

# Report of the Office of the Chief Executive to the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023

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**Subject: Update report and the National Independent Child Practice Review Report Published in May 2022**

## **Summary statement:**

This report provides an update and builds upon the report presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Report on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2022. This report identifies the progress made against the six local recommendations outlined in the National Independent Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's review from May 2022. The report highlights not only the advancements made in each area but also instances of improved processes and practices that have emerged during this period of reflection and improvement.

## **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:**

The Bradford District Safeguarding Children Partnership (BDSCP) promotes equality. It ensures that no individual or group is discriminated against based on race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, or other protected characteristic. The actions and recommendations outlined in this report have undergone a thorough equality assessment. This assessment ensures that the policies, practices, strategies, services, or functions presented herein are inclusive and do not inadvertently disadvantage any particular group.

The BDSCP recognises the importance of the Council's equality objectives. The work presented in this report contributes to these objectives by fostering a safeguarding environment where every child receives the highest standard of protection and care regardless of their background or identity. Specific measures have been implemented to ensure that the safeguarding practices are culturally sensitive and responsive to the

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diverse needs of our community.



## **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Following the tragic deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes in Solihull in June 2020, Star Hobson in Keighley, Bradford in September 2020, and the subsequent two murder trials and convictions in December 2021 of their parents and partners, a national review of learning from the two cases was initiated.
- 1.2 The review was undertaken by the national independent Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. This panel commissions reviews of serious child safeguarding cases, focusing on improving learning, professional practice and outcomes for children, based on the possibility of identifying improvements from cases that it views as complex or of national importance.
- 1.3 The review's primary focus was to try and understand how and why public services and systems designed to protect children were not able to do so. The review looked in detail at service responses to the two children's experiences, to make sense of what can be learned and must do differently in the future locally and nationally. The review, published on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2022 has six local and eight national recommendations. This Overview and Scrutiny report focuses primarily on the national and local recommendations for Bradford only.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 This report provides an update and builds upon the report presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Report on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2022. This report identifies the progress made against the six local recommendations outlined in the National Independent Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's review from May 2022. The report highlights not only the advancements made in each area but also instances of improved processes and practices that have emerged during this period of reflection and improvement.

### **2.1 RECOMMENDATION 1: REVIEW STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 2.2 In response to the national review's call to enhance strategic and operational responsibilities, the Bradford District Safeguarding Children Partnership (BDSCP) has taken several proactive measures. The Children's Partnership has convened development sessions, creating a new shared vision and objectives for 2023/25. While partners have been diligently reviewing their safeguarding structures, separate initiatives have been undertaken to understand the intricacies of resource allocation.
- 2.3 Recognising the importance of continuous learning, the National Review has been made accessible on the Safer Bradford website. Its insights have been disseminated through various channels, including webinars, events, and publications. To ensure data-driven decision-making, the BDSCP sub group Performance Monitoring Audit and Evaluation (PMAE) is realigning the partnership dashboard with safeguarding priorities. New recruitment initiatives have been successful to bolster data management capabilities.

**2.4** Each statutory safeguarding partner determines their contribution based on organisational capacities and budgetary constraints. The Strategic Leadership Group (SLG) plays an instrumental role in overseeing and finalising these financial arrangements. The BDSCP annually reviews these contributions to ensure they remain equitable, proportionate, and aligned with evolving needs.

**2.5** These contributions are documented and shared in the Partnership's annual report to maintain transparency and demonstrate commitment to prudent financial management. This approach ensures that funding is equitable and consistently aligned with the strategic objectives set by the safeguarding partners.

**2.6 RECOMMENDATION 2: COMPREHENSIVE EARLY HELP OFFER DEVELOPMENT**

**2.7** In light of the national review, BDSCP has been proactive in refining its early help offer, ensuring it's comprehensive and accessible at various stages of child and family assessment by the Bradford Childrens and Families Trust.

**2.8** The Partnership has meticulously reviewed its Pre-Birth Procedures, emphasising the assessment of parental and family risk factors and has been assured of further dissemination by partners. The Independent Chair's involvement with the improvement board has ensured alignment and prevented duplication of efforts.

**2.9** The approved Early Help Strategy, published in February 2023, will be a cornerstone of the Start for Life programme. This strategy is complemented by developing family hubs, children and young people's plan, and embedding Police Early Action teams in localities.

**2.10** Bradford District Care NHS Foundation Trust (BDCFT) has made improvements in antenatal health visiting, especially for first-time parents. They've introduced a new process to review antenatal records, ensuring vulnerable individuals receive timely face-to-face contact. Furthermore, a new 0-19 triage system has been implemented to provide no missed antenatal contacts.

**2.11** For pregnant teenagers, pathways have been reviewed to ensure efficient and effective support, with safeguarding activity reports now including data on under-18s bookings for maternity care.

**2.12** The role of care-leaving services has been expanded to support care leavers who transition into parenthood. This involves monthly meetings between adult and children services, a joint housing protocol for care leavers, and updated pre-birth guidance.

**2.13** The Partnership emphasises a holistic approach, focusing on child outcomes and involving extended families and neighbourhoods in supporting vulnerable young parents. The development of Family Hubs, restorative practices, and increased multi-agency workforce development opportunities is fortifying this approach.

**2.14 RECOMMENDATION 3: CLEAR EXPECTATIONS ON RISK ASSESSMENT AND DECISION MAKING**

- 2.15 In response to the call for more explicit expectations regarding risk assessment and decision-making, the BDSCP has undertaken several initiatives. The Integrated Front Door (IFD) has been implemented, ensuring timely service provision.
- 2.16 Strategy meetings, integral to the IFD, have undergone a continual review and refinement. The partnership has identified and is addressing key areas for improvement, particularly concerning the attendance and punctuality of these discussions. Moreover, progress is being made in reviewing and enhancing current processes, particularly on strategy discussions and Section 47 investigations. While the partnership has made progress in ensuring these procedures are consistent and embedded in practice, there is a collective acknowledgement that sustained efforts and diligence are essential to maintain and further elevate the standards of these critical safeguarding processes.
- 2.17 The Children's Social Care (CSC) has revamped its chronology template, aligning it with the National Law Group and providing bi-monthly training on chronology completion.
- 2.18 The David Thorpe Model approach to the IFD has been introduced. This model, combined with the updated policy for safeguarding children's supervision in 2022, aims to ensure effective, timely, and professionally challenging supervision of cases. Current efforts are focused on broadening the understanding of supervision across multiple agencies, including Police, Health services, and Children's services. However, a recent review indicated that only 50% of cases have recorded supervisory oversight, highlighting an area for continued improvement.
- 2.19 Furthermore, the BDSCP has emphasised the importance of professional curiosity, disguised compliance, and information sharing. Seven Minute Briefing guides have been published on these topics, and a complete training programme has been delivered to social workers.
- 2.20 In June 2023, the BDSCP, in collaboration with the Bradford Adult Safeguarding Board, hosted a pivotal joint conference centred on professional curiosity for frontline practitioners. This conference garnered the participation of over 100 delegates and featured nationally recognised speakers, underscoring the community's commitment to this crucial aspect of safeguarding. A highlight of the event was the afternoon session, which presented a case study derived from this review, offering insights and learning points from the findings. This case study served as a practical example to reinforce the theoretical knowledge imparted, ensuring that the principles of professional curiosity are understood and effectively applied in practice.
- 2.21 The co-location of the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) with the police has enhanced information sharing, and the review of the West Yorkshire Consortium Tri Ex procedures ensures alignment with best practices.
- 2.22 RECOMMENDATION 4: REVIEW AND COMMISSION OF DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES**
- 2.23 The BDSCP has taken significant steps to review and commission domestic abuse

services. An independent review led by Huddersfield University is currently assessing the effectiveness and availability of domestic abuse services across the Bradford District. This review aims to comprehensively understand service availability, capacity, and gaps, with a final report expected **by the end of November 2023**.

- 2.24 Training modules have been thoroughly reviewed, incorporating findings on domestic abuse, its impact on children, and the development of safety plans. A recent safeguarding conference in June 2023 emphasised these elements, and a dedicated website has been launched to provide resources and support on domestic abuse and sexual violence.
- 2.25 Additionally, the practice of routine enquiry about domestic abuse has become a standard part of the professional practices within midwifery and health visitor services. Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (BTHFT), Bradford District Care NHS Foundation Trust (BDCFT), and Airedale NHS Foundation Trust (ANFT) have all incorporated domestic abuse awareness and routine enquiry into their safeguarding training protocols. Recent audits have shown a significant implementation of routine domestic abuse enquiries in clinical interactions at BTHFT, with BDCFT and ANFT also placing a strong emphasis on this practice within their training programmes. While these figures are encouraging, the Trusts acknowledge the necessity for ongoing efforts to ensure that this practice is consistently applied across all cases. The commitment to continuous improvement in this area reflects the dedication to safeguarding the well-being of individuals and families within the community.
- 2.26 The BDSCP's efforts in response to Recommendation 4 demonstrate a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to addressing domestic abuse. Through independent reviews, training enhancements, and embedding routine enquiries in healthcare services, the partnership is continuing to make progress in ensuring a robust understanding and response to domestic abuse in the Bradford District.

## **2.27 RECOMMENDATION 5: UNDERSTANDING ROLES REGARDING ALLEGATIONS OF BRUISING**

- 2.28 In addressing Recommendation 5, the BDSCP has made progress in ensuring practitioners understand their roles when considering allegations of bruising.
- 2.29 The co-location of the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) and West Yorkshire Police at Trafalgar House as facilitated improved strategy discussions. This move has enhanced the quality of these discussions and facilitated the review and improvement of Section 47 Investigations. As previously documented in this report, additional training is being provided to managers and social workers on Section 47 and strategy discussions.
- 2.30 Professionals requesting a Child Protection Medical Assessment (CPMA) now follow updated documentation to ensure all crucial information about the child and family is shared during the assessment. The Principle Social Worker is responsible for familiarizing new social workers with this updated guidance. CPMA training has been incorporated into the Section 47 training and induction processes. The Bradford District Safeguarding Children Partnership plans to engage with the

Children's Trust to seek assurance about the implementation and efficacy of these CPMA practices, underscoring the commitment to continuous improvement in child protection.

- 2.31 Child Protection Medical Assessments (CPMAs) in the Bradford District are consistently conducted in accordance with the guidance provided by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH). Both Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (BTHFT) and Airedale NHS Foundation Trust (ANFT) demonstrated commendable performance in a recent national audit undertaken by the RCPCH, reflecting their commitment to these standards. Continuing their dedication to quality and compliance, both trusts maintain rigorous review processes for Child Protection reports to ensure ongoing adherence to the RCPCH guidelines.
- 2.32 Training workshops and briefing sessions have been conducted, focusing on case recording, assessment, plans, and lessons learned from this review.
- 2.33 A comprehensive training programme has been developed and implemented, addressing issues raised in this review, including medicals, information sharing, and bruising. The bruising has become a regular topic within existing training for social workers, ensuring they are well-equipped to handle such cases. Furthermore, Police colleagues have increased the number of Digital Media Investigators to bolster the Child Protection processes.
- 2.34 In conclusion, the BDSCP's actions in response to Recommendation 5 demonstrate a detailed approach to enhancing practitioners' understanding of their roles when dealing with allegations of bruising. Through improved strategy discussions, updated CPMA guidance, adherence to RCPCH standards, streamlined information provision, and comprehensive training. The commitment to multi agency training ensures that frontline practitioners are well-prepared and informed, fostering a more robust child protection system in the Bradford District

2.35 **RECOMMENDATION 6: REVIEW INFORMATION-SHARING PROTOCOLS**

This recommendation underscores the criticality of establishing and maintaining robust information-sharing protocols to safeguard children effectively. Recognising this, the BDSCP has taken decisive measures, including strategically co-locating EDT with the police at Trafalgar House. This initiative has substantially bolstered real-time information exchange, ensuring that vital data is accessible when it's most crucial. Concurrently, the district's statutory partners are reviewing and refining their existing information-sharing protocols. This comprehensive review is about alignment with current best practices and anticipation and preparation for future guidance.

- 2.35 In line with this forward-thinking approach, the BDSCP is actively reviewing and considering the insights from the recent parliamentary report, "Improving Multi-Agency Information Sharing." This report, which emphasises the enhancement of existing information-sharing protocols, serves as a beacon for the BDSCP's ongoing efforts.
- 2.36 Additionally, the BDSCP is keenly awaiting the revised "Working Together

Guidance 2023." Even though it's currently in the consultation phase, this guidance is anticipated to fortify information-sharing practices further. Once finalised, the BDSCP is poised to adopt and integrate the recommendations from this guidance into its operational framework. The partnership's proactive stance on this matter underscores its commitment to ensuring that every piece of shared information contributes effectively to safeguarding children in Bradford.

## **2.37 BDSCP'S COMMITMENT TO ROBUST INFORMATION SHARING**

The Bradford District Safeguarding Children Partnership acknowledges that information sharing consistently emerges as a pivotal theme in numerous reviews, both at the national and local levels. Recognising its paramount importance, the BDSCP is committed to exploring innovative avenues to bolster the confidence of staff in this domain.

2.38 The partnership believes that when practitioners have the right tools and knowledge, they can share information more effectively, knowing they stand on solid legal and ethical ground. While improvements have been made, the BDSCP is cognisant of the journey ahead. The intent is to cultivate an environment where information sharing becomes second nature, underpinned by trust, clarity, and the collective goal of safeguarding the vulnerable.

2.39 The partnership's will continue with ongoing efforts to refining this crucial aspect of child protection, ensuring that every piece of information is harnessed to its fullest potential for the welfare of the children in Bradford.

2.40 The Oversight & Delivery Group, under the guidance of its Chair, has taken strategic steps to amplify accountability and transparency in the challenge process. A series of assurance meetings with key agencies integral to the action plan's execution has been undertaken.

2.41 These meetings serve as a platform for a comprehensive assessment of progress against the plan's recommendations and actions. They also foster constructive dialogue and challenge, ensuring that the partnership's approach to challenge remains dynamic and continues to focus on service improvement.

2.42 The Practitioner Forums, designed by the Business Unit Manager and facilitated by the Independent Chair and Scrutineer, have emerged as a vital mechanism for two-way communication between the safeguarding partnerships and frontline practitioners. These forums foster the sharing of skills and expertise and facilitate discussions on impactful information concerning vulnerable children, adults, and families.

2.43 The Independent Chair recognises the immense value of these forums and envisions them as an ongoing engagement tool within the quality assurance framework.

## **2.44 EXPLORING PROGRESSIVE PRACTICE: THE BRISTOL INSIGHT MODEL**

2.45 In the pursuit of continuous improvement, the BDSCP has been actively exploring progressive practices in child safeguarding. A promising avenue that has emerged



is adopting a model aligned with the "Bristol Insight" and the "Think Family Database." This innovative approach, which emphasises a holistic view of child welfare, was spotlighted as a best practice in the recent Social Care Review led by Josh MacAlister.

2.46 By integrating the principles and methodologies of this model, the BDSCP aims to enhance its data-driven decision-making processes, ensuring that every intervention is both timely and effective. The "Data as One" project board has been entrusted with ensuring this initiative's successful implementation and monitoring. This board will oversee the integration of the model, ensuring that its principles are embedded in the partnership's daily operations, ultimately driving positive outcomes for the children of Bradford.

## **2.47 A CONTINUOUS COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE IN SAFEGUARDING**

2.48 The Bradford District Safeguarding Children Partnership (BDSCP) has dedicated significant time and resources to meticulously compile and execute the actions within the main action plan. This commitment reflects our focus to the safety and well-being of the children in our district. All but one of the actions have been completed, with the final action set for completion in November.

2.49 It's imperative to understand that safeguarding is a dynamic and evolving process. While we acknowledge the completion of specific actions, many of these represent ongoing commitments that will require continuous monitoring, review, and adaptation. For instance, monitoring and reviewing strategy meetings is not a one-time task but an enduring responsibility, ensuring our practices remain robust and responsive to the needs of our community.

2.50 The BDSCP is not just ticking boxes but is deeply invested in improving our safeguarding practices. BDSCP remains steadfast in its dedication to continuous improvement and elevating service delivery standards.

2.51 The learning from the review was published in the Bradford District Safeguarding Children Partnership's Annual Report for 2022/23. This information was posted on the Safer Bradford website on October 31st and presented to the Council Executive Committee on November 7th, fulfilling the obligatory duty to disseminate such findings.

2.52 The profound impact of the loss of a child resonates deeply within our community and especially among those of us in safeguarding roles. Such events serve as poignant reminders of the gravity of our responsibilities. As a partnership, we are resolutely committed to ensuring that every child in our care receives the protection, support, and opportunities they rightfully deserve.

## **3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

There are no other considerations.

## **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

4.1.1 There are no financial issues arising from this report. .

## **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

5.1 The protection of Children is the highest priority for the Council and its partners when considering the implications of abuse, as is the provision of services to support those who are victims of this abuse. Failure to protect and provide appropriate services significantly increases the risk to children in the district. It would lead to significantly reduced public confidence in Bradford Council, West Yorkshire Police, the Health economy and other partners, as has been demonstrated nationally.

## **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report, in that it does not impose any additional legal duties or obligations on the Council. Rather, it provides an update on recommendations for improvement of services, many of which have either already been adopted by agencies, or which will be incorporated into the future working practices of those agencies in the exercise of their statutory duties.

## **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

Nil

### **7.2 TACKLING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY IMPLICATIONS**

Nil

### **7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

7.31 The Bradford Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and BDSCP are essential collaborators in protecting the community's most vulnerable individuals. The implications for the BDSCPs 2022/23 annual report show enhanced cooperation and communication between these partnerships, sharing knowledge, resources, and best practices to mitigate identified risks effectively. BDSCP, & CSP intend to explore overlapping areas of responsibility. Continued opportunities may exist to refine roles or develop joint strategies for more impactful community safeguarding.

7.32 Across West Yorkshire we are adopting a public health approach to reducing violence and seek to identify the common risk factors driving violence and the protective factors preventing violence. This encourages identification of these factors and implementing interventions across all levels: individual, relationship, community and societal, at the same time.

7.33 The public health approach to violence reduction has dedicated research and evidence at its core and addresses the inequalities that can lead to involvement in serious violence.

#### **7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

7.5 The use of violence and intimidation is a violation of the rights of the child/adult under the Human Rights Act. The multi-agency partnership arrangements are intended to prevent the rights of the child/adult being violated in this way.

#### **7.5 TRADE UNION**

Nil

#### **7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

Nil

#### **7.7 AREA COMMITTEE LOCALITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

Nil

#### **7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

7.81 The perspectives and well-being of young people are at the forefront of every measure implemented. The updates to strategy discussions, information sharing protocols, and the concerted efforts in training and process refinement directly contribute to a more robust safeguarding framework. This not only aligns with the Council's legal and moral duties as a Corporate Parent but also actively promotes better outcomes for Looked After Children. By enhancing the precision and responsiveness of our safeguarding practices, we are creating an environment where the voices of young people are heard, and their safety and development are prioritised, ensuring that the impact on Bradford's youth is positive and enduring.

#### **7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT**

7.91 The nature of child protection work requires partners to manage confidential matters and data under GDPR regulations in accordance with individual agency guidelines. There is no sensitive data included in this report that requires a Privacy Impact Assessment None.

#### **8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

Nil

#### **9. OPTIONS**

Nil

#### **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 The Committee is requested to acknowledge and note the progress against the recommendations.

**11. APPENDICES**

**12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Nil