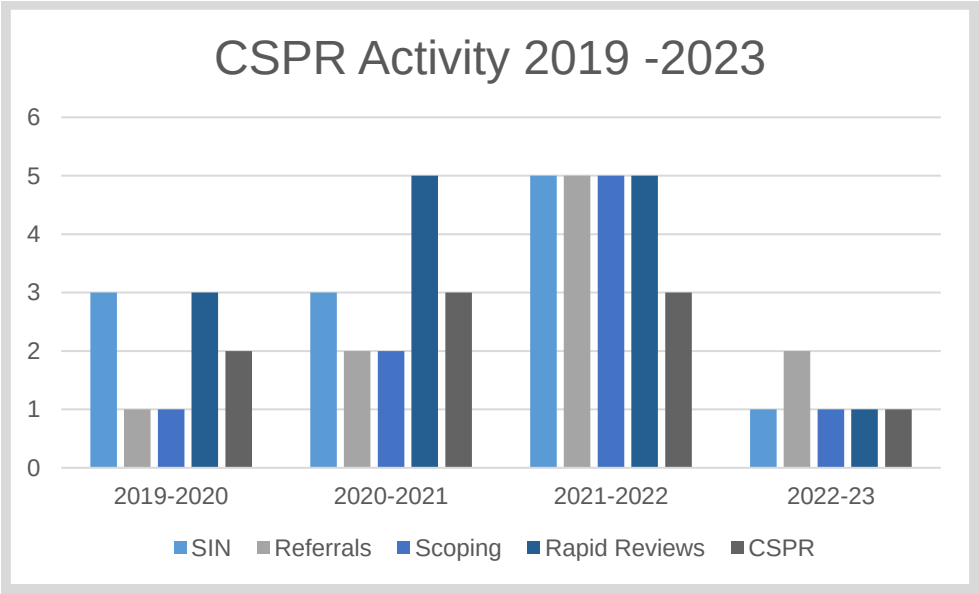
The partnership assesses Serious Safeguarding Incidents as defined by Working Together 2018 and decides whether a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) is required, in order to identify how to improve safeguarding responses in future. From April 2022 to March 2023, **one** serious incident notification and **two** further non-statutory referrals for review were submitted and considered by the partnership. The LSCP was also asked to contribute to two other rapid reviews by other local authorities, one became an integrated CSPR/SAR and the other did not meet the criteria for a CSPR.

As a result of this activity the safeguarding partnership undertook **one** local rapid review. The **two** further local referrals considered by the partnership did not meet the criteria for a serious incident notification. Single agency learning was identified in both of these cases and agreed for audit or other practice learning. The partnership was able to identify learning to improve safeguarding systems from **two** of the cases referred. **One** case was agreed as a local Integrated

CSPR/SAR and this review is due to conclude by October 2023. Parallel processes have delayed speaking to families and the subject children and this is now progressing.

The partnership identified no additional system learning was to be gained from further review of the other cases and therefore no Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews were required in these cases. This view was supported by the Independent Chair/Scrutineer and by the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.

The chart below shows how activity around learning from case reviews has reduced in the last year. This follows a three year period where serious incident notifications, rapid reviews and CSPRs all increased year on year. The LSCP Case Review Group and safeguarding partners have worked hard to ensure the right cases come to the LSCP at the right time.



The partnership also contributed to two rapid reviews held by other Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships, no further system learning was to be gained from further review of the other three cases and therefore no Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews were required.

The Partnership has completed a number of legacy Serious Case Reviews, as well Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR) some of which remained underway or which were published over the year. The partnership has continued to focus on the learning and to gather evidence of the impact of this activity. While activity to address the learning commences at the point of the rapid review, evidence of how well the learning has embedded in practice can take time to establish and is often tested through audit. Reporting focusses on the practice learning activity undertaken since the last report was produced. Work streams around learning from experience have been themed and taken forward in unified delivery plans which have included activity around:

- Contextual Safeguarding including Serious Youth Violence and Missing: *Unpublished Thematic Review and unpublished CSPR on child exploitation*
- Domestic Abuse including working across adult and children's settings: *Family Usman and cross border unpublished CSPR*

- Neglect including dental neglect and child protection medicals for neglect: *Oliwer, Tahira, Family Usman*
- Physical Harm including non-accidental injury to under 2's and use of ICON: *cross border unpublished CSPR, Family Usman*
- Education including special educational needs, absence, missing from education and the role of education in identifying unmet need or risk through neglect, sexual abuse and self-harm: *Family Usman, Oliwer, Essex Child V, unpublished Thematic Review and unpublished CSPR on child exploitation*
- Emotional wellbeing and mental health (including attendance at acute settings suicide, self-harm, and accidental death and use of the dark web): *Child V, Rapid Review A, Rapid Review B*
- Thresholds (including Early Help and multi-agency approach to support Core Groups and Child Protection Plans): *Family Usman, Oliwer, Essex Child V, an unpublished Thematic Review and an unpublished CSPR on child exploitation.*

The 'golden threads' of 'cultural competence' and 'voice of the child' also run through these work streams. In addition to local learning, there has also been assurance sought regarding the learning from national reviews such as '*The Myth of Invisible Men'* and '*Bridging the Gap'* where the partnership tested themselves against their recommendations. [4]

The LSCP Joint Learning and Improvement Group (LIG) and LSCP Scrutiny and Performance (S&P) Group as well as the Pan Bedfordshire sub groups have been utilised as delivery arms to ensure that the learning is given the widest reach and impact. Within the Luton Wider Safeguarding Partnership meetings, the model has moved to specific practice learning activity linked to the themes and data as well as inviting those with lived experience to speak about what worked well, any gaps in service provision, and how service delivery can be improved from their perspective. The outputs are to disseminate the learning, distil key messages and ensure that practitioners have access to appropriate resources to support them in practice.

The learning and the activity against recommendations from individual reviews were presented to the partnership in a unified '*Closing the Loop Report*'. The following pages provide the headlines regarding the work around reviews:

One legacy Serious Case Review (SCR) and one CSPR are complete but cannot yet be published due to other parallel process. However, this has not prevented the system learning being disseminated and this has been brought into service development, training and procedural updates and briefings. A Thematic CSPR on Serious Youth Violence was completed in 2022/23 and published after the end of the reporting period. As a result the LSCP received assurance regarding further development of MACE and MAGPAN as well as the Youth Safeguarding Service to address risks to young people that exist outside the home such as contextual safeguarding as well as changes to how education work with these young people.

[4] The myth of invisible men safeguarding children under 1 from non-accidental injury caused by male carers

Essex Child V was published in June 2022 and the action plan against the recommendations for Luton SCB were concluded with continued oversight of how the learning is embedding in practice. An overview of all the cases reviewed around suicide has also been presented to the Joint Learning Improvement Group as well as to other Pan Beds meetings.

This work is overseen through the governance structures and reported across structures while accountability and final decision making sits with the Luton Statutory Partners Executive meeting. They have received as part of this oversight of learning from reviews:

- the detail of all recent action plan activity linked to CSPRs and rapid reviews
- an overview of how the Subgroups have triangulated the learning from reviews and are ensuing it is being taken forward
- an overview of the changes made to policy and practice guidance as a result of the learning from reviews
- the annual training report information including courses linked to learning from reviews.

Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews: A summary of numbers, learning and impact is set out below as of March 2023. A detailed breakdown is provided in Appendix B

- Number of SCRs/CSPR published 1
- Number of CSPR completed but not published **1**
- Number of CSPR underway **1**

The learning is being disseminated through a number of mechanisms:

- Presentation at place based and Pan Beds learning events, training and workshops
- Presentation at Luton Council practice weeks and education strategic group
- One page summaries for each CSPR
- Production of a 'closing the loop report' twice per year.

The impact of this work is being evaluated through the analysis of data and theme based audits as highlighted earlier in the report.

LEARNING FROM NATIONAL PRACTICE REVIEWS

Child Protection in England, the National review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson, was considered at our Case Review Group, local Strategic Board and Pan Beds Strategic Leaders Groups. A multi-agency assurance activity was undertaken; agencies reflected on, and provided examples of, how the learning from this report was used in practice. A number of briefings were developed to cascade learning and encourage changes in practice where needed, including assurance that referrals from family, friends and neighbours were assessed appropriately and a move away from the term 'malicious referral'. The Partnership was assured of safe practice within Central Bedfordshire.

A practitioner briefing was circulated following publication of Child Q (Hackney CSPR) to increase awareness of racism, adultification and use of appropriate adults. This CSPR influenced creation of a Pan Bedfordshire Cultural Competence Group; this group met quarterly in

2022/23 to seek assurance and develop practice when working with black and minority ethnic communities.

Partners agreed that, alongside Section 11 audit, agencies would undertake the NSPCC Best practice for strategic decision makers, a framework to identify what their agency already has in place or needs to address at an organisational level to ensure children from black and minoritised ethnic communities are supported and protected more effectively. This served as a practice benchmark and will be reviewed as part of the annual conversation on Cultural Competence in early 2024. Our training offer was reviewed to ensure learning from local and national reviews was incorporated.

PRIORITY 3 – NEGLECT

Neglect continues to remain the most common form of child abuse across the UK. Partners across Luton aim to ensure, that there is early recognition of neglect cases and that from early help to statutory intervention there should be appropriate, consistent, and timely responses to need across all agencies.

The LSCP works closely with neighbouring Safeguarding Children Partnerships in Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire, taking a county wide approach to raising awareness of neglect and helping frontline practitioners to identify and tackle neglect. The Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group is guided by the Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Strategy 2020-23 with oversight of the annual work plan.

Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group holds bi-monthly themed meetings. The Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group have agreed their new three year strategy (2023-2026), with an annual work plan, effective from April 2023. A Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Conference is planned for 14th February 2024. Work is ongoing to create a data set that will support the countywide work on Neglect. It is agreed that the 2023/24 Section 11 audit will use Neglect as its key theme across all standards.

Bedfordshire Luton Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board is actively engaged with the Pan Bedfordshire Neglect work streams, to ensure consistency of approach across the county and partnership systems. **Cambridgeshire Community Services** highlighted the Graded Care Profile in training and supervision when there are any identified issues of neglect. Staff within Luton children's services can access training for GCP2 and there is an emphasis on using this tool to support ongoing assessment of need, referrals as part of multi-agency working. Assessment tools such as 'A Day in the Life of….' are available for staff on the intranet and are equally advocated within training and supervision to support maintenance of focus on the lived experience of a child. **East London Foundation Trust** promotes GCP2 training to safeguarding contacts.

Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust describe the standard practice, when a child/ young person is admitted to hospital, of recording their presentation, weight, height, and any developmental delay. The names of those with parental responsibility are also recorded alongside who is accompanying the child at the time. The Safeguarding Children Team have a system of 'information sharing' electronic forms for all hospital staff to share a concern about a child 24/7.

This allows staff to share any level of concern with the Safeguarding Team which would include concerns that would not meet the threshold for CSC or the Emergency Duty Team out of hours. The Safeguarding Team review this information, gather information and take action. The safeguarding team can also provide supervision to staff that raise concerns to promote good practice. All concerns around neglect are raised through the information sharing pathway and where threshold is met referred to Children's Social Care. Many cases generate robust discussions with partner agencies such as the 0-19 service to explore wider health information to support a referral and assure follow up on discharge from hospital. There are effective working relationships with the 0-19 service including their safeguarding team with the aim of leading to better outcomes for children. In the acute hospital, contacts with children and young people are often very short.

Neglect features as part of the L&D Level 3 safeguarding children training day, this includes definitions of neglect, how that presents in practice and the response required. In addition the team use local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR's) as case studies within the training programme for the Trust.

Discussions have taken place about the difficulty of using a neglect tool (GCP2) within an acute setting and how reliable it is likely to be in a short / acute contact. It has been agreed that a specific hospital tool is unlikely to correctly capture a child's lived experience in an emergency situation but that there are robust systems in place for staff to escalate concerns whereby the safeguarding team can support with additional checks alongside the wider MDT. This would ensure a more robust way in capturing this information correctly and safely.

Luton Council Children's Services and Education had their Ofsted ILAC inspection in July 2022 and were advised that they were effective and that Ofsted did not find any children at significant risk of harm. This finding demonstrates that outcome of the work that has been undertaken from 2020 to present. However we are faced with a new challenge of the cost of living crisis and as a result we are seeing Child Protection cases increase and cases of poverty rising. The Pan Beds Neglect Group has been chaired by the Service Director Safeguarding Assurance and Practice Improvement who has also push forward improvements in GCP2. Twelve new 'train the trainers' were trained in September 2022 and they are rolling out the programme with a first cohort of staff to be trained by April 2023.In April 2023, our practice week will focus on Neglect and how our work both in house by with partner agencies can support families where there are concerns with regards to neglect.

THE GRADED CARE PROFILE (GCP2):

There is a single countywide child neglect assessment tool in place, the Graded Care Profile (GCP2). This is a nationally recognised tool, which has an established research basis. The tool was introduced across Pan Bedfordshire as a series of workshops. The Partnership has continued to monitor how the tool has been embedded in practice. Professionals and agencies report usefulness, through both feedback and training. It has been identified, that whilst the GCP2, is being used within agencies, further consistency, across the partnership needed to be addressed. A Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Strategy & Delivery Plan is currently being developed, in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton (Pan Bedfordshire) to address this need. The aim, as the three Safeguarding Children Partnerships, is to work together to strengthen,

support and develop the workforce and practice to improve outcomes for all children. This strategy will help and support practitioners to identify indicators of neglect.

The GCP2 is an assessment tool, developed by the NSPCC to help frontline practitioners measure the quality of care a child is receiving. Within Luton GCP2's are completed by Luton Children's Services staff along with colleagues from Cambridgeshire Community Services (CCS). Whilst more practitioners were trained in 2022/23, the number of assessments has fallen. It has been identified that refresher training should be provided to build skills and confidence with an expectation this will improve assessment completion numbers.

Children's Services Audit (November 2022) on Neglect and the completion of GCP2s in relation to children on a child protection plan highlighted the numbers remained stubbornly low. This has prompted a renewed focus on completion of GCP2s and consequently further training has been offered, wider services are completing GCP2s, there is a focus on which children are subject to a plan due to neglect, ensuring the completion of a GCP2 an 'day in the life of' form part of CP plan. A radio button in process of being developed to pull through from CP plan to evidence if and when GCP2s are commenced.

From April 2023, GCP2 'champions' will present a 6 monthly highlight report on GCP2 completions, quality and recommendations with the aim of increasing the use of this valuable assessment tool across Bedfordshire.

BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE BODY WORN VIDEO (BWV) SCRUTINY PANEL:

Bedfordshire Police provided opportunities for a multi-agency panel to scrutinise BWV footage of neglect cases. The panel met twice in 2022/23, with two Luton cases reviewed. This was an opportunity to highlight the Police Officers calm interaction with a parent and children and to recognise development opportunities in gaining the voice of the child/ren present and to further professional curiosity. Bedfordshire Police have identified and shared learning as a result of this panel as part of their ongoing development work to support offices and staff to accurately record cases of neglect. Once case has been shared further as a case study to demonstrate aspects of clutter, hoarding and adult self-neglect in families.

NEGLECT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

In collaboration with the other Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnerships, Luton LSCP also has policies, procedures and guidance available for frontline staff when dealing with cases of neglect: https://bedfordscb.proceduresonline.com/p_neglect.html

The themes in 2022/23 included learning from local and national practice reviews, emotional neglect, poverty informed practice and Think Family, informing a number of new practitioner guidance documents.
Chronology Guidance 2022
GCP2 Principles (November 2022)
Think Family Briefing (March 2023)
GCP2 Practitioner Briefing (March 2023)
Neglect Practitioner Briefing (March 2023)

PRIORITY 4 – EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH

As highlighted in Priority 2 much work has been undertaken as a result of learning from the Child Safeguarding Partnership Review for Child V as well as continuing to progress system change from previous serious case reviews such Child L, Child M and Family Usman.

The LSCP provides guidance, advice, and resources from partners in relation to the mental health and wellbeing within families, in particular we have shared resources through our website, newsletters and email circulation/distribution lists. Mental Health and well-being is recognised as a concern locally (and nationally) due to rising numbers of children, young people and adults needing to access services.

An increase in child death by suspected suicide was highlighted in the Pan Beds Learning, Improvement and Training Group. Partners have requested an update from Public Health once their Mental Health audit is completed. It was agreed that the Case Review Group will now be advised of child death by suspected suicide, as an opportunity to identify themes or actions that may be taken to support practice and policy development.

We have supported local initiatives including **Better Days**, inviting the project leads to present at our Wider Safeguarding Partnership meeting. Toolkits and useful resources were shared as part of *Mental Health week 2023*. The LSCP promotes Reflect (*which is replacing Kooth*) across the partnership and has shared updated support service list and a wide range of emotional wellbeing related training.

Trauma Informed Care - As part of their focus on emotional health and wellbeing the Joint Learning and Improvement Group has also received presentations on the Pan Beds approach to Trauma Informed Care (TIC) from East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT)

This gave examples of where Luton and Bedfordshire are in relation to their counterparts and how they are meeting regularly to update each other and deliver training.
Examples of current practices already practicing in trauma informed way:

- Violence Reduction Initiative – safety huddles utilising the TIC approach
- Consistent staff offering care
- Dialogue to identify people's needs
- Offering choice re intervention /staff

A three pronged approach to embedding and adapting current systems and for practitioners to be Trauma Informed focused was addressed and in it needing to be supported by supervision and reflective practice at every level. This entails:

1. Training – for all levels of staff to increase awareness of TIC approach
    - Learning what it is
    - Discuss with colleague how it could be applied in their area of practice. Each area may have different strengths and needs in terms of applying this approach.
    - Consider how to adapt their individual service
2. Management support within individual services as well as across the wider Trust.
3. Leadership from senior management team in driving the required change Trust wide

Bedfordshire Police is currently planning, a PILOT amongst schools to educate around sexual boundaries and safe relationships. This will enable children to feel comfortable in speaking out about any experiences they have or are experiencing. In order to fulfil its objectives there is a need to ensure buy in from the partnership specifically safeguarding leads.

Bedfordshire Luton Milton Keynes ICB commissions Mental Health Services, from East London Foundation Trust (ELFT) and works with ELFT and CHUMS to support the integrated pathway for children and young people with emotional wellbeing and mental health needs. BLMK ICB leads the Bedfordshire Children and Young People Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Network Meeting which provides the opportunity for key stakeholders to understand developments in relation to these issues. They also supported the development of the MH&WB hub within the Local Offer website. BLMK ICB have led the Clinical Reference Group for Children's Eating Disorders focusing on the national ambitions. This has led to the development of Integrated Clinical Guidance for the management of Children and Young People with Eating Disorders providing care before, during and post admission to medical ward or CYPMH unit. BLMK ICB and ELFT are leading a series of workshops across the system entitled "*Using I Thrive to improve our Mental Health system for Children and Young People in Bedfordshire & Luton*."

In February 2023, a new digital text messaging service was launched. Children and young people in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes can text 'REFLECT' to 85258 if they need advice or support. This change of digital service was implemented following a review of Kooth provision. The service is free and confidential and delivered in partnership with Shout.

East London Foundation Trust Bedfordshire and Luton CAMHS has appointed a SEND lead across the service since September 2021. The lead works closely with the three local SEND partnerships in Luton, Bedford and Central Beds to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. This will include ensuring that CAMHS advice for Education, Health and Care needs assessments are of good quality. The most recent audit identified that 60% of advices audited were Good or Outstanding. CAMHS practitioners are asked to attend a 2 hour SEND

compliance training programme – to date 72% of practitioners have attended the training. The SEND lead works closely with Luton SENAT in relation to individual children and young people and will be sitting on the Luton Moderation panel which assesses requests for EHC needs assessments. The SEND lead also sits on the Luton SEND Strategic Improvement group, SEND Operational Group and associated work streams as and when required.

Mind, BLMK & ELFT CAMHS opened a Young Person's Sanctuary in Luton in March 2023. The Young Person's Sanctuaries are safe, non-judgemental spaces that young people can come to if they find themselves in crisis or mental distress in the evenings. There is no need to call and book an appointment, young people simply drop in and will be met by a trained mental health worker who will listen and help them identify ways to address the problems they are facing. The teams will also be able to refer and signpost to other services if required. The Young Person's Sanctuaries were identified as the preferred support option during a round of public focus groups to shape a new 24hr extended mental health crisis care across Bedfordshire.

Parents with Mental Health Issues - It is embedded into training that various parental issues may affect their parenting capacity and that mental health may be an area where this can happen. The "Think Family" approach is embedded into practice. If an adult attends/ is admitted into hospital due to a mental health crisis, they will be asked if they have dependent children and what support they have from family and services. Information sharing forms will also sent to the safeguarding team, and a CSC referral will be made if necessary by the appropriate professionals.

Women where perinatal mental health concerns have been identified during pregnancy are offered a referral to the perinatal mental health team for ongoing support. The perinatal mental health midwives support with all pregnant women known to have mental health concerns. Women also have access to the OCEAN service. This supports emotional and psychological support for those that have suffered pregnancy/birth trauma or loss. Woman do not have to be under maternity services to engage in this service

Areas for Improvement

When a male is admitted with a mental health crisis or needs admission, it is more difficult to ascertain whether he is a father, and if he lives with his children. Women usually link to their children on the hospital systems or Summary Care Record if their child was born in the UK.
If a male is unwilling to give this information, or too unwell and has no one with him it can be difficult to obtain this information. This is an on-going issue for improvement that has been considered in the partnership. There has also been a Pan Beds focus on the findings from the *National Review: Myth of Invisible men* and the partnership assurance in response.

WHAT ELSE DID WE DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Pan Bedfordshire Engaging schools and make education our 4th Safeguarding Partner

This new group was created as an outcome of a Department of Education funding to develop Education as the 4th Safeguarding Partner. A small project group representing schools across Bedfordshire liaised with local schools and regional colleagues to identify models of engagement which were working in other areas and consider the best fit for Bedfordshire. The Project Group developed and presented their Safeguarding Education and Engagement

Strategy and accompanying report to the Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leaders for Children's Services Group in September 2022 and the first meeting of the Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group took place in November 2022.

Although early days for this group, it's work is recognised as important by all partners as education settings spend so much time with children, young people and families. The impact of COVID on all services is recognised and we hear the pressures school settings face. The Group meets twice a term for themed meetings based on emerging local concerns, or direct requests from education. Work to engage schools and other education settings has led to two themed coffee meetings taking place with the Luton MASH and the Luton DSOs.

Our first theme looked at Sexual Harms following a wave of concerns around Andrew Tate, misogyny and 'banter'. Questions are agreed by the Pan Bedfordshire Group and taken back to local Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) meetings via our Safeguarding in Education Lead and Business Manager. In our first attempt, there were few responses so we have adapted our approach, resending the questions using online forms and moving from standalone cluster meetings to incorporating meetings with existing, well attended DSL Forums. The approach will continue to be monitored and adapted to ensure it is effective in hearing and responding to the voice of education as a developing partner.

Pan Bedfordshire Policy and Practice Group

The Policy and Practice Group meets twice a year and has a rolling programme of work that continues throughout the year linked to the updates required in May and November. The procedures have been updating linked to learning from reviews from Luton, across Bedfordshire and Nationally. Amendments to procedures can be found here and are linked to learning from reviews and audit within Luton. There are the following task and finish groups also running alongside this:

- Pan Beds Cultural Competence
- Pan Beds Complex Cases
- Pan Beds GCP2
- Pan Beds ICON Group
- Pan Beds Information Sharing Group
- Pan Beds Non-Accidental Injury in Under2s Group
- Pan Beds Voice of Child Group

Child Exploitation & Missing

Luton LSCP with the other partnerships across Bedfordshire have formed the Pan Beds Child Exploitation & Missing Strategic Group. There has been significant work in developing the Ban Beds Child Exploitation & Missing Strategy together with the Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Action Plan which has been developed to include the findings from the VERU Needs Assessment and Strategy. The Action Plan has been shared with partners across Bedfordshire for their implementation and the governance of the action plan sits with the Pan Beds Child Exploitation & Missing Strategic Group.

Within Luton Children's Social Care have led on their nationally recognised response to serious youth violence through the MAGPan (Multi-Agency Gangs Panel), joint youth work and

community policing in the Amber Unit, our recent multi-agency TREE (Tackling, Reducing and Eliminating Exploitation) project tackling exploitation activity and a targeted prevention and education programme in high schools.

There is close partnership working with Bedfordshire's Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit, through MAGPan and our existing partnership arrangements, ensuring that risk of exploitation is addressed at an early stage through targeted interventions and support. Monthly meetings around the context of the town centre infrastructure/economy and how the town centre impacts on young people, gangs, CSE etc.

Partners have continued their work to ensure that children and young people in Luton and Bedfordshire are protected from extra-familial harm and reduce episodes of missing. The contextual safeguarding approach promotes thorough assessments and safety plans around children and young people who are at risk of significant harm beyond their own family.

This strong partnership approach has identified adults and locations of concern and a prompt response of community safety patrols, youth worker outreach, visits to premises, and seen perpetrators of exploitation served Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWN), along with warning notices and convictions for Modern Day Slavery offences.

Bedfordshire Police have expanded the use of Operation Encompass to capture information on missing children and share with the relevant school to ensure appropriate support and keep track and monitor risk of exploitation.

Luton Children's services identify strong relationships with Bedfordshire Police in information sharing and joint working, along with support from agencies such as Link to Change. Their dedicated CSE Co-ordinator ensures consistent guidance on best practice and support to service delivery who shares weekly updates with Independent Reviewing Officer and Child Protection Chairs. The Missing Protocol and return home interviews support prompt engagement with children and families to provide support and high rates of completion of return home interview.

LBC Youth Partnership Service: In terms of statutory youth justice outcomes, Luton has improved on previous best ever performance of 2022/23 with a further reduction versus new entrants and continues to outperform statistical family, national and critically regional comparators. Given Luton's context and the complexities emerging from the exceptional pandemic/ lockdown period, this remains outstanding performance. For an area with pockets of high depravation, the year on year performance in reducing the use of custody, first time entrants and reoffending sees the Service consistently outperform our statistical family group as well as the national performance average. From March 2022 to March 2023 only **29** children have entered the criminal justice system and there has not been any custodial sentence in that same period. Reoffending in Luton is currently **28%** against the national average of **34%**.

Whilst we have continued to see an incredible level of development and innovation within the Service as we have risen to meet the challenges, criminal exploitation that leads to serious violence remains the number one priority. The Youth Partnership Service delivers a contextual safeguarding approach to criminal explanation through the Multi-agency Gangs Panel.

The multi-agency approaches that the Youth Partnership Service has built with statutory, non-statutory and community partners has been fundamental in reducing the number of children and young people coming into the statutory youth justice system and those involved in serious violence in Luton. However whilst the youth justice cohort has reduced significantly as a result of developing services around targeted earlier intervention, the numbers within programmes developed to meet criminal exploitation have grown rapidly.

The critical issue that we need to understand is how children in Luton are drawn into criminal exploitation with many through factors largely out of their control such as social economic issues or underlying health and education needs. This has led to increasing numbers of previously unknown children being referred into MAGPan with complex risks and needs. Developing a Youth Partnership Service that is able to identify the types of issues that lead to exploitation earlier remains key to safeguarding children who get drawn into criminal exploitation and serious violence.

Firstly we need to reduce these numbers and build on current work streams in operation to ensure children and families are able to build resilience to resists all forms of exploitation. Through the continued development of the Youth Partnership Service across Supported Transitions, the Tree Project, Amber and Dallow Cares, we are developing a framework of targeted specialist intervention with children and their families in partnership with the community.

In order to create a cohesive, consistent and sustainable framework of targeted early awareness and pathways to intervention, the Youth Partnership Service are working with the Behaviour, Inclusion & Wellbeing Advisory Board (BIWAB) to focus on risk management and reduction for school children on the edge of criminal exploitation.

Secondly, we need to target and reduce the risk that is being held in the 'non-statutory' space at MAGPan. It is difficult to engage children and young people already involved in criminal exploitation and we need to increase our capacity and multi-modal approach to breaking down those entrenched behaviours. We need to build on our developing understanding of the needs of our children, the risk to their safety and well-being and the risk they present in the community. We need to provide targeted support for children based on known dynamic and static factors of children and young people who have a strong 'likelihood' of exploitation in adolescence and as they transition into adulthood. Through this framework of targeted specialist early intervention and prevention, we aim to achieve a reduction in the numbers of children we see referred into MAGPan already entrenched in criminal exploitation.

Children and Young People who attend Emergency Departments with assaults, or signs of exploitation: If a child or young person presents to the Emergency Department with an assault, such as a serious injury, a stabbing or gunshot wound, the police are informed. Information is also shared with Children's Social Care (CSC) – in particular if the child/young person has a Child Protection Plan. In addition checks should be made with CSC to find out if they are known or open as a Child in Need (CIN). If a child is not known/ open to CSC, a decision is then made as to whether a referral is required. In addition, all children who present to ED with an assault under age 18 have their information shared with The Safeguarding team. Each case is looked

at by the team, and shared with the school nurse, school safeguarding lead, Youth Offending Service (YOS), or support worker as appropriate. (GP will always be sent information for their own patients).

Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit

One of the Trusts Medical Directors represents the hospital on the strategic group for VERU. Regular data and updates are shared with the Safeguarding Team.

Practice that requires improvement.

- Children, whom are Post GCSE's in Year 11, are placed outside of paediatric units onto adult wards/ departments.
- They remain under The Safeguarding Children's Team as they are children until their 18th Birthday (The Children Act 1989)
- It is evident from audit and data that a number of these children /YP are perceived as adults. This means that information has not always been shared with The Children's Safeguarding Team, or other agencies.
- This is an on-going area for development.

There is an active piece of work in progress with the Emergency Department on the Bedford site to identify young people between the ages of 16-18 that present with identified needs and/or concerns around risk. The paediatric matron will also alert the safeguarding team to under 18's that are admitted to an adult area.

Child Death Overview Panel: The BLMK CDOP Panel has not yet produced its Annual Report for 2022-23. However, they continued to progress their action plan for 2022-23 as follows:

- **Data quality**: During this review data was analysed form a range of sources. In future this will be easier as all data will be on eCDOP which will make retrieval easier and more complete. We have noted that ethnicity has not always been recorded and that we have not been able to report on the deprivation quintiles for our child deaths but would hope to do this in coming years. Similarly, we would like to be able to report more detailed data relating to social care involvement for child deaths. Ethnicity. For 12 of the cases reviewed, the panel did not have information relating to the child's ethnicity. This should be resolved through easier data sharing via eCDOP
- **Public Health**: This report continues to inform public health practice and policy with emphasis on maternal obesity reduction to reduce the risks of preterm delivery or delivery complications and improve ability of antenatal scan to detect congenital anomalies. Wellbeing services across Luton and Bedfordshire provide information and support regarding preparation for pregnancy, after pregnancy and children and family weight management programmes. Health visiting is considering collaborative work with the maternity voices group to understand the barriers to women accessing weight management support after or before pregnancy. The themes highlighted through CDOP influence public health priorities and ongoing health promotion across the system; smoking cessation, safe sleeping, consanguinity, suicide prevention.
- **Training**: Further training for GPs has been arranged in collaboration with The Designated Doctor for Safeguarding. The Child death reviews nurses at the local hospital Trust share the learning from CDOP at their level 3 safeguarding training events. We

plan to develop further multiagency training. The Designated Drs Child death reviews participated in the Learning from Deaths Series Oct 2020 in the eastern region. Key messages from the event were shared with local safeguarding partners.

- **Newsletter**: The Panel has previously produced newsletters to share with partners covering key themes from deaths reviewed. We plan to refresh this in the coming year, starting in November 21.

Progress reports have been provided to each CDOP meeting throughout 2022-23.

VOICE OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

In July 2022, the Pan Bedfordshire Voice of the Child Group held a consultation event with the theme 'How can we help you to feel safe?' The event was chaired by Alan Caton, our independent Chair and Scrutineer. 76 children, aged 7-14yrs, attended representing 10 Bedfordshire schools. 20 teaching staff attended and discussions were supported by members of the Voice of the Child subgroup. As a thank you for attending, each school received a £50 Amazon voucher.

This event was a great opportunity to hear directly from children and young people and gain some assurances that they felt happy and safe growing up in Bedfordshire. Although they responded positively about feeling safe, they demonstrated some anxieties around social issues and perceived dangers.

What did children and young people tell us about feeling safe? The children and young people told us they feel safe growing up in Bedfordshire and having kind and trusted adults at home and in school helped. They identified people in uniforms (police, fire, lollipop man) as trusted people in the community. Many described how seeing friends helped cheer them up as did adults who know you well and 'check in with you.' The oldest attendees told us about the need for open, honest communication with adults who spend quality time with them, and for more education around emotions and wellbeing. Across all ages, children and young people wanted autonomy; younger children spoke about adults who helped them to learn but also wanting to be listened to. One said, 'Respect us and what we do or look like, no matter what,' another 'teach me basic skills.' The older group talked about being trusted to make decisions. Technology, notably mobile phones, and CCTV played a part in children and young people feeling safe, many talked about having a phone when out and about; using location tracking apps so people knew where they were and use of CCTV in the streets and in their home. Discussions suggest many of the Yr4-6 pupils had mobile devices. Children and young people said they would not share personal information and should talk to adults if they were worried.

What did we learn about children and young people's worries? COVID related factors played a significant part in the conversations; not seeing friends, wearing masks, not being able to go outside and missing friends, wider family and teachers. Social injustice was a theme in all groups; poverty, use of food banks, the war in Ukraine, Black Lives Matter and discrimination in many forms. They also expressed anxieties about 'not knowing people's intentions' and being harmed if they were not with a trusted adult.

Pupils shared their thoughts on feeling safe;

- *"I feel safer at home than when I'm out and about because I'm wary of people I don't know."*
- *"CCTV cameras around my house make me feel safe."*
- *"When I walk to school the lollipop man Geoff makes me feel safe."*
- *"Knowing windows and doors are locked helps me feel safe."*
- *"Adults help because they always stick with you."*
- *"Safe is when you don't need to worry about your family or yourself."*
- *"It feels good when I can express myself."*
- *"Friends because we all care about each other."*

The event was also an opportunity to hear from school staff, who shared positive feedback about relationships and support for safeguarding within their school teams and their wider communities. Opportunities to come together as localities were beneficial and Designated Lead Forums/ meetings were working well. Many recognised improvements in communication with other practitioners but felt there was still progress to be made. Staff highlighted the increased children, young people and their family's mental health issues and domestic abuse, level of complexity in safeguarding cases, waiting lists for support services, staff wellbeing and capacity but had ideas for how they could be further supported; supervision and training, a focus on preventative work and early support for children, young people and families. There was notable feedback on understanding of the role of the safeguarding partnerships and their work; asking the Partnerships to consider how updates, information and resources can be better communicated to schools, and highlighting that information is spread across multiple websites making it harder to locate. There was support for a 'one stop' Pan Bedfordshire website with an overview of local pathways and offers. The new Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership website is in development and a quarterly newsletter is circulated.

A debrief was held after the event which was a great opportunity to hear directly from children and young people and gain some assurances that they felt happy and safe growing up in Bedfordshire. Although they responded positively about feeling safe, there were many examples of anxious comments. The group discussed the impact on the children and young people's emotional wellbeing of being so alert to perceived dangers and social issues. The group considered that spending more time around adults during lockdown and experiencing a pandemic would have contributed to this but also wondered if children and young people are accessing information presented at a level that is harder for them to process. The group acknowledged that childhood has often included 'big issues' but there would have been few opportunities such as this event for children and young people to express their views. The group reflected on future events having a focus on support and strategies to build confidence and resilience.

The Chair of the Pan Bedfordshire Voice of the Child Group is leading on work to encourage schools to develop their own children's safeguarding boards.

Bedfordshire Police continue to develop the voice of children and young people within their service. Child Victim feedback is gained within PVP Unit through postcard handouts and Victim Engagement Officers. 'Voice of the Child' training has been delivered to all frontline officers, Force Control Room, and Specialist Detectives.

Bedfordshire Luton Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board gains assurance from the providers it commissions services from that the voice of Children, young people and their families are an integral part of contract arrangements and service provision. For example, via reports of audits. It undertakes listening events with Children in Care Council and has a close relationship with Healthwatch which informs local arrangements.

When Children attend for health assessments their views and feelings are assessed using picture charts rather than text. The complaints procedure is child orientated and was adapted to meet their needs and understanding. BLMK ICB has a culture of listening too and engaging with service users and Children seeking their views in decision making and development of service and policies such as co-production work with service users around LGBTQ issues.

Cambridgeshire Community Services (CCS) gathered feedback from children and young people who have received a safeguarding intervention to inform service improvements is the review of the Children in Care Initial Health Assessment. 6 young people aged 7 -17yrs, male and female, including 2 ethnic minority participants and 1 non-English speaking asylum seeker (using translation services) took part in the review in the form of an interview style 1:1 discussion with the co-production lead to share feedback on their experience of the initial health assessment process. The research was further expanded by working with SHOUT youth participation group for children in care.

A result of the feedback gathered is the co-production of new resources and materials to be sent to the young person in preparation for their Initial Health Assessment (currently in development), including a personalised appointment letter addressed to the young person, and a short film animation giving information on what to expect in the initial health assessment. The impact of this work is that the service has a greater understanding of the needs of the young people throughout the Initial Health Assessment process, and once the resources have been finalised, the young people will feel well informed, prepared and more in control of the assessment they are undertaking.

East London Foundation Trust identified capturing the voice of the child when submitting safeguarding children referrals especially in demonstrating impact of parental mental health on the child as an area of development.

From 1st April 2023, the Voice of the Child Subgroup will be absorbed as a golden thread into a revised Pan Bedfordshire safeguarding children partnership structure, ensuring the voice of the child is embedded in all work. An 'annual conversation' is planned in early 2024 to review, and evidence, how the voice of the child has remained a key theme in our work. A task and finish group is engaged in planning our next children's event (November 2023) which will focus on healthy relationships for primary school aged children.

Pan Bedfordshire Cultural Competence Group

The Partnership responded to the review of the adultification, disproportionality and diversity issues and the effects on the criminalisation of children in the Youth Justice system by bringing together a multi-agency Pan Bedfordshire Cultural Competence Group for 2022/23. The group

received assurance from Bedfordshire Police on their local practices and ensured the multi-agency training programme content did not carry bias messaging and addressed adultification. The LSCP have undertaken work with the Adult Safeguarding Board to further support culturally appropriate practice. Further work will be considered around the training needs of the workforce on this theme. The National Panel included 'Intersectionality' in their updated guidance to safeguarding partnerships.

ENSURING THE PROVISION AND QUALITY OF HIGH QUALITY MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

Safeguarding Bedfordshire

Training has been commissioned in collaboration with the other two safeguarding partnerships in Bedfordshire for the last five years. Safeguarding Bedfordshire provides a multi-agency programme to meet the priorities of the three local safeguarding partnerships (Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, and Luton).

A workforce survey, undertaken in 2022 suggested whilst practitioners enjoy face-to-face training, virtual classroom sessions are often preferred as they reduce travel time and cost. Training attendance (face-to-face and virtual classroom) remains lower than pre-pandemic levels; **733** practitioners attended training this year (**a 6% decrease on 2021/22**), however, eLearning completions have increased by **25% to 9,264**. As part of the work to increase access to the training, there has been a change to the learning management platform used.

As part of our training assurance work, the Section 11 audit included **Standard 5**; with agencies evidencing how effective safeguarding training is available to all staff in contact with children, young people, and their families. The LSCP uses this to receive assurance from single agencies as to how they are ensuring their practitioners are able to access learning and development opportunities both within their agency and in a multi-agency setting.

Attendance summary

Class based Training	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2022/23	2021/22
Courses delivered	12	8	14	22	**56**	69
Delegates booked	149	137	172	275	**733**	780
Places Filled %	77%	97%	88%	81%	**86%**	91%
Satisfaction %	100%	97%	99%	100%	**99%**	98%
Cancelled	1	3	6	1	**11**	5

- The information on practitioner take up is a challenging one in many regards for Luton as there is a mixed picture of take up in Luton placed based agencies especially when compared to the other Pan Bedfordshire partnership practitioners. This is set out in the table below:

Training activity by agency

***Cl**- Virtual Classroom **eL**- eLearning*

Training Uptake by Agency	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4		Total 2021/22**		Total 2022/23	
	Cl	eL	Cl	eL	Cl	eL	Cl	eL	Cl	EL	Cl	eL
Bedford Borough Council	14	80	2	20	5	41	13	85	24	47	37	226
Central Bedfordshire Council	24	122	18	74	27	114	25	101	100	519	94	444
Luton Borough Council	4	0	4	21	3	63	7	37	46	97	18	122
BBC Schools/Academies	13	71	15	196	32	154	57	149	88	867	117	626
CBC Schools/Academies	32	224	20	378	34	394	86	520	159	942	172	1516
LBC Schools/Academies	0	45	36	64	40	151	34	184	91	476	110	451
BBC Early Years, Childcare, Out of School	6	30	9	40	2	124	6	156	20	247	23	350
CBC Early Years, Childcare, Out of School	12	235	6	272	4	307	8	584	32	770	30	1410
LBC Early Years, Childcare, Out of School	14	42	4	46	7	106	0	142	21	181	25	337
University of Bedfordshire	0	0	0	852	0	139	0	439	3	1197	0	1430
Adult Social Care	0	42	0	88	1	76	0	241	n/a	n/a	1	453
Emergency Services	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Faith	0	0	0	2	1	4	0	70	1	7	1	10
Health	10	14	7	9	3	39	14	84	34	81	34	101
Independent Organisation	1	188	6	96	6	271	6	419	40	1001	19	829
Police	8	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	15	7	11	3
Voluntary Charity	10	130	10	253	6	109	19	322	71	634	45	604
Youth Offending Service	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	1	15	3	0	5
Total	149	1225	137	2407	172	2095	275	3537	760	7389	733	9264

** Some completions were manually updated following issues with the host platform during this time.*

*** Agency types were rationalised in 2022/23. 2021/22 data was reported by organisation.*

Pan Beds eLearning	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2022/23	2021/22
Learners registered	2634	3654	2501	3,995	**12784**	8293
Learners completed	1225	2407	2095	3,537	**9264**	7386
Pass rate %	46.5%*	65.9%*	83.8%	88.5%	**72%***	89%
Satisfaction %	99%	100%	97%	97%	**98%**	99%

- **Impact of attending training:** we have continued to receive positive feedback regarding our courses. One delegate who attended Hearing the Voice of the Child found it so useful that she has commissioned our trainer to deliver the course to her staff team to ensure that the principles from the course are embedded in their residential setting.

- There is good news in terms of the number of school staff accessing the training but other areas of staff are very low when compared to their counterparts. This is a significant challenge for the partnership in 2022/23.

HOW DO LSCP KNOW ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

The LSCP meets with the two other safeguarding partnerships in the county and the statutory partners via a Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leadership Group that meets bi-monthly to discuss key issues and demands and to prioritise areas of work to be taken in regard to the safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children. The LSCP Business Plan 2020-2023 sets out the partnership priorities and how it measures impact through audit, performance data and the voice of the child.

This model has worked well with actions were delegated to the appropriate lead safeguarding Partnership or sub group and monitored via action plans held by the Pan Beds Coordination Group with regular highlight reports from the sub-groups, and progress reported to the Strategic Leaders Group.

In order to reduce pressures and demand in the system, Pan Bedfordshire activity especially around audits is coordinated by the Pan Beds Coordinating Group, which meant that the partners were able to participate in the wider audit programme. It was also able to gather evidence of good practice in the system.

The Effective Support Strategy (ESS) guidance was revised in June 2023 as partnership data had suggested there were a lot of contacts coming in which did not necessarily lead to further action, and this suggested there was possibly a lot of anxiety or confusion in the system which leads to increased referrals. The document has an aim to focus on having conversations about identifying the right support for the child rather than whether they meet the threshold for social care intervention. There are many examples of where this partnership dialogue has resulted in better outcomes. However, there also remains a challenge around the role of Lead Practitioner.

Evidence of impact can be found in terms of:

- ✓ A real strength of the partnership and service provided by Children's Social Care is that we kept our work as business as usual and in fact we saw a rise in Child Protection cases during the peak of the pandemic. Children are still being seen face to face and hybrid models of work is taking place to conduct child protection conference and other key meetings for children and families.
- ✓ Close partnership working with Bedfordshire's Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit, through MAGPan and our existing partnership arrangements, ensuring that risk of exploitation is addressed at an early stage through targeted interventions and support.
- ✓ Our PREVENT work is a strength: the work is well co-ordinated and effective with strong partnership working in place between key agencies.

- ✓ The work on introducing ICON has been led by CCS and a multi-agency task group has over the in 2022/23 worked on developing and delivering on communications activity to ensure all parents are familiar with ICON.
- ✓ A good example is the cross city working that developed with the Afghan refugee families that moved into the town in Aug 2021 which has continued in 2022/23 with the arrival of refugees who have crossed the channel or fled Ukraine. Collaboration between the council, health providers, police and voluntary sector has meant there is a clear package of support with a focus on prevention and support. This was designed to ensure that safeguarding issues when raised were set in a context where there were stressed families living in small spaces in an alien environment and to provide support.
- ✓ There is regular discussion and collaboration with MASH team and senior managers across partners as required to manage concerns and professional disagreements. A good example is the joint working across police, health, DWP and Children's social care in relation to a potential trafficking concern.
- ✓ There has been further engagement work with schools and communities and a real drive to make Education the 4th Safeguarding Partner.
- ✓ Activity to ensure the voice of Luton's children and young people helps to share the safeguarding system;
- ✓ There is evidence that the learning from CSPRS and learning reviews are leading to changes in the quality and consistency of practice, this appears to be a strength in the partnership, where learning promulgated and shared at frontline level, including at LBC practice weeks
- ✓ The BLMK ICB has worked to support children and their families by recognising immediate and long term risk to their health and wellbeing and setting up task and finish groups to address concerns regarding cohorts of children e.g. obesity group, mental health and wellbeing group.
- ✓ Health partners have also convened groups to discuss health and safeguarding concerns and develop action plans for individual children and the BLMK Designate Nurses has offered supervision and guidance on intervention for health partners who are concerned for the welfare of individual children on their caseload.
- ✓ The police have worked with partners in launching the child and young person migrant programme.
- ✓ The police have coordinated a multi-agency Neglect Scrutiny Panel to review and audit Body Warn Video and identify cases of neglect and improvements around identifying signs of abuse within the home. This has also helped to identify cases both of neglect and domestic abuse where earlier intervention may have helped.
- ✓ The Police have received funding for onward referrals for children and adults agreed for a 3-year period which will see referral pathways for children who are victims or witnesses of domestic abuse, sexual abuse or other emotional of physical abuse.
- ✓ As part of the work around victim engagement there are clear work streams around engagement with schools through 'reading time'.

PARTNERSHIP SELF EVALUATION – OUR ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE PLANS

The Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership in Luton has worked hard to maintain effective oversight of the safeguarding arrangements in Luton and to evolve from its former arrangements under the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership to reflect the requirements of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and has changed its name from the Luton Safeguarding Children Board in April 2022.

The partnership has established strong leadership and constructive, critical challenge of practice with the three statutory partners meeting monthly to provide greater oversight, drive on priorities and to evaluate risk, resource and capacity in the system. The wider partnership meetings have good representation from both statutory and voluntary organisations, including schools and have retained lay membership. Relevant agencies have demonstrated their commitment to safeguarding by contributing across a range of meetings and sub groups many of which are across Pan Bedfordshire.

There are good working relationships with the Safeguarding Adults Partnership, as we share an Independent Chair to ensure that where possible we address activities together. There is more focus and join up on the whole system response to some of the issues that affect each group such as domestic abuse, exploitation and substance misuse, and mental health. A wider protocol for joint working has been developed with shared Subgroups, development sessions and plans for joint practice development days covering cross cutting themes.

Having a shared Joint Learning Improvement Group has supported the connectivity across services and helped to identify possible gaps in legal literacy, transitional safeguarding and cultural competence.

Key assurance has been sought and evidenced around the priorities and how they have made a difference to outcomes for children and young people. The voices and lived experiences of children and young have had more of a focus as evidenced in the work evolved through the Wider Safeguarding Partnership on neglect and poverty. This has included review of '*The Relationship Between Poverty and Child Abuse and Neglect: New Evidence*' and what it means for children and families in Luton as the report highlights:

- The relationship between poverty and child abuse.
- The record level of children who are currently in "out of home" care.
- That 1 out of 60 children are being investigated for abuse or neglect each year.
- Family poverty and inequality are real factors of harm to children.
- Deep poverty is growing rapidly in UK in the recent months, which is likely to get worse
- That child protection services are rarely engaging effectively with impact of unemployment and housing conditions on families with children. One of the key recommendations is having a child protection system, which engages with family poverty.
- Referrals in Luton are likely to increase due to fuel poverty and increase in cost of living

The Wider Safeguarding Partnership considered its response given the view of the Pan Beds Neglect group is '*that the full impact of the pandemic has not yet been seen in relation to the challenge around neglect*'. It recognised that currently **46%** of the primary reasons for child protection plans in Luton is neglect. It also fed into its plans that in terms of domestic abuse and neglect, when neglect becomes very substantial, neglect becomes the primary focus and domestic abuse has a lesser focus, this needs to be further explored.

As highlighted in the partnership safeguarding snapshot and through the report there has been scrutiny of both single and multi-agency performance and assurance information. There have been several audits presented to the LSCP that provide a window into the multiagency safeguarding system. The LSCP has also participated in the Pan Bedfordshire section 11 self-assessment and provided challenge to partners and relevant agencies regarding their evidence against the descriptors within the safeguarding standards under focus.

Without a doubt the focus for practitioners accessing learning has been a challenging one, both for the service in its planning of virtual delivery, and in the practitioners and services ability to consider learning and balance that, with managing the day. It has continued to be difficult to meet the multi-agency audience requirements and enable a good mix of attendance with lower numbers, due to course capacity and virtual experience limitations. It is intended to move forward with a mixture of face to face, virtual learning experiences or blended learning experiences for those courses available. There is a real challenge for the partnership to provide accessibility for its practitioners and to achieve value for money.

Unaccompanied asylum seekers has been another area of focus for the LSCP as there have been significant number arrived in Luton over the last year. Looking at their needs and complexities, the services are constantly looking at crisis prevention within the system. The LSCP has considered secondary stress and what that may look like plan for the people using the services as well as the staff providing it. The LSCP recognises that 'when the system is creaking' that assurance is required that services are still functioning at the level they need to be. Social prescribing is an area that the LSCP needs to understand better and how the system can work well together to better support children and their families.

Assurance around systems, structures, processes and governance is also being collated with oversight by the Pan Beds Strategic Leaders Group. Two new subgroups were agreed as part of the Pan Beds structure, '*Safeguarding in Education*' as a core group and '*Cultural Competence'* as a golden thread. This alongside a review of our MASA arrangements has ensured that both the structure, form and function are the best fit for ensuring effectiveness of decision making and making best use of limited resources.

The LSCP will be reviewing the partnership funding for its business support in 2022/23. The partnership have maintained their funding level since 2018 with the Local Authority, as the largest contributor. An additional pressure for the partnership is their shared business support function with Luton Safeguarding Adult Partnership who have also seen increasing volumes of review work as well as sub groups and task and finish groups.

There has been a challenge for the partnership given the increase in volumes of work linked to reviews and additional pressure within the system to maintain their focus on their statutory duties confident that funding is available and at the appropriate level. This has required challenging strategic leadership, supported by the Strategic Business Manager, around the number, purpose and frequency of meetings held both place based across the Pan Beds partnership landscape. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of meetings held across the LSCP while ensuring strong governance remains to take forward the work.

The work of the Youth Justice Partnership has reduced the statutory footprint. The key performance indicators show clearly that Luton continues to outperform statistical family, national and critically regional comparators. However as a consequence of our focus, we have seen increased early intervention cohorts through developed initiatives such as Multi-Agency Gangs Panel, Amber and programmes in schools and in the community. Equally whilst the Edge of Care part of the Service has shown great promise in the last 18 months with large cost avoidance targets being met, the current cohort is in the older age range.

As a Service working with the most vulnerable cohorts of children and young people in Luton, we are comprehensively involved and invested in promoting the vision of a Child First youth justice service and delivering the strategic priority to make Luton child-friendly town. The creation of our contextual safeguarding response through the Youth Partnership Service puts children first and aligns with measurable outcomes of the strategy. Significantly, the key priority areas of the Strategic Management Board (early intervention, health and education) place children and their needs at the centre of the specialist interventions we deliver. The natural evolution of our Service development in Luton needs to see early intervention and prevention services targeting children at the start of their journey rather that the end.

Luton has a strong commitment to our community and we work closely with all anchor organisations across the town and the wider BLMK region to ensure that we are all working towards providing the best possible start and environment for our children and Young People. We have a number of initiatives that exemplify this the first is the Fairness taskforce that involves organisations and businesses from across Luton working together to meet our goal of a town built on fairness and social justice.

Luton Council are developing our child friendly Luton strategy and we are engaging with our young people to understand what they would like to see delivered as part of this. We have begun to engage with our partners from across the Luton system to look at how we achieve these goals. Partnership pledges from all key partners in our Children's Trust Board – with a clear commitment to having the shared goal of Child Friendly Town at the heart of all decision making.

The National Advisor for Care Leavers initially visited us in early 2022 and has since returned in March 2023 to review the progress of our Care Leavers Ambition Plan and the development of our Luton Promise. This work is being fully supported by Members, who have all been asked to become Champions that will support our whole system response to the needs of our Care experienced Young people this is led by our CEO and we continue to develop our support offer for health, housing, leisure and education and training.

To date we have created seven apprenticeship opportunities within Children's Services and have a pledge from all other Council departments that they will be able to offer at least one Apprenticeship, we are working with partners and Member champions to extend the offer of Apprenticeships in the wider community to our Care Leavers. Additionally Active Luton have provided a free Annual leisure pass where the Young Person can bring a friend along too. We have developed our housing offer and we are now able to help with decoration, white goods, carpets and furniture too. We have established joint working protocols with housing and the DWP to ensure that we have early sight for when tenancies become challenged to enable additional support to be put in place to minimise negative outcomes.

Partnerships help to build a strong and empowered community supporting fairness, equality and local pride and speaking with a powerful voice by:

- promoting a cohesive and inclusive society
- tackling prejudice, discrimination and hate in all its forms
- achieving equitable outcomes for all who are disadvantaged or a risk of disadvantage
- making Luton a disability friendly town
- ensuring our community has influence, voice and respect in shaping the vision and priorities for Luton 2040 and the future of the town
- Dallow Cares safeguarding initiative who are working with the Dallow Community to build community resilience for our young people and the impact of knife crime and mental health.

To measure progress on this priority we will be regularly monitoring the following target outcomes:

- Our 2040 vision for Luton to eradicate poverty.
- A town built on fairness with equitable outcomes for all our residents.
- A continually cohesive community where our residents get along well with each other.
- A meaningful voice for all our residents to shape the vision and direction of our town.
- Increased social responsibility and civic pride throughout our community.
- A thriving voluntary and community sector that enables our residents to support themselves and each other.

The BLMK ICB has sought to work closely with partners, for support with early intervention and good outcomes for children and their families. The front door audit has been useful for recognising those areas where improvement is needed in collaborative working particularly in the early stages when a family presents to services, needing help and support. The ICB has supported primary care colleagues and health providers to update their safeguarding policies in their respective organisations so that their work is guided by current legislation. Audits completed by health provider organisations demonstrate to the ICB how they recognise when children need to be safeguarded and how they subsequently work to support children and families.

This is also evident in key performance indictors submitted to the BLMK ICB, demonstrating outcomes, and any gaps in pathways, as well as through the serious incident reporting process.

The impact of this work is also evident through supervision sessions with individual staff members.

As part of further understanding of the effectiveness of multiagency safeguarding practice we intend to increase our placed base audits as this is a key message coming out from the Bedford Borough JTAI and our recent Ofsted focussed visit. We also recognise that our efforts to increase awareness and understanding of private fostering needs to be renewed and we will be launching a marketing campaign across our networks.

Whilst collaborative working between partner agencies has improved, communication pathways still need to be more robust so that safeguarding concerns for children and families are understood and actioned effectively. We have examples where the escalation process has not be followed properly by both partners and practitioners within Children Social Care and this has led to significant drift and delay for one of the families for which we are holding an Integrated SAR/CSPR. The issue of escalation is therefore an area that needs further work as well as application of the levels of need, risk and intervention within the Effective Support Strategy guidance. However, the LSCP as a strong and supportive partnership we will continue to hold challenging conversations in order to improve the outcomes for children in Luton.

INDEPENDENT CHAIR'S SCRUTINY OF THE PARTNERSHIP

Luton Safeguarding Partners as part of their arrangements to safeguard children and promote their welfare are required to demonstrate that they are open to independent scrutiny.

I have been appointed to take on the role of independent chair and to offer independent scrutiny of Luton's multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and this is my assessment of how effective these arrangements have been in practice over the past 12 months. I will highlight where I feel the arrangements are performing well and where I consider further development is required.

As an independent scrutineer it is my role to review the annual report for the Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership. This report highlights the improvement work carried out by the partnership, reflecting its commitment to the safety, wellbeing and development of children and young people in Luton.

Voice of Children, Young People and Families

The partnership has successfully prioritized the voice of children, actively involving them in decision-making processes and leveraging their insights to improve coordinated service delivery. By placing children at the heart of their work, the partnership has demonstrated its dedication to understanding and addressing their unique needs. This report provides details of the consultation event held with children to hear their voices around 'feeling safe' on page 33.

Partner response to Neglect

This report highlights the priority issue of 'neglect'. Neglect continues to be the most common form of child abuse across the UK, which reflects the position in Luton. It is vital that as a partnership, there is early recognition of neglect to ensure a consistent and timely response.

As a Pan Bedfordshire partnership we have adopted a single countywide child neglect assessment tool, called the Graded Care Profile (GCP2). GCP2 has been adopted by all partners, however, returns using this tool are low and disappointing. I will continue to challenge agencies to use GCP2 to identify children at risk of neglect and hope to see an increase in returns and an early intervention to improve the lives of children who are at risk of neglect.

Partner Commitment to Luton Safeguarding Arrangements

Luton works closely with the other partnerships across Bedfordshire to tackle all forms of child exploitation. This work showcases the partnership's determination to protect children from harm and support those who have been affected by these devastating experiences. Their work is a testament to the importance of a unified approach in tackling these complex issues. The report also highlights the Pan Bedfordshire work to bring schools and education settings closer to the strategic work of LSCPs , and to develop a Safeguarding in Education Engagement Strategy to support schools in becoming a fourth safeguarding partner.

Return Home Interviews can provide the partnership with a rich picture of intelligence which highlights key themes or trends and assists with activities to prevent further missing episodes. Whilst this is challenging work, I would like to see an increase in the successful completion of RHI's and will provide added scrutiny to this area in the following year.

The comprehensive Section 11 reports from relevant agencies and schools across Luton demonstrate a strong culture of safeguarding, accountability, and continuous improvement, essential in maintaining a high standard of child protection.

Learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Over recent years the partnership in Luton has had to deal with a high number of Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. I would like to see real vigour when it comes to learning from serious cases. The purpose of reviews of serious child safeguarding cases, at both local and national level, is to identify improvements to be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Such reviews should seek to prevent or reduce the risk of recurrence of similar incidents. It is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Partners to identify serious safeguarding incidents at a local level and then to review them as appropriate so that improvements can be made.

This report includes the details of the learning from Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR) undertaken in this reporting period along with the learning and activity from several legacy cases. It also outlines how the partnership has learned lessons from high profile national reviews.

Performance Monitoring and Analysis

Luton's Safeguarding Partners have a well organised group of multi-agency professionals that oversee reviews and ensure there is a culture of learning and continuous improvement. The group are very keen to see that the recommendations from reviews improve outcomes for children and that lessons learned are embedded into practice. Furthermore, the partners are creating a robust audit regime which will ensure that the learning is revisited and embedded. I will closely monitor the audit process to confirm that learning is indeed embedded, and practice is improved.

Evidence of Impact and Challenge

Another key focus of the partnership has been transitional safeguarding, ensuring a smooth and coherent journey for young people as they navigate the complexities of adolescence and transition to adulthood. The collaboration between agencies must be really strong in this area to create a strong safety net for these vulnerable young individuals. This continues to be complex and challenging work, particularly for those children who have been experiencing abuse and exploitation. As they reach 18, the services available to them are limited.

Abuse and exploitation does not end at 18 years of age and yet many services for adults are designed only to support those people with ongoing care and support needs. This important work needs to continue to enable the partnership to develop effective 'Transitional Safeguarding' arrangements.

Lastly the partnership's Safeguarding Training has received excellent feedback from delegates, highlighting its effectiveness in fostering a collaborative approach among professionals and empowering them with the knowledge and tools needed to safeguard children.

There are many strengths to the safeguarding children arrangements across Luton. I have found a partnership that is open to scrutiny and challenge and one that strives to continually learn and improve practice.

There is strong leadership and a clear sense of joint and equal responsibility from the three safeguarding partners. The partnership is one that is built on high support, high challenge and where difficult conversations are encouraged.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this annual report showcases the excellent and improving work carried out by the Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership in the past year. Their dedication, collaborative spirit, and unwavering commitment to child protection have led to some excellent outcomes, and I am confident that they will continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of the children and young people they support.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to thank all the organisations and individuals in the public, voluntary and private sectors who work tirelessly across Luton to improve the safety and quality of life of our children, young people, and families.

Alan Caton OBE
Independent Chair and Scrutineer Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership