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### **Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)**

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#### **Time and Date**

10.00 am on Thursday, 16th January, 2025

#### **Place**

Diamond Room 2 - Council House

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#### **Public Business**

1. **Apologies and Substitutions**

2. **Declarations of Interests**

3. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 10)

a) To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024

b) Matters Arising

4. **Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership Yearly Report** (Pages 11 - 60)

Briefing Note of the Director of Children and Education

5. **School Attendance Duties** (Pages 61 - 76)

Briefing Note of the Director of Children and Education

6. **Work Programme** (Pages 77 - 80)

Briefing Note of the Director of Law and Governance

7. **Any Other Business**

Any other items of business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.

#### **Private Business**

Nil

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Julie Newman, Director of Law and Governance, Council House, Coventry

Wednesday, 8 January 2025

Note: The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Tom

Robinson Email: tom.robinson@coventry.gov.uk

Membership: Councillors J Birdi, B Christopher, J Gardiner, Mrs S Hanson (Co-opted Member), Mr D Jackson (Co-opted Member), R Lancaster, S Nazir, E M Reeves, R Thay, CE Thomas (Chair), A Tucker and Mr G Vohra (Co-opted Member)

By invitation: Councillors K Sandhu (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) and P Seaman (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)

**Public Access**

Any member of the public who would like to attend the meeting in person is encouraged to contact the officer below in advance of the meeting regarding arrangements for public attendance. A guide to attending public meeting can be found here: <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/publicAttendanceMeetings>

**Tom Robinson**

**Email: tom.robinson@coventry.gov.uk**

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)**  
**held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 28 November 2024**

Present:

Members: Councillor CE Thomas (Chair)  
Councillor J Birdi  
Councillor B Christopher  
Councillor J Gardiner  
Councillor R Lancaster  
Councillor E M Reeves  
Councillor R Thay  
Councillor A Tucker

Co-Opted Members: Mrs S Hanson and Mr G Vohra

Other Members: Councillor K Sandhu (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills)

Employees (by Service Area):

Children's and Education A Coles, R Hamblett, S Kinsell, N Macdonald, R Sugars, S Watson, A Whitrick

Law and Governance G Holmes, T Robinson, A Veness

Apologies: Councillors S Nazir and P Seaman (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Mr D Jackson (Co-opted Member)

## **Public Business**

### **49. Declarations of Interests**

The Board noted that Councillor CE Thomas was a trustee at Willenhall Community Forum, Councillor R Lancaster was involved in the delivery of the Coventry Holiday Activities and Food Programme, and Mrs S Hanson was the Vice Chair of Inspire. As these were not disclosable pecuniary interests, they all remained in the meeting.

### **50. Exclusion of Press and Public**

**RESOLVED** that the Board agrees to exclude the press and public under Sections 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 relating to the private report in Minute 57 below headed 'Homes for Children in Care – Update Report' on the grounds that the report involves the likely disclosure of information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The grounds for privacy are that it refers to information relating to an individual and the financial or business affairs of an organisation and the

**amount of expenditure proposed to be incurred by the Council under a particular contract for the supply of goods or services. The public interest in maintaining the exemption under Schedule 12A outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.**

**51. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October, 2024 were agreed and signed as a true record.

**52. Coventry Holiday Activities and Food Programme**

The Scrutiny Board consider a Briefing Note of the Director of Children and Education, together with a video at the meeting, which provided an update on the Coventry Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme over the past 12 months.

The Briefing Note indicated that the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is a national initiative, aimed at addressing holiday inequalities through a blend of free positive activities and experiences coupled with healthy food and support to families. The national aims of the programme are to ensure a high-quality experience that will result in children:

- receiving healthy and nutritious meals
- maintaining a healthy level of physical activity
- being happy, having fun and meeting new friends
- developing a greater understanding of food, nutrition and other health related issues
- taking part in fun and engaging activities that support their development and well-being
- feeling safe and secure
- getting access to the right support services
- returning to school feeling engaged and ready to learn

Similarly, families should also be able to benefit from this support, and this could be through:

- providing opportunities to get involved in sessions, for example cookery classes.
- ensuring they are signposted towards other sources of information and support, such as health services or employment and education opportunities.

In terms of funding arrangements, Coventry City Council is in receipt of an annual Department for Education grant (£1,587,840 for 2024/25 with a further investment of £50,000 from Coventry Building Society) and leads a multi-agency partnership to deliver activities in the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holiday periods.

Therefore, the core eligibility criteria are statutory school-age children (reception to year 11) who are entitled to benefits-related free school meals. Local Authority areas have discretion to broaden eligibility and Coventry have extended this to include children assessed through a Children and Families assessment,

undertaken by Children's Services, as in need, on a child protection plan, in care, assessed to be in financial hardship (through an early help assessment), or referred via the Migration and Resettlement teams. Children and young people in years 12-13 are eligible if they are in receipt of benefits-related free school meals (FSM) and have an Education and Healthcare Plan (EHCP) or are receiving special educational need (SEN) support at their place of education. There is also discretion for parents to refer appropriate children.

The national roll-out of HAF took place in 2021, with the first Coventry face-to-face delivery taking place in the 2021 summer holiday. This has included wider support through in person events in the build up to going live for the Summer 2024 HAF Programme, including a live cooking demonstration, support to the resettlement team event and in person booking support for families across the city.

The Board were informed that HAF funding is in place until 31 March 2025, with Christmas 2024 currently being the last funded holiday and that Coventry City Council is part of the national HAF network which focuses on building the case for funding to be continued post-2025 in the context of increasing needs (e.g. Cost of Living Crisis).

Councillor K Sandhu, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, began the discussion by highlighting HAF as one of the Council's biggest success stories, involving more partners, more young people, and more diversity than in the previous four years of the programme. She stated that being able to offer young people a place to feed their aspirations and their confidence while eating a healthy meal was having a continued impact throughout the city.

The Board questioned Officers and received responses on a number of matters relating to the HAF Programme:

- Delivering the programme while staying within budget and utilising an extra £50,000 investment from Coventry Building Society to prioritise children from Special Schools.
- Positive indications of continuing government funding past March 2025.
- Expanding provision of the programme to the children of home educators, especially those with SEND considerations – expanding the programme criteria locally whilst bearing in mind the programme's capacity.
- The possibility of co-ordinating with the ICB (Local Integrated Care Board) and the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport to communicate both the educational and health benefits of the programme.
- Community organisations and building trusted relationships between the council, the providers, the children and their families.
- Contingency plans for funding and the prospects for the programme if funding stops.

Councillor K Sandhu thanked the Board for their contributions and the officers for their continued successful delivery of the programme.

**RESOLVED that the Board:**

- 1. Notes the information in the Briefing Note about the Coventry Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme.**

2. **Promotes the Coventry HAF programme and supports the national case for continued HAF funding post-March 2025.**
3. **Requests the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:**
  - **Makes the case for continued funding in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.**
  - **Requests the criteria for discretionary eligibility be considered to include home educated pupils.**
  - **Works alongside the Cabinet Member for Public Health, Sport, and Wellbeing to identify potential funding from health partners to enhance the HAF programme.**

### 53. **Social Worker Recruitment and Retention - Workforce Update**

The Board considered a Briefing Note of the Director of Children and Education on the Social Worker Recruitment and Retention implementation and the impact to date.

The Briefing Note outlined that recruitment and retention of social workers continues to be a national problem and accepted in the government's response to the Independent Review of Social Care. The workforce profile over the past few years has led to Children and Education Services supporting a "grow our own" approach, with a key focus on enabling social workers into the profession and developing into experienced social workers with high quality practice standards.

Therefore, the local picture in Coventry in many ways mirrors the regional and national picture. Coventry has continued to face challenges to recruitment and retention of social workers, which has impacted the stability of the workforce, and the number of agency staff required to cover vacancies. Coventry is based within the West Midlands but also within commuter distance to East Midlands. It is therefore in an area where there are several local authorities all competing for the same pool of social workers, which makes it a competitive market for social workers.

Previously, in 2023/2024 investment was approved for Children and Education Services to support the recruitment and retention of social workers. This was in response to a challenging period, where a mix of high case levels, difficulty recruiting experienced social workers and a limited supply of suitable agency staff meant that children's social worker vacancies were significantly high.

Importantly, Coventry Children and Education Service's vision for the Social Work workforce was to secure a stable, permanent, highly skilled and capable workforce. Coventry's practice approach has evolved since the launch of Coventry Family Valued, as Coventry Children and Education Services has become more relational and restorative, and more recently, Rethink Formulation has been introduced as a tool to support practitioners to rethink practice 'with' children and

families further, and to support the growing relational and restorative culture in Children and Education Services and across the partnership.

The key recruitment and retention initiatives implemented over the last twelve-month period have included but were not limited to:

- In 2023/24, a retention payment was paid to experienced social workers, advanced social workers and senior practitioners who remained in post for a period of twelve months up to 31 March 2024.
- A Progression Pathway for experienced social workers launched in April 2024 to provide experienced social workers the opportunity to progress to Advanced Social Workers.
- A Progression Pathway for newly qualified social workers launched in September 2024 to provide newly qualified social workers the opportunity to progress six months earlier subject to meeting ASYE and competences.
- A review of the Social Work Academy has been completed to embed a structure to support delivering the workforce to meet service demand and the needs of our children, families and communities.
- A total of 25 Apprentices are undertaking a Social Work Apprenticeship (5 commenced in in September 2024; 6 Apprentices complete in June 2025, and 14 complete in June 2026).
- Flexible Working 9-day fortnight has been piloted and rolled out to the wider service area to support staff/social workers with maintaining a work life balance.
- A successful wellbeing offer for all staff continues to be offered to support wellbeing and retention of staff.
- Regular Social Worker Recruitment open evenings, held jointly with Adults Social Care to increase the number of social workers.

The Board questioned Officers and received responses on a number of matters relating to social worker recruitment and retention including:

- How flexible working arrangements operate for staff and the benefits of this new system.
- Coventry as a challenging geographical location for recruiting social workers in terms of its vicinity to other local authorities.
- The competition with other local authorities over retention payments.
- Adopting progression models to provide new starters with an assurance of progression.
- Coventry being slightly higher on average compared to the national average of retention when benchmarked against other local authorities due to:
  - The 'grow our own' approach of training and development including the social work academy model.
  - Good starting salaries.
  - Good retention payment offers.
  - Coventry being highlighted for good standards and practices.
- The primary reasons for staff leaving – namely work/life balance and money – and circumventing this through flexible working arrangements and wellbeing offers.
- The positive impact of flexible working on levels of sickness that continues to be a national issue.

- The impact on budgets and sustaining relationships with children and families when staff members leave.
- The proportion of staff members leaving the profession completely and being confident that Coventry's offer is enough to retain staff members.
- Possibility for a cap on social worker's caseloads and the difficulties in this approach because of the legal requirements for provision.
- One-year restrictions on employing agency staff who have previously worked for the local authority.
- Rotating social worker roles and encouraging staff to gain experience in multiple areas and with multiple families.
- Tracking social workers for their safety and the piloting of the Oyster personal safety device.
- The balance of experience and average age of Coventry's staff.

The Board requested that officers consider accelerated increments for retention payments for Social Workers to support retention of staff

**RESOLVED that the Board notes the current progress.**

#### 54. **Homes for Children in Care - Update Report**

The Board considered a Briefing Note of the Director of Children and Education which provided an update on the complexities of finding homes for children in care following the Briefing Note previously considered by the Board at the meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2023.

The Briefing Note stated that in the last 2-3 years there has been a marked increase in the number of children and young people in care that local authorities have struggled to find appropriate homes for. This is a widely reported national issue and is a consequence of several interlinked factors, which were highlighted in Competition and Market's Authority report of March 2022, the Independent Review of Children's Social care of May 2022 and the Government's consultation response to this review – Stable Homes, Built on Love (February 2023). There is national recognition that the children's placement market is broken.

As officers reiterated during the meeting, Pro Bono Economics reported on the national challenges in October 2024: The number of children in residential care has more than doubled (102% increase) since 2011 with spending on these placements jumping by 90% (an increase of £1.1billion). Almost half of this increase has come in the last two years.

To tackle this, the Coventry practice model 'Family Valued' works on the premise of keeping children and families together when it is safe to do so. This approach seeks to enable families to find the solutions to challenges they face. Families are supported through Family Network Meetings and Family Group Conferences (FGC) and additional support to identify family led solutions. Family led solutions include kinship arrangements (connected fostering) which are sought, when a child is unable to remain safely with their parent/s. This area has seen significant growth in Coventry, with around 120 children now being placed in a kinship arrangement and 40 children being supported to achieve permanence through a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) last year.



The Briefing Note outlined that the number of children in care decreased earlier this year, with 668 children being in care as of April 2024. However, in line with an annual trend of more children entering care over the summer period, this increased to 720 by September 2024. There are currently 69 children living in a residential children's home (end of September 2024), placed by Coventry Children's Services, an increase of 10 children from April.

However, when children enter care urgently or need to move at short notice, officers stated that finding the right home for a child in the current market can be challenging, providers may request funding for additional resources particularly if a child is moving from one children's home to another. In addition, the impact on the child having to move can further perpetuate their sense of rejection, self-worth & subsequent trauma.

Officers highlighted that the new 'Short Stay, Same Day' children's home which is due to open imminently, sought to address some of these challenges by enabling a planned move, supporting a robust search for the right home, at the right time, in the right place.

The Board questioned Officers and received responses on a number of matters relating to homes for children in care including:

- Covering the costs of children's placements when they cross local authority borders.
- Joint working and preventive services arrangements – specifically trying to prevent children in mental health crisis from waiting in accident & emergency and using the Hope Model to steer them in alternative directions.
  - Similarly investing in the Kooth counselling and support service to allow children from different ethnic backgrounds the space to talk about their mental health.
- Work being undertaken to simplify and streamline becoming a foster carer while recognising the importance of safeguarding – future updates to the national minimum standards to facilitate this process.
- Trauma reactions and self-sabotaging behaviour of some of the most vulnerable looked after children.
- Projected savings if using council owned homes for children instead of private provision.
- Future plans to bring looked after children into council owned homes for children and the impact this would have on the children and their families.

The Board thanked officers for their responses and for their continued hard work.

**RESOLVED that the Board:**

- 1. Continues to support the Residential Strategy 2023-2026.**
- 2. Notes the two additional homes for our children with the most complex needs.**

**3. Supports the work being undertaken in relation to sufficiency, addressing high-cost placements and improving outcomes for our children in care.**

**55. Work Programme**

The Board noted the Work Programme.

**56. Any Other Business**

There were no items of public business.

**57. Homes for Children in Care - Update Report**

Further to Minute 54 above, the Board received and noted a private Briefing Note of the Director of Children and Education which set out the personal and commercially confidential matters relating to the Homes for Children in Care – Update Report.

(Meeting closed at 12.20 pm)



Coventry City Council

## Report

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**To: The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)**

**Date: 16<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

**Title: Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership Yearly report**

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### **1 Purpose**

- 1.1 To brief the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) on the Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CSCP) yearly report in relation to activity of the CSCP April 23- March 24.

### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) is recommended to:
1. Note the contents of the annual report in Appendix 1.
  2. Identify any further recommendations

### **3 Information/Background**

- 3.1 Working Together 2023 states that, 'Safeguarding Partners must jointly report on the activity they have undertaken in a 12 month period. That reporting should be transparent and easily accessible to the families and professionals. The focus of these reports should be on multi agency priorities, learning, impact, evidence and improvement.
- 3.2 Reports must include what partnerships have done as a result of the arrangements, including on child safeguarding practice reviews and how effective these arrangements have been in practice.
- 3.3 Safeguarding Partners should make sure the report is widely available. A copy should also be sent to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.
- 3.4 The CSCP had 3 priorities for 2023-2024 :
- Child Sexual abuse
  - Exploitation
  - Making the system work

### **4 Highlights 2023-2024**

- Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership was subject to a Joint Targeted Area inspection in March 2024. Inspectors found that, 'Children at risk of criminal exploitation and Serious Youth Violence are safer as a result of

partnership working undertaken by both statutory services and the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector to reduce risks in places and spaces as well as for individual young people in Coventry. Mature partnerships are in place’.

- Child Sexual Abuse Leads have been trained and are embedded across Children’s Services meaning that children and families benefit from well supported and skilled workers.
- A Child Sexual Abuse conference was held in May 2023 attended by 166 practitioners from across the partnership.
- 2000 practitioners have attended training, webinars and learning events.
- The Safeguarding Together Action Group (STAG) made up of 40+ frontline practitioners continues to grow, ensuring that key messages get to the frontline.
- The CSCP has developed new ways of communicating with practitioners to include online events, one-minute guides, webinars and podcasts.
- ‘Your Voice Matters’ the young people’s group supports children and young people to have a voice. Work has been undertaken to ensure that their views are acted upon.
- The CSCP has continues to be much more responsive to emerging issues rather than sticking to a planned programme of work. Examples of this include the Early help audit and the Domestic Abuse audit.

## **5 Priorities for 2024-2025**

5.1 The following have been agreed as the priorities for 2019-2021:

- Neglect
- Exploitation
- Making the system work

Report Author(s):

**Name and Job Title: Rebekah Eaves, Coventry Safeguarding Children’s Partnership and Adults Board Manager**

**Directorate: People Directorate**

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Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

**Appendix 1 - Coventry Safeguarding Children’s Partnership Annual report 2023-2024**



# ■ Annual report 2023-2024





**Coventry  
Safeguarding  
Children**  
PARTNERSHIP

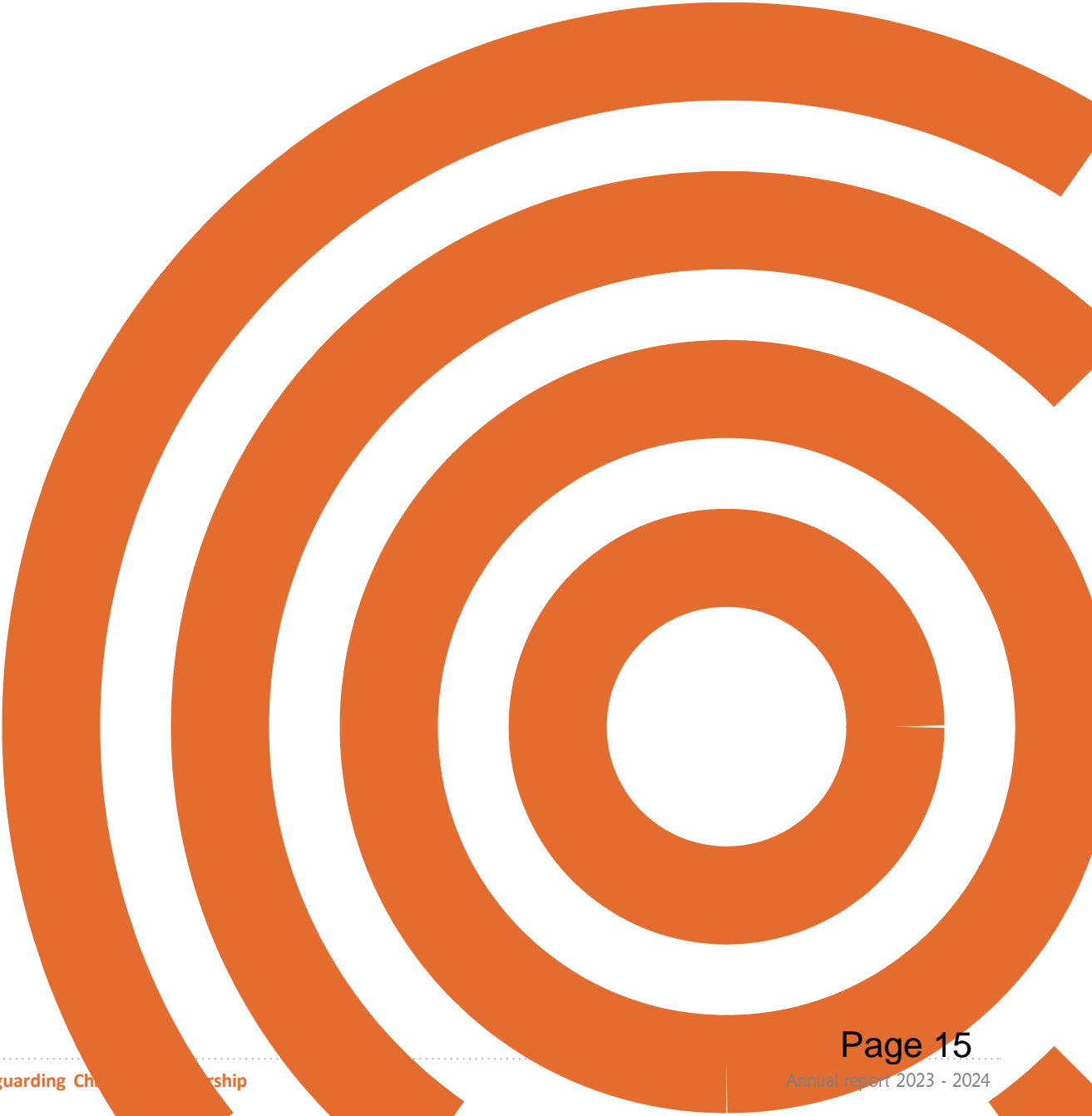
**Board partners**

 <p><b>National Probation Service</b></p>	 <p><b>NHS</b> <b>Coventry and Warwickshire</b> Integrated Care Board</p>
 <p><b>NHS</b> <b>Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership</b> NHS Trust</p>	 <p><b>NHS</b> <b>West Midlands Ambulance Service</b> NHS Foundation Trust</p>
 <p><b>NHS</b> <b>South Warwickshire</b> NHS Foundation Trust</p>	 <p><b>Coventry City Council</b></p>
 <p><b>CITIZEN</b></p>	 <p><b>WEST MIDLANDS POLICE</b></p>



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## Introduction from the Safeguarding Partners



This report is Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership yearly report for the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and sets out the work that has been undertaken by partners and the subgroups of the CSCP during that time.

Over the past year we have gone from strength to strength as a partnership and both strategic leaders and frontline practitioners strive within their roles to collaborate, learn, resource, be inclusive and mutually challenge one another to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and young people in Coventry.

The Safeguarding Partners are now considering the revised Working Together 2023 and looking at ways to strengthen our arrangements to provide the best possible outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to thank practitioners across all sectors as well as communities whose efforts make Coventry a Child friendly city every day.



## Coventry's population figures

### Population growth

From 2011 to 2021 Coventry's population grew by 8.9% from 317,000 to

# 345,300

This is higher than both the overall increase for the West Midlands of 6.2% and 6.6% for England



The latest mid-year population estimate (2022) for Coventry's population is

# 355,600

Coventry is a diverse city **55.9%** of school children are from an ethnic minority group



In the 2021 census, 45% of Coventry's population identified as an ethnic minority, an increase from 33% in 2011



England 26%. West Midlands 28%

**91%** of primary

**85.8%** of secondary

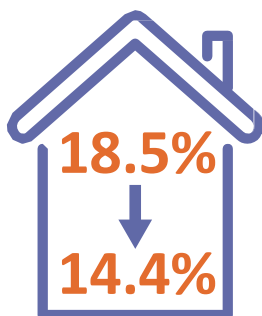


Pupils attend a good or outstanding school, below statistical neighbours at 94.5% and 88.2% and below the percentage nationally at 93.9% and 86.8%

The latest data for 2021-22 suggests that



**27%** Coventry children aged 0-15 live in relative low-income families compared with **20%** nationally and matching the percentage in the West Midlands region



The percentage of Coventry neighbourhoods that are amongst the 10% most deprived in England reduced from 18.5% to 14.4% between 2015 and 2019

Based on this measurement Coventry ranked 64th nationally in 2019 (with 1st being the most deprived), an improvement in ranking 46th in 2015

**78,947**  
**(22%)** of the city's population were children and young people aged under 18

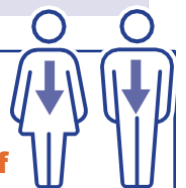
**225,915**  
**(64%)** were of working age 18 - 64

**50,738**  
**(14%)** were aged 65 and over

In 2022



Young city with a medium age of



**34 years** and is falling England average

**40** years 2022 mid-year population estimate



## Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership arrangements

Arrangements for Safeguarding Partners to work together and identify and respond to the needs of children and young people in Coventry.

### Our values are:

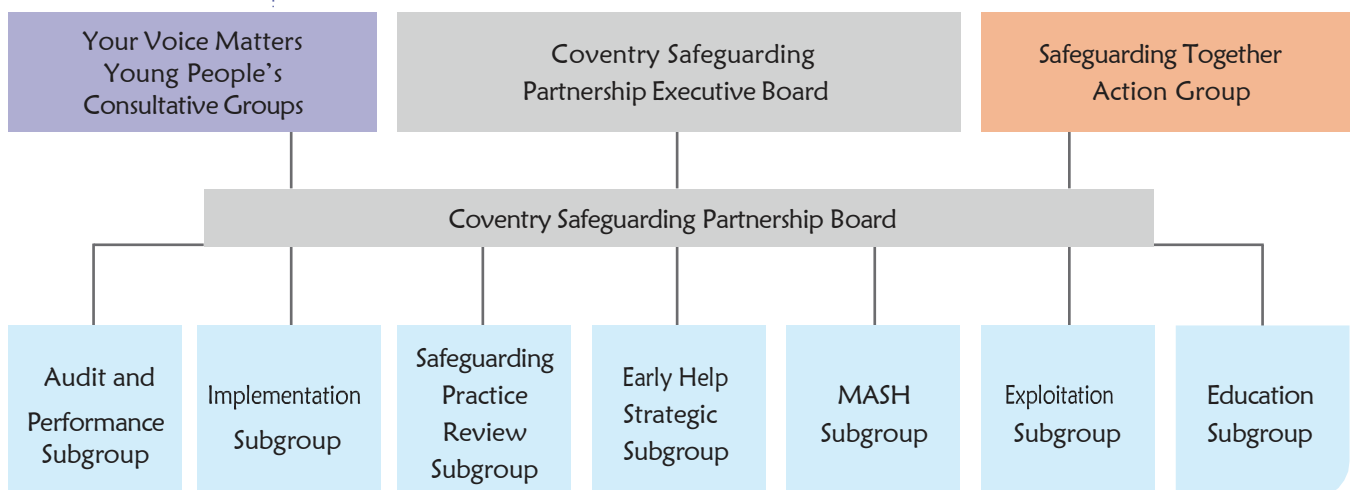
Our vision is to work in partnership to ensure that children and young people are protected from harm and neglect and that their welfare is promoted.

Our values are:

- To put children, young people and families at the heart of everything we do.
- To ensure that partners work together achieving better outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- To recognise and share examples of good practice so that these can be replicated in other areas.
- To be innovative and to try new approaches to ensure continuous improvement.
- To be open and honest about barriers that may be preventing improvement so that we can collectively agree how these may be overcome.
- To ensure that poor practice is challenged appropriately to ensure that it leads to improvements in the system.
- To ensure that children, young people, and their families receive the right service, at the right time in the right way.

Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership benefits from strong, maturing relationships with partners which allows a greater degree of not only collaboration but challenge.

### CSCP Organisational Chart



The current arrangements can be found here: [coventry\\_safeguarding\\_children\\_partnership\\_-\\_safeguarding\\_arrangements](#) The Safeguarding Partners are currently undertaking consultation as well as developmental work to look at updating the arrangements in line with Working Together 2023, Chapter 2. These will be published by 31st December 2024.

## Engagement of Education

Coventry benefits from a strong and embedded education partnership approach with formalised communication channels and planned systemic engagement with Headteachers.

The Director of Children's Services and Education sits on the CSCP Board and Executive Group and a Headteacher also sits on the CSCP Board. There is also Primary and Secondary Headteacher representation on the EH Strategic Partnership.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) briefing sessions are held quarterly with meetings regularly having 150 plus attendees from across nurseries, primary, secondary education as well as colleges. The main purpose of the briefings is to deliver updated safeguarding legislation and guidance updates, whilst also raising awareness of support that is available not only in Coventry but nationally.

## Multi-agency priorities

Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership has three priorities Child Sexual Abuse, Exploitation and Making the System work. The tables below some of the work that has been undertaken across the partnership to progress these priorities as well as outlining areas where there has been slower progress and what will be put in place to progress these.

### For 2023-2024 the CSCP had 3 priorities

Child Sexual abuse
Exploitation
Making the system work

## Progress against priorities

### Priority: Child Sexual abuse

#### What's working well?

Coventry City Council Children's Services now has 17 Social Workers who have completed Child Sexual Abuse Leads training. Over the last year 147 Child Sexual Abuse advisory discussion notes have been recorded on LCS Children's Services database. This means that Child Sexual abuse Leads are able to work with the Social Worker who is able to identify areas of concern and safety and guide practitioners in their next steps. This means that children and their families benefit from well supported and skilled social workers.

Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership held a Child Sexual Abuse Conference in Spring 2023. The recording can be found on the website here: [Child Sexual Abuse \(CSA\) – Coventry City Council](#)

The Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse (CSA Centre) delivered training to RISE staff at CWPT on 22.06.23 and 29.06.23 with a report of 92 delegates who attended.

CV Partnerships run the Artemis project which is aimed at preventing violence and sexual violence against schoolgirls. The project is delivered in schools with pupils selected by the school Designated Safeguarding Leads.

Coventry City Council Child Sexual Abuse Leads meet with Anna Glinsky the Deputy Director for the Centre of Expertise on a monthly basis. The purpose of this is to support Child Sexual Abuse practice Leads but also to offer consultation on complex cases. All Practice Leads have also been invited to join the National Practice Leads network to share ideas and best practice.

Coventry College provides a swift and appropriate action when a learner discloses sexual abuse, supporting them with reporting to authorities and continuous emotional support to learner

A series of resources have been developed with the support of the CSA leads. These resources can be found here:- [Child Sexual Abuse \(CSA\) – Coventry City Council](#)

SWFT Safeguarding Team provides Level 3 Training for all clinical staff who work with children and young people. The Safeguarding Team are currently delivering a Sexual Abuse Level 3 training package, this is a Face-to-Face session and feedback has been positive. Following attending this staff will be able to recognise signs of Child Sexual Abuse understand the barriers to disclosing and what action to take to support those impacted by Sexual Abuse.

The training empowers staff to utilise "Professional Curiosity." Trauma informed practice is also discussed as well as aspects of the law designed to protect children from Sexual Abuse. Professionals are being provided with the knowledge and skills to recognise and respond to Child Sexual Abuse.

Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership delivered a conference on unpicking Underage Child Sexual Activity. This can be found on the website here: [Unpicking underage sexual activity \(youtube.com\)](#)

West Midlands Police, Schools intervention and prevention officers work closely with schools and in particular Designated Safeguarding Leads to intervene when any incidents of abuse are suspected or identified.

The Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust Safeguarding team delivers Safeguarding Supervision on a planned and AD-HOC basis. Reflective practice and professional curiosity are encouraged so Practitioners are confident in identifying and responding to child sexual abuse in supervision and during support calls.

At University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire Child Sexual Abuse is embedded into all internal level 3 safeguarding children training and features heavily in supervision sessions delivered. Numbers of referrals in relation to this have been noted to increase following the training.

The Integrated Care Board has Sexual Assault and Referral Centre information hosted on the GP Gateway/intranet.

Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust holds a Safeguarding Champions meeting every quarter and is very well attended, to date there are now 151 safeguarding champions. Guest speakers are invited at each meeting and have included representatives from Blue Sky Centre.

On 20.04.23, 08.04.23 representatives from Sexual Assault and Referral Centre attended the Champions Meetings and delivered a presentation that included an overview of Sexual Assault and Referral Centre processes and procedures for adults and children.

All Probation staff are required to complete 'Child protection and safeguarding' training every 3-years. As part of this training the four areas of abuse are discussed, including sexual abuse. Indicators and impacts of sexual abuse are covered, as well as what to do if there are concerns about sexual abuse.

West Midlands Police staff have embedded with family hubs to facilitate information sharing where concerns about families can be flagged which may include issues of suspected abuse. Referrals via Multi Agency Referral Form to go through the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub are made and actions are then set.

Individuals convicted of sexual offences and required to register have an assigned police offender manager who works closely with the assigned probation practitioner. The Probation service has a mature and developed working relationship with police sex offender managers and operate the joint supervision of this cohort through the MAPP (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements), a statutory process which mandates the oversight, monitoring and intervention with this (and other designated categories of sexual and violent offenders). Registered Sex Offenders who are on licence (released part way through the custodial element of a sentence) are subject to a suite of conditions. These include not to live with children, only to work as approved by the service, undertake Polygraph testing, prohibited activities e.g., Not to attend certain locations/premises, not to own internet enabled devices, to undertake Sex Offender Behaviour Programmes, not to travel abroad and not to associate with any other convicted sex offenders.

The Vanguard worked in partnership with Coventry Rape and Sexual Assault Centre to deliver a pre and post counselling offer for CYP ages 11-18 years that were on the waiting list for therapy, or who had received therapy. The value of this is evidence by CYP stating they feel more equipped to understand their emotions and triggers and feel ready for counselling.

The Probation Service delivers specialist accredited offending behaviour programmes for people with a sexual conviction, supporting the protection and safety of children.

The Probation Service enforces Orders and Licences and where information of increased risky behaviour, evidence of new offending or failure to meaningfully engage in rehabilitative interventions, is present then individuals are recalled to serve further time (up to the remainder of their sentence) in prison or returned to Court for breach/re-sentence.

School intervention officers will intervene in cases where inappropriate images are circulated amongst school pupils. Referrals are made and children are given an educational input in an effort to prevent further incidents occurring.

### What are we worried about?

CSA Practice Leads are identifying a number of cases that are being referred in which feature harmful sexual behaviour, however since the removal of the NSPCC service there is no specialist service for this cohort of children.

There is some variable practice in identifying child sexual abuse.

There is still some evidence that the Sexual Assault Referral Centre are not being invited to attend all MASH and area team strategy meetings where sexual abuse is suspected. The participation of these SARC practitioners within these meetings allows for specialist advice and guidance to be provided, in turn responding to the needs and risks of children in a timely manner with a robust and co-ordinated approach.

The Probation Service continues to have a shortage of qualified Probation Officers. This can result in high workloads and turnover of staff managing cases.

National figures state that 1 in 20 children are likely to suffer child sexual abuse. The CSCP recognises that there are potentially still a large number of children who are affected by this type of abuse who are not identified by agencies.

The number of prosecutions in relation to Child Sexual Abuse is still low and means that many perpetrators of sexual abuse may continue to offend.

## What needs to happen?

Coventry Safeguarding Partnership will consider the findings of the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panels national report into Child Sexual Abuse in the family environment and what needs to be done as a result.

Work needs to continue to raise awareness of the signs of child sexual abuse. To support this the CSCP will continue to deliver training in relation to child sexual abuse.

Awareness raising needs to continue in relation to raising awareness around the role of the SARC and the importance of inviting them to strategy meetings.

## Priority: Exploitation

### What's working well?

Risk is managed effectively within Horizon due to the strong multi-agency working relationships with a focus on parents being partners in the safeguarding plan. The impact of this approach has reduced families needing to move out of City, children becoming looked after and support being offered in the community.

Integrated Care Board Professional Learning Time (PLT) held an event 'All age exploitation' in March 2024 which included presentations from the Violence Reduction Partnership, Horizon Team and Modern Slavery Lead. Over 400 General Practice staff attended. Evaluation following the event indicates that nearly all found the training to be highly relevant and most would change their practice in light of information shared.

Quarterly Schools Panels for both Primary and Secondary Schools are used to share intelligence and to discuss and prioritise a response to current trends. These panels have led to improved and more relationships with Head Teachers and Designated Safeguarding Leads. This in turn improves the flow of information and intelligence.

Daily SOCEX (Serious Organised Child Exploitation) is now well established. Daily SOCEX briefings consisting of West Midlands Police, Horizon, Health, Education and Youth Justice representatives are held to review information linked to children. There is evidence of strong information sharing and early intervention offers to children and young people.

CEMOG – Governance (Child Exploitation and Missing Group) – this focuses on locations and offenders, identified through intelligence, crimes, missing debriefs etc and from partners including the Horizon team. Monthly meeting held by WMP PPU.

The multi-agency Daily Missing Triage meeting is well embedded across Coventry Children's Services, West Midlands Police LOCATE (missing persons team), Education and Health Partners. This forum discusses missing and found children that creates opportunities for prevention, intervention and disruption. The Daily Missing Triage meeting will also consider and discuss approaches for children missing from Education, ensuring timely responses to the identified needs or risks. All missing children from home, care or education are tracked robustly via the Daily Missing Triage meetings.

Horizon has skilled Team Managers and Practitioners who provide case consultations for all new referrals and children open to social workers within the Area Teams and Through Care when Child Exploitation or Serious Youth Violence has been identified.

An All-Age Exploitation level 3 training package is to be currently being offered to all CWPT-eligible staff. This package includes the process of children and young people transitioning to adult services and what support is available for them when they are survivors of sexual abuse.

Horizon continues to deliver multi agency training and awareness raising of Child Exploitation via Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

Dedicated Intelligence Officers sit within the Exploitation Hub. They scan 24hr crime, intelligence, custody records and create a SOCEX document which is used to inform the weekday SOCEX Triage meeting as well as the wider Dept. This process ensures a force overview and a view of the bigger picture. It helps to drive/impact local decision making and ensures staff are aware of emerging trends/issues elsewhere that may inform our thinking and approach. These officers also provide intelligence products for the exploitation hub supporting and informing operational activity.

An E-learning package has been developed for businesses and communities across the City to log onto to learn more about exploitation and how to identify and respond to exploited children.

The Integrated Care Board took part in exploitation week. Resources were shared and electronic messaging was displayed in GP surgeries on screens. The Protected Learning Time event took place during Exploitation week.

The Integrated Care Board has worked with Partners to develop the Integrated Health and Care Delivery Plan which is the response to the implementation of the Integrated Care Strategy. There are 3 priorities underpinned by 9 key areas of focus and enablers. Through this work a population level safeguarding impact will be achieved by reducing inequalities, prioritising prevention and focussing on the wider determinants of health. There is also a workstream focussing on enabling the best start in life for children and young people. This will reduce the pull/pull factors of exploitation.

A strong joined up offer between statutory and voluntary sector services reduces risk in places and spaces.



LPA Firearms Portal- This is managed and investigated by dedicated officers assigned to this task: managing all firearms intelligence from inception to finalisation. The portal is also reviewed daily by the gangs Sergeant. This ensures consistency, correct prioritisation and managerial oversight.

The Vanguard project has piloted a Speech and Language therapist in Coventry Youth Justice Team to assist in providing training and expert advice to staff, as well as assessing and working directly with young people open to the service. In July 2023, the Speech and Language Practitioner received a prestigious national award at the Skills for Health Our Health Heroes Awards. The service was named 'Best Healthcare Initiative in a Community or Criminal Justice Setting' by an expert panel of judges. Working in close collaboration with the Youth Justice Team in Coventry. Evaluation of this post has had a direct effect on Children and Young People with a reduction in re-offending and breaching their court orders, and an increase in those accessing education, training and employment.

South Warwickshire Foundation Trust have a Named Nurse for Exploitation, the Trust expects that this practitioner is involved in all the relevant meetings that they are required to attend and share health information as appropriate to ensure children and young people are safeguarded.

The Named Nurse provides Safeguarding Level Three Exploitation Training, which is available to all staff who work with children and young people. They are also involved in creating resources, disseminating information, and working closely with all partner agencies. The training aims to ensure practitioners are able to recognise and act upon exploitation concerns in a timely fashion.

St Giles Trust continue to operate within UHCW across all clinical areas. They liaise with the Safeguarding Team and jointly young people up to the age of 25 are identified where they may be a victim of exploitation so that support can be offered. Often the episode of care in an acute trust can be those teachable and reachable moments and the support of St Giles at this time can be very positive.

At University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire Exploitation is on the Level 3 training for both Adults and Children and will remain.

A series of lunch and learns have been delivered in Coventry to probation practitioners. Two topics delivered was serious organised crime, in which exploitation is one of the strands.

The Coventry Health Exploitation Navigator is co-located within the dynamic multi-agency Horizon Team. The Health Exploitation Navigator works collaboratively with Social Workers, Police Officers, and Youth Workers by collating, interpreting and presenting a detailed analysis of relevant health information from a range of NHS systems, both locally and further afield which will contribute to triage, risk assessment and outcome decisions. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable children and young people by supporting and signposting professionals working directly with exploited children across the partnership is a core function of the Health Exploitation Navigator role.

### What are we worried about?

Recruitment to the Horizon team has been slow, which has impacted on the number of children able to be directly supported by the team. For these children, the Horizon Managers increased joint supervision and case consultation offers.

At times children wait too long for Mental Health Assessments, and children who become looked after wait too long for their initial health assessment.

University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire report that there have been occasions when a child or young person has presented with significant injuries such as those from shooting and there has been a lack of professional curiosity. This can lead to a delay in sharing information with Children's Social Care or the police about these presentations.

At times some professionals can accept children's explanations at face value and are not professionally curious.

Children who have been issued with a threat to life warning continue to be a concern for Children's Services. There needs to be greater sharing of information between agencies.

Transition for children as they approach 18 is not always sufficiently considered.

### What needs to happen?

Work needs to be undertaken in relation to transition including the development of a transitions panel.

The CSCP needs to maintain an oversight of Mental Health Assessment waiting times and promote any mitigating community measures.

Work with parents is needed to help parents to spot the signs of exploitation and enable the family to support the protection of the young person. A community e-learning package has been developed and this needs to be promoted.

The CSCP needs to undertake work to promote professional curiosity.

The CSCP needs to continue its work to understand any issues of disproportionality in relation to exploitation.

## Priority: Making the system work

### What's working well?

The CSCP is responsive to emerging issues and has in line with this has completed work in relation the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panels reports on Children with complex disabilities in residential settings and Domestic Abuse.

The CSCP was subject to a Joint Targeted Area Inspection in relation to Serious Youth Violence and Criminal Exploitation in March 2023 and inspectors reported mature partnership arrangements in place.

On 3rd April 2023 West Midlands Police (WMP) moved to a new operating model with the creation of 7 Local Policing Areas (LPAs) to deliver an effective and efficient service to the public which enshrines the principle of local neighbourhood policing. The Coventry LPA is led by a Chief Superintendent with authority and control of resources to meet local needs more effectively. This means that investigations, response, offender management and neighbourhood policing come together under one local command enabling WMP to meet the needs of the public better through improved engagement, enhanced understanding of local priorities and flexing our resources accordingly.

Most agencies maintained their compliance with child safeguarding awareness training and were at 90% or above.

The STAG frontline practitioner group is well attended and allows information to be disseminated across the partnership.

IRIS is commissioned throughout General Practice to aid recognition and support of families where domestic abuse is present.

The Trust is committed to supporting Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP) to make the system work. The Family Health & Lifestyle Service (FH&LS) attends and supports the Early Help Advisory Group and the Early Help Strategic Group.

SWFT, FH&LS (0-19) frontline practitioners attend all appropriate meetings including Strategy Meetings, Initial and Review Child Protection Conferences, Core Groups etc. to improve outcomes for children and young people and support partners.

Right help, right time training continues to be delivered across the partnership. This is promoted by all agencies. Audits routinely show good application of RHRT thresholds.

Voice of the child practice standards have been developed and are being socialised across the partnership.

ICON has been commissioned by the Integrated Care Board with the Integrated Care Board steering roll out at system level. This is a licenced program that helps people who care for babies cope with crying and has been evidenced to prevent abusive head trauma.

The Integrated Care Board commissions a Named Nurse to work within MASH to provide the health oversight and contribute to multi- agency analysis and decision making.

Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust is committed to the Early Help Strategy. All training packages have been updated with Early Help processes and signposting and promoted at the Safeguarding Champions group and throughout all Trust bulletins and Intranet sites.

The University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire Safeguarding Team remain fully staffed and accessible to all staff, offering guidance in relation to all aspects of safeguarding, in addition to supervision and visibility within clinical areas.

South Warwickshire Foundation Trust has two Nurses currently working within the Coventry Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). This facilitates the safeguarding of our young people due to Partnership working and the sharing of relevant information. The Trust also contributes to the regular audits of cases within the MASH. This allows for all partners to look to improve practice within MASH. The Safeguarding Children's Lead also attends the MASH Subgroup.

While Registered Providers of Housing do not have primary responsibility for safeguarding subject to the Childrens Act 2004, they are expected to mirror organisations. Citizen does this by:

- Having a designated safeguarding lead
- Sharing information with professionals
- Having safe recruitment practices and whistleblowing procedures
- Training their staff in safeguarding
- Having a clear safeguarding policy; and
- Having a procedure on how to respond - We call these Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

West Midlands Police is supported by a Force Public Protection Unit (PPU) which strives for investigative excellence, ensuring justice for our vulnerable community members. The PPU consists of local Adult Investigation Teams, Rape & Serious Sexual Offences Investigation Teams, Child Abuse Investigation Teams, Safeguarding Teams and Sex Offender Managers.

Coventry and Warwickshire Foundation Trust is implementing the trial of the early help module targeting RISE teams as early adopters.

At Citizens customers can report safeguarding concerns in confidence either through our dedicated safeguarding phone line or email address.

The implementation of a standard proforma for probation requests for information from MASH has been jointly developed and implemented, resulting in timely responses of quality.

The Early Help strategy has been developed and is starting to embed.

Citizen has partnered with Coventry City Council to deliver 'The House Project'. The project supports young care leavers in to permanent accommodation from the age of 16 plus. Citizen's role in the partnership is to offer 1 bed flats which are directly matched to the cohort of care leavers when they are ready to move into their own home. The Council provide the support, which includes several months of pre-tenancy support and training.

The Probation Service implemented a national mandate for Child Safeguarding Checks to be completed at Court at the point of sentence or within 48 hours of sentence. In Coventry the Probation Service has worked closely with Coventry Childrens Services to implement these new procedures. The intention is to expedite the risk assessment so that risks to children can be understood and mitigated quickly and to manage the impact of a parent going to custody on a child. Court Case Administrators (CAs) now have read only access to MASH systems to support with swift returns into Court when people are now known. A MASH Probation Service Officer now sits and works within the Coventry MASH.

Probation managers have monthly meetings with MASH managers to discuss the processes and any improvements that are required, this is effective and ensures that any barriers to sharing information is addressed and resolved.

Making the system work, Vanguard Youth Worker Pilot in Children's Services in Coventry and Warwickshire Local Authorities and St Giles (Coventry) with 7 new posts called Positive Directions workers who are Trauma Informed Youth Worker Practitioners that work directly with young people that have experienced trauma and adversity, using relationship based approach using a Social Prescribing model to engage and empower young people and re-connect them to their community. The services mobilised in January 2023 working with over 150 young people and their families across Coventry and Warwickshire.

There is clear evidence of the impact of the pilot service that includes:

- Building trusting relationships with Practitioners
- More positive relationships with parents/carers
- More positive relationships with siblings
- More positive relationship with school/college
- Returning to education (school/college)
- Accessing apprenticeships
- Decrease offending
- Decrease of going missing episodes
- Decrease in young people presenting in crisis
- CYP developing business and social enterprises (3 nail art businesses and 1 investment business) to find alternatives to criminality to make money.

University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW) have use of the internal intranet which can be updated by the Team with any current changes / updates. At UHCW the number of Safeguarding referrals and enquiries are maintained, demonstrating consistent awareness amongst staff. There is daily liaison with the MASH and information sharing is felt to be good between the two teams.

South Warwickshire Foundation Trust appropriately disseminates information from the Partnership and Partner Agencies via their Safeguarding Board, Safeguarding Operational Group and Link Group. This includes lessons learned from Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Review's. There is an emphasis on supporting staff to embed the learning through feedback and monitoring actions taken.

The South Warwickshire Foundation Trust Safeguarding Link Group Meetings are held monthly both face to face and via MS Teams. The aim of the Safeguarding Link Group Meeting is for short sharp messages to be relayed which can be taken back to "frontline" teams for information sharing. The Link Group supports the dissemination of messages and encourage their teams to utilise the Safeguarding Information Library and share Lessons Learnt.

To ensure that staff working with young people are Trauma Informed to identify and respond to the needs of young people, a suite of 8 Trauma Informed Bitesize training modules have been developed by the Vanguard Practice Educators and endorsed by both Coventry and Warwickshire Safeguarding Partnerships.

The Vanguard project has developed an open access repository of the Universal Social Prescribing offers already in place across Coventry and Warwickshire. The Young People have named the platform Positive Pathways, they have designed the logo and the website. It will continue to be curated and added to and was launched in February 2024. The Vanguard has worked with Positive Impact Foundation to develop and curate a Warwickshire look up tool to assist young people navigate the opportunities and activities in their area, to compliment the look up tool already in place in Coventry.

Please find the link to the platform:

[www.happyhealthylives.uk/positivepathways](http://www.happyhealthylives.uk/positivepathways)

In addition, we have worked with a young person to assist us in providing a voice over for a demystifying social prescribing info hosted on the platform.

### What are we worried about?

The complexity of cases that require a multi-agency response have continued to increase. This is reflected in the number of rising cases being referred into the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

The number of cases that are referred to MASH that result in no further action continue to be significant. The result of this is that workloads in the MASH are extremely high.

Recruitment and retention are concerns for a number of partner agencies.

The lack of suitable placements at times continues to be a challenge. Placements that are available are at a premium cost which puts a significant financial burden on the local authority.

The waiting list for CAMHS assessments is a concern as children can wait a significant period of time for an assessment and during this time their needs can escalate significantly.

At times there is variable practice in capturing the Voice of the Child and using this to establish the daily lived experience of the child.

### What needs to happen?

The CSCP threshold document Right help, right time needs to be reviewed and promoted across the partnership.

The CSCP needs to maintain an active overview of waiting times for CAMHS assessments.

There needs to be national consideration in relation to the lack of suitable placements.

The newly developed Voice of the Child Practice Standards need to be promoted across the partnership.



## Impact on children, young people and their families

### Your Voice Matters

Over the last five months, the Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership have been out to three schools in order to run a Your Voice Matters session with the children of Coventry. These sessions have been done within both primary and secondary schools in order to get a range of age perspectives. The true aim of these sessions is to understand where the children feel both safe and unsafe, and what can be done about this: what they would like to see change in Coventry. The sessions also are used to gauge the children's understanding of safeguarding and tests if they are able to identify abuse/neglect and challenges them on who they would feel comfortable speaking to, should they encounter it. All of the children within each school had an understanding of what safeguarding was, with the older students able to give a very detailed description and example. When identifying neglect or abuse within scenarios all of the children were generally able to depict what is abuse and situations of neglect. This has demonstrated that the children do have a good awareness of abuse and neglect. All children were able to identify several groups of people that they would be able to talk to if they were experiencing or believed someone else, they knew to be experiencing abuse/neglect. The identified safe people to talk to were:

- Parents
- Family members
- Teachers
- Afterschool club leaders
- A friend's parents

The sessions also questioned the use of social media platforms, in which all three of the schools' results showed a wide usage of multiple platforms. The platforms included (but were not limited to) YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok and Snapchat. Despite the age restrictions associated with the platforms, the vast majority of children either used, accessed, or had their own accounts. When asked what they would do if they were to receive negative messages or bullying on social media platforms, children from all three of the schools answered that they knew how to use the blocking system, report the comments, as well as provide a list of the people they would feel confident talking to if they were to feel bullied or uncomfortable with what they had seen online.

The results from the questions on safety within both the primary and secondary schools ranged from feeling safest at home, at school, with family/friends or in their room. The areas in which they felt least safe were more diverse, but a common theme were alleyways and dark places, buses, and the town centre. When asked what these groups of children would like to see added/changed within Coventry the answers varied from:

- Adding lights to alleyways
- Adding security on buses
- More parks/public spaces
- Young girls swimming sessions/leisure sessions
- More cameras (including hidden cameras) within the town



A copy of the report is provided to each school to summarise the findings from each session and a You Said, We Did will be completed once the findings have been taken to the board's subgroups.

#### You Said, We Did...

Young people said that they would feel safer if there were more patrols in the community, this was fed back to Board members and Safer Spaces is under development.

Young people said they felt unsafe walking in the dark and in alleyways, we have spoken with local partnerships to investigate further, as a result of this, lighting has been improved in certain areas.

Young people said they would like there to be more CCTV in the town centre, we have contacted the CCTV team and Community Spaces, and a grant has been applied for.

Young people said that they felt unsafe and uncomfortable on buses, we have fed this through to bus companies and are assured that CCTV on buses is monitored

Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership is currently identifying parents' groups across the city to ensure that as part of the new arrangements parents views are also sought. Parents are currently involved in Safeguarding Practice Reviews so their views feed into the framing of recommendations as seen on page 25.

## Training

The CSCP deliver a programme of specialist multi-agency training and development opportunities. This has been developed utilising support and co-facilitation from partner agencies and specialist organisations. The CSCP regularly assess where there are training gaps and implement methods to ensure key messages are shared, for example: the CSCP have recently launched a level 1 safeguarding e-learning module which is available to all professionals, community members and small businesses in Coventry.

Right Help, Right Time Workshop	204
Level 1 Safeguarding E-Learning	130
Level 2 Working Together to Safeguard Children	112
Child Sexual Abuse Awareness	61
Understanding Sexual Abusers	16
Technology Assisted Sexually Harmful Behaviours	46

Non-Accidental Injuries	60
Cultural Harms & Spiritual Abuse	23
Having Difficult Conversations	39
Effective Supervision	24
Female Genital Mutilation Awareness	15
Fabricated Illness	28
Emotional Abuse & Neglect	50
Domestic Abuse, Violence & Safeguarding	70
Financial & Economic Abuse from a BME Perspective	14
Contextual Safeguarding	24
SoS 1 Day	121
SoS 2 Day	201
SoS ½ Day	14
SoS Safety Planning	16
LADO	115
Reducing Parental Conflict	165
Reducing Parental Conflict Toolkit	48
Reducing Parental Conflict Managers & Leaders Training	24
Lunch & Learn Trauma Informed Practice Sessions	214
Father Inclusive Approach	64
Relationship Leader Train the Trainer	8
Learning Events	208

**The Partnership are proud to say that we have had over 2000 practitioners attend our training, webinars and learning events!**



## Impact on professionals

One of this year’s priorities within the CSCP is Child Sexual Abuse, the CSCP developed a new multi-agency CSA awareness session and have evaluated the overall impact of this training. Our multiagency training programme is regularly evaluated to ensure that the impact on practice is understood. The evaluation includes an analysis of three-month post course feedback, specifically linked to impact on practice and evidence of how training has resulted in better outcomes for children. Three courses in total were evaluated to review impact.

Course	Child Sexual Abuse Awareness	Level 2 Working Together to Safeguard Children	Level 3 Non-Accidental Injuries in Children
General Comments	<p>“The training was fantastic and very engaging”</p> <p>“This gave you a great insight to the subject, made you more aware, supported you in what to do as a professional”</p> <p>“It was very engaging and thought provoking!”</p>	<p>“Lots of new and useful information around MASH”</p> <p>“I enjoyed the wide breadth of knowledge from all the leaders of the course. Also the Accessibility means I only needed the morning off and not the entire school day”</p>	<p>“Very clear explanations and good key messages”</p> <p>“As I do daily assessments of the under-fives, I will utilise this information, as needed”</p> <p>“The scenarios I felt were an eye opener, bruising coming out 2-3 days later when doing a medical and being mindful of this... as things can be missed”</p>
Evidence of Impact	<p>“My confidence is extremely high since completing the course”</p> <p>“I always consider CSA and ask the questions”</p> <p>“It’s been helpful having knowledge of the SARC and what services they offer”</p> <p>“This has helped me identify behaviours that could indicate sexual abuse in young and teenage children”</p>	<p>“I now have a more in-depth knowledge of how to action any safeguarding concerns I might have through the correct channels”</p> <p>“I am now confident in approaching a crisis needing safeguarding with confidence and much more knowledge”</p> <p>“I am better able to support staff in reporting safeguarding concerns and how to support when they report concerns to me”</p>	<p>“When thinking about a situation – I ensure that I focus on the effect on the child not the intended motive by the perpetrator”</p> <p>“I have been more direct about asking about any marks I have seen on children on my caseload and made sure the story matches the mark”</p> <p>“The course has increased my confidence in recognising and identifying concerns”</p>

## Engaging frontline practitioners

Engagement with frontline practitioners is a priority for Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership as it is recognised that it is vital for learning to reach the frontline in order for there to be a positive impact for children, young people and their families. The CSCP utilises a number of methods to engage frontline practitioners in the work of the CSCP.

### STAG

The Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership hold a frontline practitioner forum called the Safeguarding Together Action Group (STAG).

The STAG's purpose is to bring people together in a new way to safeguard children across the partnership. There are currently 181 members across over 100 agencies, some of which have never worked directly with the Safeguarding Children Partnership before.

The discussion topics in the STAG fall mainly into the below categories:

- To share information from Safeguarding Practice Reviews, audits and national learning so that information can reach front line professionals more effectively.
- To ensure that professionals are kept up to date with emerging safeguarding issues across the City.
- To help cross-agency working
- To look at the effects of action on front line practice
- To increase awareness of new policy and procedures
- To identify emerging safeguarding issues

Organisations are invited to put forwards speakers, presentations and items that are of interest to the forum members. Partnership updates are also shared via the Forums mailing list. Meetings have taken place once a quarter over the past year, covering actions recommended in rapid reviews and topics recommended by members. This included: the Mental Health Directory, Domestic abuse, the Sexual Assault and Referral Centre and Coventry family valued.

The forum has adapted in innovative ways to maintain communication and discussions with partners, utilising chat functions and virtual polling software to obtain feedback on the forum, current safeguarding concerns and what members would like to see in future meetings. Meetings continue to be recorded and shared with members so they can be used in training sessions and by members unable to attend.

## Newsletter

The newsletter is sent out on a quarterly basis and contains a breath of useful and timely information, ranging from the most recent One Minute Guides, highlighting local services, promoting practice tools and referral pathways and signposting to upcoming training and events. The newsletter has 3,439 subscribers who are able to access further information through web links through the newsletter. <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/coventry-local-safeguarding-children-board/newsletters>

## Resources

The CSCP recognises that frontline practitioners have a range of learning styles and often have busy daily roles which necessitates resources being developed that are informative and concise and suit a variety of learning styles. The CSCP has developed one-minute guides, podcasts and webinars.

As part of the update to Working Together 2023 the partnership will be looking at ways of evaluating this impact with practitioners.

## Scrutiny

Coventry Safeguarding Partnership currently has five levels of scrutiny:

- Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Rapid Reviews
- Multi agency audits
- Multi agency dataset
- Quality assurance visits
- External scrutiny

## Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership published two Safeguarding Practice Reviews in 2023-2024.

### Stephen

Stephen was admitted to hospital when he was 15 years of age from an inpatient adolescent mental health unit. On admission to hospital staff expressed concerns about his physical and emotional health. Stephen appeared emaciated and dehydrated, his clothes were dirty and was distressed and afraid. There were significant concerns Stephen had suffered neglect and emotional harm whilst at the inpatient unit. A Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and criminal investigation commenced. The conclusion of these investigations was that Stephen's welfare had been put at risk of significant harm due to institutional processes.

The full report can be found here:- [sw-child-safeguarding-practice-review \(coventry.gov.uk\)](https://www.coventry.gov.uk/sw-child-safeguarding-practice-review)

Recommendation	Implementation
<p>The CSCP to seek assurances that primary schools in the local area are routinely identifying children who may struggle with transition and that these children are supported/prepared for transition at an early point. A particular focus should be on children with symptoms of/diagnosis of an ASC.</p>	<p>The Safeguarding Reference Group has agreed a process and this has now been shared with Designated Safeguarding Leads.</p> <p>The Section 175 audit has also been amended to include a question in relation to transition.</p>
<p>The CSCP to determine what may need to be done to strengthen multi-agency working with children who have mental ill health which should include addressing the need for services to regard mental ill health as a safeguarding matter and establishing how informed consent for referral to CS will be achieved.</p>	<p>Coventry Local Authority has created an online mental health directory. <a href="https://www.coventry.gov.uk/mental-health/mental-health-and-wellbeing-support/2">https://www.coventry.gov.uk/mental-health/mental-health-and-wellbeing-support/2</a></p> <p>This directory was promoted at the STAG in January.</p> <p>Having difficult conversations training has been updated to include a section on gaining consent.</p>
<p>The CSCP to maintain an active overview of the waiting times for ASD assessment in the local area and provide support and challenge to the CCG in the reduction of waiting times. CSCP to share the learning in this report with the Learning Disability and Autism Executive Board (LDAEB) and provide support and challenge to this board in the implementation of the relevant CIC recommendation. This should include a requirement to strengthen an understanding by multi-agency services, parents/carers and children about the services available and any gaps. Outcomes to be measured by LDAEB and reviewed by CSCP.</p>	<p>The CSCP Board is now receiving regular updates in ASD waiting times. This has included information on sources of support that have been put in place in the community to support children, young people and their families whilst they are waiting for an assessment.</p>

Recommendation	Implementation
<p>Coventry local education services to review the current EHCP strategy to ensure that the importance of EHCPs for children with ASD and/or mental health needs is adequately set out, and that an assessment is commenced at the earliest possible point. This strategy should reflect the urgent need for an EHCPA to be expedited for children at the point of admission to an inpatient unit. Awareness raising about the importance of EHCPs to be completed with schools and multi-agency partners. CSCP to oversee implementation and provide support and challenge.</p>	<p>An online portal has been created which makes it more straightforward to apply for a EHCP Statutory assessment. Ongoing awareness raising is undertaken with SENCo's 3 times a year and in the Autumn a workshop is held with Early years. SENDEAS advises parents on how to apply for EHCP. The number of referrals has increased significantly from 400 to 800 and 25% of these are in relation to Mental health needs.</p>
<p>The CSCP to request that partner agencies review their approach to children with severe complex needs arising from ASD and/or mental health needs in the community and demonstrate how relevant disability guidance and legislation is effectively used to meet a child's needs, including how relevant specialisms are engaged where needed.</p>	<p>Rise Children and Young People's Mental Health has completed a Skills audit for clinical staff to understand the level of training, skills and confidence Children and Young People Mental Health clinicians have when working with Children and Young People with co morbidity needs of Neuro diverse and mental health. This has lead to an action plan of relevant training to achieve the aim of ensuring there is an appropriate and accessible offer within Emotional Wellbeing and Specialist Mental Health provision for autistic children, young people through a combination of staff training, and increased joint working between emotional wellbeing, specialist mental health and autism services.</p>

Recommendation	Implementation
<p>National Health Service England (NHSE) regional managers to provide regular updates to CSCP about service developments in the relevant areas set out in the Mental Health Implementation Plan, the Rapid Review and this CSPR and determine how NHSE is tackling the lack of availability and suitability of inpatient treatment for children with ASD &amp; severe complex needs.</p>	<p>The starting position and vision is admission avoidance for young people with ASD and complex needs and work with a range of stakeholders in order to achieve this.</p> <p>NHSE have in post a senior Clinical Pathways specialist who works with the young people with particularly complex needs and who are hard to place.</p> <p>West Midlands CAMHS Provider Collaborative have in post coproduction and Family Ambassador staff.</p> <p>Quality Assurance teams and case managers review care plans and records whilst undertaking their various functions – these record reviews include risk management/care plans/Behaviour support plans. A review of the environment is also undertaken.</p> <p>Any concerns are managed through the quality assurance framework.</p>
<p>The CSCP make representation to the National Panel about the need to conduct a National Review on relevant matters highlighted in this CSPR about the lack of availability and suitability of mental health inpatient units for children.</p>	<p>This was highlighted as part of the report submission as a National issue. The National panel have responded to say that they will not be picking this up as a national issue at the moment but they may do in the future.</p>
<p>The CSCP to seek assurances that the support provided to staff on general paediatric wards enables the best possible care to be provided to children suffering from a mental health crisis. This support should include support to meet a child's needs, support in meeting the needs of other children on the ward and in contending with the impact on their own wellbeing.</p>	<p>Work is currently being undertaken in relation to this specifically in the form of risk assessing the needs of young people prior to their admission to the Paediatric Unit.</p> <p>There is now mandatory updates for Paediatric nurses for Children in crisis across the unit and W14 are all undertaking on-line learning for Neuro-diversity training.</p> <p>Safeguarding supervision is also delivered to all W14 nurses on a 1:1 basis and there is also peer review once a month for Doctors.</p> <p>The risk assessments are all being re-aligned to identify need at the earliest point.</p>



Recommendation	Implementation
<p>The CSCP to review whether the role of the LADO, in leading investigations into concerns about harm to children as a result of the care provided in an institutional setting, is clearly defined and seek assurances that this crucial role is sufficiently understood and prompted across multi agency partners. LADO escalation processes, to seek rapid resolution to protect a child from significant harm, to be reviewed to ensure they are robust.</p>	<p>The role of the LADO is a statutory role set out in legislation and local policy. There are however Practice Standards currently drafted, to which Coventry's LADO has contributed, as part of the National LADO Network. The aim of these is to support there being clear parameters around the role, well define responsibilities, and consistency and robustness in practice.</p> <p>The LADO has increased its training/ briefing offer and this is available to all who have a role with children and young people in Coventry. There is also work underway to further improve the LADO Service's webpages, to ensure that members of the public and professionals can easily access guidance. In addition, the LADO operates a daily duty system to ensure availability to provide individualised advice and support via telephone and email during office hours.</p>
<p>NHSE, and relevant providers of NHSE commissioned care, to review the practice and processes of responding to concerns about a child in real time and to demonstrate to CSCP their compliance with their relevant safeguarding duties under the Children Act 1989. Commissioning practices should adequately reflect this requirement.</p>	<p>The existing national mental health model contract has in place processes for monitoring service compliance and all Providers are required to comply with safeguarding legislation and guidance for both vulnerable children and adults.</p>
<p>NHSE to provide assurances to CSCP that all providers of treatment and care to children within mental health inpatient units are contractually obliged to submit an SI notification and SIR that meets expected NHSE standard and set out what action will be taken if these standards are not met.</p>	<p>NHSE CAMHS Tier 4 services are commissioned under the National Mental Health model contract. This contract includes the requirement for all providers to comply with the Serious Incident Framework <a href="https://www.england.nhs.uk/patient-safety/serious-incident-framework/">https://www.england.nhs.uk/patient-safety/serious-incident-framework/</a></p>

Recommendation	Implementation
The CSCP to review referral pathways for notifying CSCP of serious incidents, including incidents involving children placed out of area, and raise awareness of the requirement to make timely referrals.	A guide has been created outlining the process for Serious incident notifications and this has been socialised across the partnership.
The CSCP to issue a framework of expected multi -agency working based on the recommendations from the recent JTAI and the good practice currently in place in the care and treatment of Stephen - this framework should include how joint working will be achieved at the front line and across the organisational hierarchies.	Coventry Early help strategy has been launched and socialised across the partnership.
Mental Health Surge Group to extend current work related to trusted adults to include all agencies. CSCP to include the importance of trusted adults in the multi-agency framework for children with mental ill health/complex needs.	This has been shared with the Mental Health Surge Group. The importance of relationships is also highlighted in the Right help, right time threshold guidance.
Children in inpatient mental health units to be offered an independent advocate to support the child and the multi-agency system in hearing a child's voice and advocating for them.	All providers report through contracts their advocacy activity and confirmation that they have services in place. West Midlands CAMHS Provider Collaborative are reviewing their Key Performance Indicators to more specific and molecular scrutiny of advocacy activity and contacts.

## Anya

Anya, aged two years and two months, was found at home alone after her mother had sadly died in the family home. At the time of the incident, Anya was the subject of a child protection plan. Over two days, various unsuccessful attempts had been made to gain access to the home by Children's Services - the local police force were requested to complete an urgent visit. Twenty-four hours later, Anya was found by police. She was physically unharmed although cold, wet and hungry. Family members have said that she continues to suffer with fears and nightmares associated with the trauma of this event.

The full report can be found here: [anya-safeguarding-practice-review \(coventry.gov.uk\)](https://coventry.gov.uk/anyasafeguardingpractice/)

Recommendation	Implementation
<p>When considering the learning from this case, Children's Social Care to determine whether further development work is needed to consider the implications of using the emotional harm category in child protection planning, as opposed to the neglect category.</p>	<p>Dip sampling is taking place to understand if this is a more systems wide issue to inform future work</p>
<p>Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to consider what further service development work may be needed to promote the importance of multi-agency professional ownership and challenge in safeguarding children.</p>	<p>Level 2 and Right help, right time training has been strengthened to incorporate this.</p> <p>The Escalation procedure has been promoted through the CSCP newsletter and via a webinar. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kfy4-6PqJXk&amp;feature=youtu.be">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kfy4-6PqJXk&amp;feature=youtu.be</a></p>
<p>West Midlands Police to report findings of the Internal office of Police Conduct and local investigation to Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership, relevant multi-agency learning and action to be progressed with oversight from Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership.</p>	<p>The IOPC have advised that this investigation is still ongoing.</p>
<p>CSCP to seek assurances, including evidence of outcomes, from Coventry Children's Services that practitioners and managers are fully aware of private fostering regulations, the limitations of written agreements and the legal steps required to secure a child with connected carers where there are concerns about a child's safety.</p>	<p>The CSCP has created a One Minute Board on Private Fostering and this has been socialised across the partnership.</p> <p>Board members have received a presentation in relation to private fostering.</p>

Recommendation	Implementation
<p>Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to consider what further service development work may be needed to promote the importance of multi- agency professional ownership and challenge in safeguarding children.</p>	<p>Level 2 and Right help, right time training has been strengthened to incorporate this.</p> <p>The Escalation procedure has been promoted through the CSCP newsletter and via a webinar.  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kfy4-6PqJXk&amp;feature=youtu.be">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kfy4-6PqJXk&amp;feature=youtu.be</a></p>

Recommendation	Implementation
<p>Contingency planning that includes legal action to safeguard a child should form part of child protection chairs in legal consultations and planning meetings should be reviewed.</p>	<p>Child Protection chairs have access to Local authority legal representatives for provision of advice.</p>
<p>Learning from this CSPR, about the need to promote an equal partnership of father's and extended families in safeguarding children, should inform future service design/ developments to achieve the new government strategy. CSCP to maintain oversight.</p>	<p>The Family Group Conferencing Service routinely explores family network and identifies sources of support within the family.</p> <p>Agencies are now routinely capturing fathers' details within the records and also seeking out opportunities to improve engagement with fathers.</p> <p>A webinar in relation to the Myth of Invisible Men has now been delivered across the partnership.</p>
<p>When safeguarding children from domestic abuse or substance misuse, the information held in relevant services, including GP's, must be routinely available to Children's Services. A lack of consistent proactive engagement in safety planning by relevant services, including providing information to triangulate the evidence used to inform child protection plans, must be routinely escalated.</p>	<p>The importance of triangulating information is included in both Right help, right time and level 2 training. Agencies are also encouraged to escalate where there are concerns about the level of risk that is agreed.</p> <p>Understanding parental substances misuse and hidden harms training is now delivered across the partnership as well as lunch and learns on opiates, non-opiates and alcohol dependency.</p>
<p>Domestic abuse services in Coventry and West Midlands Police to demonstrate how voice of the child, in cases of domestic abuse, is understood and reflected in service provision and clarify the services available to perpetrators of domestic abuse. CSCP to provide support and challenge based on the four core principles set out by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review panel</p>	<p>West Midlands Police have now developed an app which demonstrates how children's voices are sought and captured in a meaningful way.</p> <p>Victims Voices, including children's, are consulted with in respect of the Domestic Abuse Strategy in line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.</p>

Recommendation	Implementation
<p>CSCP to review how cultural competency/ Social graces are promoted as a practice model in relevant CSCP policies, training and supervision with particular reference to how engagement with families is understood and achieved. Single and multi-agency audits to routinely include this as an audit variable and report to CSCP on outcomes to inform any future developments.</p>	<p>CSCP are scoping out cultural competency training with a view to incorporating it into the training brochure.</p>

## Multi agency audits

Multi-agency audits provide a valuable means of identifying strengths and areas of good practice alongside key lessons for improvement and the CSCP has a systematic auditing process in place that allows them to monitor the quality of practice and target areas that require further development. This year there was a planned programme of audit activity which focused on statutory and thematic audits chosen by the Partnership: linked to priorities, in response to identified areas of concern or emerging themes, or as a result of inspections or learning from local and national reviews.

## Early Help

In response to the findings from the joint targeted area inspections (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk, the CSCP decided to carry out quality assurance activity to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of practice in supporting families early, whether through statutory services or early help, and the impact this had on children, young people and their families. This involved two elements: a Quality Assurance (QA) visit by the CSCP Executive Group to the Woodside Family Hub in Coventry, followed by a multi-agency case file audit.

During the QA Visit, the CSCP Executive Group were able to liaise with frontline practitioners from across the partnership via a range of bespoke activity including structured interviews and informal discussions, observations of practice and dip sampling. The visit afforded the Executives with an interesting and positive insight into the work carried out within the Woodside Family Hub. They found the Hub to be a warm, welcoming, family-friendly environment for children and young people. Hub workers were passionate and displayed a positive approach to the work they carry out with a strong sense of trying to make a difference. Multi-agency, partnership working between agencies was identified as an area of strength, and all staff said they enjoyed working there and felt it was well-led and well-managed. It was evident that the Hub operates an ethos of ‘never turning people away’ – they strive to build trusting relationships and provide a service tailored to the individual needs of the whole family.

The multi-agency Early Help audit also highlighted some positive, effective work

being carried out with families in need of early help and support in Coventry. It was evident that practitioners were trained and well-equipped to identify risks and vulnerabilities for children and families; any risks or unmet needs were identified quickly, thresholds applied, and appropriate referrals made followed by quality assessments that were detailed, comprehensive and informed by family history. Information gathering and sharing amongst the wider partnership was found to be timely and appropriate. The voice of the child and an understanding of their lived experience was evident in the case files audited.

However, both the QA Visit and Early Help Audit identified some areas that would benefit from further development to help support practitioners working with children and families in need of help and support and ensure agencies are working together to provide early intervention and the right support to children and families in Coventry at the right time.

## How have we responded?

Area for development	What we did?
Voice of the child	The CSCP Implementation Subgroup and Children's Services Participation Team worked collaboratively to produce a practice standards guide on the importance of capturing and acting on the voice of the child. This practice guide was launched formally in 2024 followed by promotion across the partnership via the CSCP website, briefing papers, webinars, STAG and newsletter. Partner agencies were also be tasked with cascading the guidance within their organisations.
Immigration and NRPF (No Recourse to Public Funds)	Early Help practitioners received training in relation to immigration and NRPF delivered by Central England Law Centre and the Coventry City Council Migration Team. The Early Help Strategic Subgroup are now in the process of considering how this can rolled out across the wider partnership.
Engagement with Fathers	The Implementation Subgroup completed a scoping exercise to gain an understanding around what organisations already have in place to support engagement with fathers and how the partnership can further develop practice in this area. The outcome of the scoping produced a number of recommendations, and this will remain on the subgroup agenda. Engagement with fathers continues to be golden thread running through all CSCP training and a standard KLOE in audits.
Reducing parental conflict	The workforce development activity in this area remains ongoing and the CSCP regularly promotes 'Reducing Parent Conflict' training sessions that are delivered via the Early Help Partnership at all CSCP subgroups and features in the quarterly newsletter.

## Domestic Abuse

Coventry has one of the highest rates of domestic abuse in the West Midlands and are above average compared to the rest of the UK – in 2022/23, West Midlands Police recorded 10, 547 incidents of domestic abuse in Coventry. In their briefing ‘Multi-agency safeguarding and domestic abuse’, the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel highlighted key areas of practice that required attention by safeguarding partners.

In response, the CSCP decided to carry out an audit to evaluate the effectiveness of current multi-agency practice and partnership work undertaken to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people experiencing domestic abuse. The key lines of enquiry were specifically designed, using the learning from the report, to capture information the Board could use to gain assurance.

The findings from the case file audit presented a positive picture of the work carried out with children experiencing domestic abuse; risks related to domestic abuse were identified and responded to in a timely manner, followed by timely arrests and information sharing between partners. Added to this was some good evidence of practitioners consistently striving to hear the child’s voice and keeping them central to all work taking place. However, some of the findings in the National Panel’s review were echoed in this audit, particularly in relation to two of their four core practice principles – practitioners being domestic-abuse informed and an adopting an intersectional approach when working with children and young people, their parents, wider families and networks in relation to domestic abuse. The audit also identified some other areas that would benefit from further development to help support partners and drive work being undertaken with children experiencing domestic abuse across the city.

## How have we responded?

Area for development	What we did?
Awareness of the Early Help offer	The delivery of the Early Help Strategy 2023-2025 is focused on effectively communicating the Early Help offer and role/function of the family hubs to children and families to ensure they know how and where to access help.
Quality of risk assessments and safety plans	A Task & Finish Group of key members was convened to consider ways to strengthen risk assessments, safety plans and sharing information in relation to domestic abuse which led to the Public Health Domestic Abuse Programme Lead and Responsive Services Operational Lead from Children’s Services working collaboratively to produce a Domestic Abuse Toolkit. Training on the response to non-fatal strangulation and victim support was also delivered to MASH practitioners.



Area for development	What we did?
Promoting the Think Family/ Whole Family Model health organisations	<p>'Think Family' was discussed at the Lead Safeguarding GP Forum, Primary Care Safeguarding Co-ordinator induction and during supervision sessions. It is also discussed regularly within MDT meetings.</p> <p>Acute health settings ensured professional curiosity, domestic abuse and 'Think Family' featured in both Level 3 safeguarding Training for children and adults and the bespoke training package offered to Emergency Department staff.</p>
Intersectionality	<p>The Implementation Subgroup seek innovative solutions for implementing learning from local and national reviews and audits, and so they carried out the following actions to ensure intersectionality was promoted across the partnership:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Commissioned a cultural competency learning event.</li> <li>2. Added intersectionality to RHRT workshops.</li> <li>3. Intersectionality was incorporated as key component in all safeguarding training packages at all levels.</li> <li>4. Requested all partners incorporate this into their single agency training.</li> </ol>
Awareness and understanding of specialist domestic abuse service	<p>Safeguarding Together Action Group / Learning Event entitled 'Identifying and Dealing with Domestic Abuse' featured presentations from Public Health and representatives from local domestic abuse support services and covered a range of topics relating to domestic abuse such as the current landscape, indicators/signs, safety planning, practical tools and how to access support and advice.</p> <p>The CSCP Claire's Law OMG was also reviewed to ensure it was up to date and disseminated across the partnership.</p>
Domestic Abuse - Informed	<p>The Public Health Domestic Abuse Training subgroup are tasked with commissioning domestic abuse training and this group now has representation from the CSCP Implementation subgroup. They review the training periodically and ensured 'domestic abuse-informed' approach/response and the use of non-victim blaming language was incorporated.</p>

Area for development	What we did?
Understanding lived experience	<p>The CSCP Implementation Subgroup and Children’s Services Participation Team worked collaboratively to produce a practice standards guide on the importance of capturing and acting on the voice of the child. A key component of this guidance is on using creative approaches and child-friendly tools to gain a better understanding of the child’s daily life. This practice guide was launched formally in 2024 followed by promotion across the partnership via the CSCP website, briefing papers, webinars, STAG, and newsletter.</p> <p>West Midlands Police shared the content of their ‘Aware App’ with the Implementation Subgroup so this could be used by partners to inform their internal training and presentations in relation to capturing the voice of the child.</p>
Working with perpetrators of abuse	<p>Public Health and the CSCP commissioned training delivered by Coventry Relate and Coventry Haven. This training package aims to improve participants knowledge and skills to understand the challenges related to working one-to-one with perpetrators of domestic abuse through early identification techniques and working with and managing risk and vulnerability.</p>

## Serious Youth Violence

In August 2023, Ofsted, CQC, HMICFRS and HMIP published guidance for their next programme of joint targeted area inspections (JTAs) which focused on serious youth violence and began in September 2023. In readiness, the CSCP undertook audit activity to evaluate the experiences of children and young people involved in serious violence and child criminal exploitation including: the quality and effectiveness of practice, the impact this has on children, young people and their families and whether this reduced risk, kept them safe from further harm and improved outcomes.

A joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to serious youth violence in Coventry took place from 18th to 22nd March 2024 and as part of the inspection, the partnership carried out a further audit in relation to the experiences of children and young people involved in serious violence and child criminal exploitation.

Both audits offered assurance about the quality of work being undertaken with children and young people; the audits revealed that practitioners were able to identify the early warning signs of youth violence and exploitation, and joined up partnership work during assessments and planning to disrupt activity and reduce risk was an area of strength. The significant improvements that have been made to the system over the last two years to tackle serious youth violence in Coventry were acknowledged, such as the success of the CIRV programme. The evidence within case file audits indicated that the voices of children and young people in the

cohort was clear, informed planning and influenced any decisions made. The child's views were consistently being explored and the children were able to speak openly and honestly about their views on the topics being discussed, helping practitioners to gain a deeper understanding of their lived experience. There was minimal to no offender based language, adultification or racial disparity identified within the case files audited and it was clear that practitioners were viewing the children through a child-focused lens. Many examples of persistent, committed, relationship-based practice were also identified.

Still, there were some areas that needed further development to help support partners working with children and young involved in serious youth violence and child exploitation.

## How have we responded?

Area for development	What we did?
Engagement with parent and families	CSCP Training Officer and Horizon Team Manager reviewed and updated the Exploitation Training to ensure the importance of engaging parents/families was included. RHRT workshops were also updated.
Sequencing of interventions	The Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meeting is a forum to share and clarify information, establish risk, consider disruption, and develop a multi-agency support plan to meet the needs of children and young people who are involved in child exploitation (including support for parents/carers) and this process was strengthened by updating the meeting template/documentation, so this now includes sequenced interventions, clear and defined roles, and identification of a lead practitioner.
Awareness of the Horizon low risk pathway	Horizon reviewed and updated the Low-Risk Guidance and this now includes both types of exploitation. The updated guidance was shared widely across the partnership before being uploaded to the Coventry City Council website.  Additionally, when concerns relating to the older child are significant and require an assessment by Children's Services for the other siblings, this will be undertaken by the Horizon Team who have expert knowledge in relation to exploitation.
Parental criminality/imprisonment	Supporting children with a parent in prison is a priority for the Coventry Serious Violence Prevention Partnership and a key area of work being carried out by the Early Help Outcome group chaired by the Youth Justice Service Operational Lead.  Implementation subgroup also collated resources for children with parent in prison that have been developed in other areas and disseminated across the partnership.

Area for development	What we did?
Measuring performance	The Coventry Serious Violence Prevention Partnership led by West Midlands Police will be reviewing serious youth violence data and representatives from the CSCP will form part of a Task & Finish Group convened to produce a multi-agency dataset that can be held centrally.
Curious practice	<p>The Implementation Subgroup considered the best way of taking professional curiosity forwards in a coordinated way and carried out the following activity:</p> <p>Primary Care developed and launched a ‘professional curiosity’ toolkit that was shared with other agencies across the partnership for use within their own organisations.</p> <p>Curious practice featured as a section in the new RHRT guidance and the RHRT training workshops.</p> <p>A session on curious practice was held during Children’s Services Practice Week from 24th – 28th June 2024.</p> <p>The Implementation Subgroup reviewed and updated the CSCP OMG on professional curiosity and promoted this across the partnership.</p>
Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion	The CSCP will maintain an overview of agencies’ approaches to addressing and promoting Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion within their organisations via the Section 11 Audit which will be carried out in the Autumn of 2024.

## Section 175/157 Schools Safeguarding Audit

The CSCP undertakes an annual assessment of all schools in Coventry which reviews the effectiveness of the arrangements for safeguarding children in relation to their duties under S157 and S175 Education Act 2002, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2023 and Working Together 2023. This year’s audit questions were updated to reflect the changes in KSCIE and learning from local and national reviews to ensure schools are compliant with the latest legislation and guidance.

Schools were asked to complete the self-assessment using the Partnership’s new online audit system Phew. The Phew Audit System is a secure web hosted audit tool purpose built for safeguarding audit compliance and allows schools to easily correlate insights into what is working well, and where there are opportunities to improve their safeguarding arrangements and practice.

There was a 100% completion rate this year and all schools who completed the

audit self-assessed as either Grade 1 (Outstanding) or Grade 2 (Good) in relation to their safeguarding arrangements demonstrating high levels of performance by schools, which offers a good level of assurance to the Partnership. There were some clear areas of outstanding performance in areas such as policies and procedures, reporting and recording, the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead, training and safer recruitment.

It is important for schools to use their self-assessment and the key learning from this year's audit as a basis to continually develop their safeguarding arrangements. All schools were able to generate an action plan within the audit system to address any areas where improvement was required which was exportable into an Excel document, equipping school staff with the ability to review, amend, or update the plan throughout the year. Schools are ultimately responsible for ensuring the identified areas for improvement are addressed and their action plans are completed within the specified timescales.

The Partnership will continue to monitor the impact of improvements schools make through future S175/157 school safeguarding audits.

## Joint Targeted Area Inspection

Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership was subject to a Joint Targeted Area inspection in relation to Serious Youth Violence in Coventry between 18th -22nd March 2024. This is where inspectors from Ofsted, The Care Quality Commission, His Majesty's Fire and Rescue Service, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation visit an area to evaluate the effectiveness of the multi-agency partnership in relation to a particular theme, in this case serious youth violence and/ or criminal exploitation.

Inspectors found that, Children at risk of criminal exploitation and serious youth violence are safer as a result of the effective partnership work undertaken by both statutory services and the third sector to reduce risks in places and spaces as well as for individual young people in Coventry. Mature partnership arrangements are in place'. Further positive areas included:

- A range of aligned subgroups with exploitation as a clear priority.
- Leaders and partners use nearly every opportunity to learn and improve practice.
- A strong culture of support, collaboration and learning at every level of the partnership.
- A systemic approach to identifying new and emerging threats.
- A clear focus on prevention and early intervention.
- Children and communities are thoroughly engaged.
- A well-considered and tailored approach to each child's needs.
- The specialist Horizon teams is a highly effective resource.
- Sophisticated mapping of places and people is done in real time.
- A well embedded trauma informed approach.
- Effective strategic partnerships.

Areas for development included:

- The emergency duty team provides a minimal safeguarding response to incidents of serious youth violence, meaning that strategy meetings are not held at the earliest opportunity and plans are made to provide immediate protection for younger children in the family without a social worker seeing the child or family to assess.
- Children wait too long to receive mental health assessments from the child and adolescent mental health services crisis teams, and children who become looked after wait too long for their initial health assessment.
- Some professionals are not sufficiently curious and accept children's explanations at face value, which results in risks to children and young people not being wholly understood
- Transition for children between service provision is not always well enough considered for them, particularly as they approach 18.
- The understanding of the impact for different cohorts of children in relation to serious youth violence and particularly the potential for disproportionate responses to Black boys.

Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership is now progressing an action plan to respond to these areas for development.

## Key themes

Following analysis of rapid reviews, safeguarding practice reviews and multi-agency audits Coventry Safeguarding Partnership has identified the following key themes:

Area of learning	Implementation
Practitioners understanding of family composition/ roles of males- despite improving practice in this area, variable practice is still being noted. At times practitioners makes assumptions about family members without fully understanding individuals' roles. It is imperative that practitioners fully explore the role of individuals within the household to fully understand the potential source of support/risk.	<p>At the heart of Coventry family valued is exploring family networks and understanding sources of support.</p> <p>CSCP training re-enforces the need to explore family networks and understand the role of males.</p> <p>The role of males continues to be a Key line of enquiry in all CSCP audits to support a better understanding of this area of work.</p>

Area of learning	Implementation
<p>Languages matters- the CSCP have noted the importance of the language of that is used in case recording to effectively communicate the risks to others. An example of this is ‘intoxicated’ this can mean different things to different people and if it members X is so drunk that he/ she cannot get up off the sofa and look after the child then it needs to be recorded explicitly.</p>	<p>A booklet has been produced by Children’s Services titled ‘Language Matters’. This has been shared across the partnership.</p> <p>This key message has been promoted through the ‘Drug and Alcohol’ and ‘Having difficult conversations’ training.</p>
<p>Understanding the lived experience of the Child by capturing the voice of the child- it is vital that practitioners use innovative ways to capture the voice of the child to fully understand what they are seeing and how it impacts on the day-to-day life of the child. A lack of understanding in relation to this sometimes means that the risk at times is not fully understood.</p>	<p>Voice of the child practice standards have been developed and these will be socialised across the partnership.</p>
<p>Whole family approach- examples have been noted where parents are unable to support the child as their own needs, for example medical needs, are not met. At other times there is too much focus on parents needs and these can overshadow the needs of the child. It is important that practitioners take a Whole family approach but with a focus on what this means for the child.</p>	<p>Coventry family valued supports a whole family approach.</p> <p>Right help, right time is being reviewed and there will be a focus on think child, think family, think child again.</p>
<p>Children with parents in prison- examples have been seen where children with a parent or significant other in prison can follow a similar trajectory and become involved in serious youth violence or criminal exploitation.</p>	<p>The CSCP is scoping out training for practitioners on ‘Children with parents in prison’.</p>
<p>The need for mental health pathways to be communicated to schools and communities- without an understanding of these we have seen examples of where children’s mental health can deteriorate dramatically.</p>	<p>The CSCP Board now receives regular updates on community mental health provision and CAHMS waiting times.</p> <p>A Mental Health online directory has been created and socialised at the STAG and across the Partnership.</p>



## National reforms

The Safeguarding Partners continually seek to identify national learning and consider its impact on local practice. Across 2023-2024 the following work has been undertaken:-

The National Child Safeguarding Practice Review panel- briefing paper on Domestic Abuse - The Safeguarding Partners requested that an audit be undertaken in relation to the findings. The findings of the audit can be found on page 36.

Joint Targeted Area inspections (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk- in response to this publication the Safeguarding partners undertook a Quality assurance visit to one of the Early help hubs. The findings can be found on page 39.



## Looking forwards

In determining the priorities for April 2024- March 2026 the Safeguarding Partners undertook consultation work with a range of statutory, community and voluntary partners to understand those common themes that agencies felt need to be the focus of our collaborative efforts. The Business Plan that has been created is laid out below:

Priority 1: Neglect		
Action	Target Date	Lead
Coventry Safeguarding Children’s Partnership to review and update the Neglect Strategy.	December 2024	CSCP Business Manager
Coventry Safeguarding Children’s Partnership to understand the profile of neglect across the city.	June 2024	Chair of Audit and Performance
Coventry Safeguarding Children’s Partnership to develop multi agency neglect training.	September 2024	Chair of Implementation Subgroup
Coventry Safeguarding Children’s Partnership to promote the neglect toolkit.	December 2024	CSCP Business Manager
Coventry Safeguarding Children’s Partnership to engage with frontline practitioners through the Safeguarding Together Action Group to understand barriers to identifying and responding to neglect.	December 2024	CSCP Business Manager
Coventry Safeguarding Children’s Partnership to ensure that agencies are trained and supported to use the early help assessment to ensure that families receive coordinated and appropriate support at the earliest opportunity.	December 2024	CSCP Business Manager



Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to promote the step up/ step down procedure.	December 2024	CSCP Business Manager
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to undertake an audit of cases where neglect is a feature that have been subject to step up/ step down.	March 2025	Chair of Audit and Performance Subgroup
Share the learning from the National Child Safeguarding Review Panel across the partnership and implement the learning across the system.	June 2025	Chair of Implementation Subgroup

## Priority 2: Exploitation / SYV

Action	Target Date	Lead
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to share the findings of the Serious Youth Violence Joint Targeted Inspection across the partnership.	July 2024	CSCP Business Manager
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to understand the profile of exploitation/ Serious Youth Violence.	June 2024	Chair of Audit and Performance Subgroup
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to review its workforce development offer in relation to exploitation/ serious youth violence.	December 2024	Chair of Implementation Subgroup
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to undertake awareness raising in relation to professional curiosity.	December 2024	Chair of Implementation Subgroup
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to make exploitation/serious youth violence the theme of its conference in 2025.	June 2025	Chair of Exploitation Subgroup
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to review and promote the exploitation screening tool	December 2024	Chair of Exploitation Subgroup
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to develop its approach to out of hours strategy meetings.	December 2024	Delegated Safeguarding Partners.
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to raise awareness of the Trauma Vanguard across the city.	March 2025	Chair of Implementation Subgroup
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to monitor and understand any issues of disproportionality and put strategies in place to address any issues that arise.	September 2024	Chair of Audit and Performance
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to undertake an exploitation/serious youth violence case file audit.	June 2025	Chair of Audit and Performance

Priority 3: Making the system work		
Action	Target Date	Lead
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to publish new arrangements	September 2024	Lead Safeguarding Partners
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to review the Safeguarding Practice Review toolkit	September 2024	Chair of Safeguarding Practice Review Subgroup
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to develop mechanisms for engaging VCSE and Sports Clubs	September 2024	Business Manager
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to review threshold document	December 2024	Chair of MASH/EH
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to ensure that National, Regional and Local learning is disseminated to frontline practitioners	June 2025	Business Manager, Chair of Implementation Subgroup
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to further develop mechanisms to understand the Voice of the child and parents	June 2025	Business Manager
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to deliver quality assurance activity as laid down in the Quality Assurance framework	June 2025	Business Manager
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to deliver quality assurance activity as laid down in the Quality Assurance framework	June 2025	Chair of Audit and Performance
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership to deliver a multi-agency training Programme	June 2025	Chair of Implementation Subgroup



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Coventry City Council

## Briefing note

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**To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)**

**Date: 15 January 2025**

**Subject: School Attendance Duties**

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### 1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To provide information on the Local Authority's duties for School Attendance, following the implementation of the new reforms.
- 1.2 The DfE published new guidance in 2024 – [Working together to improve school attendance](#). Setting out statutory responsibilities and expectations for all key stakeholders: schools, multi-academy trusts (MATs), Local Authorities (LA), parents / carers. The initial intention was that the guidance would be statutory from September 2023, and this was presented to Scrutiny Board 2 alongside the changes to the service in Autumn 2023. The guidance became statutory in August 2024 following further updates.
- 1.3 In Coventry we continue to work in partnership with all schools. As a result, attendance continues to be a key strand of our Education Improvement Citywide priorities.
- 1.4 The School Attendance Matters document is available on the City Council website [Attendance – Coventry City Council](#) and included in Appendix A of this note.

### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended to:
  - 1) Consider the content of the information provided.
  - 2) Identify any further questions for Officers and Cabinet Members

### 3 Information/Background

- 3.1 During the 2023/24 academic year, the LA made changes to the operation of the Attendance Service to implement updated guidance (published May 2022). LAs locally, regionally, and nationally have continued to make representation to the DfE pointing out that the attendance reforms create additional burdens for LAs and schools. There has been no additional resource provided to deliver the reforms for LAs or schools.
- 3.2 The LA have recruited additional staff to ensure delivery of the new reforms. This equates to 2 additional Local Authority Attendance Officers (LAAO), an extension of hours for 2 existing LAAOs and an increase in admin support time. In addition, the time available for traded service has reduced. The majority of this has been funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant, achieved through re-prioritisation of existing funding.

- 3.3 The LA have made further amendments to the service and processes to deliver the updated statutory guidance from September 2024.
- 3.4 The revised guidance sets the same expectations for LAs as previous, to:
- Rigorously track local attendance data;
  - Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through the Virtual School;
  - Resource a School Attendance team providing core functions free of charge to all schools (e.g. communication & advice; targeting support meetings with every school; support access to multi-disciplinary family support; legal interventions).
- 3.5 Updates to the guidance include, but are not limited to:
- Changes to the law on keeping school attendance and admission registers contained within The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024,
  - New National Framework for issuing penalty notices,
  - Clarification for schools around medical evidence for those pupils prevented from attending school due to physical or mental ill health,
  - New requirements on schools around data sharing,
  - Flexibility for LAs on they work with independent schools.
- 3.6 The key theme running throughout the guidance is ‘Support First’ and it is very clear that prosecution and legal intervention only take place when all attempts to engage with the family at a voluntary and formal support level have failed, or where support has been deemed inappropriate. Please note the support first approach is applied for irregular attendance and not for a leave of absence.
- 3.7 Prior to the 2023/24 academic year the Coventry Attendance Service was predominantly a traded model. This means that apart from general advice and support for legal intervention the team had largely only worked with schools that purchased the service.
- 3.8 The service was redesigned for the 2023/24 academic year to cover the expectations of the May 2022 guidance, and following feedback from schools, has continued to offer a traded service alongside its statutory duties. The traded service offer provides schools with support for case work, working with the family to understand barriers to school attendance following school attempts to engage with the child and family. The LA will work with the family through to a resolution, with a focus on improving school attendance. In line with current practice the traded service will be reviewed with schools on a periodic basis.
- 3.9 The LA’s updated School Attendance Matters document (that has been shared with all school stakeholders), and describes the expectations, the service, and offer to schools from September 2024 is included at Appendix 1. The School Attendance Team have continued to work closely with Early Help Services throughout, and this will remain a key focus of the updated model.
- 3.10 In line with the national and regional position, Coventry has seen a worsened citywide attendance position following the pandemic. The figures for 2019-2023 can be found in Appendix B. The 2023/24 full year figures are not yet published. If

published in time they will be included in our performance report later in the municipal year. The figures for the Autumn and Spring Term of 2023/24 show an improvement from the previous year's figures with average city-wide attendance rising from 92.3% to 93%. City-wide average persistent absenteeism has also fallen from 23.6% to 20.2% during the same period.

- 3.11 The LA has been part of a pilot project 'LocalEd 2025', which has tested locality models for the school system supporting vulnerable pupils. The project has been closely linked with school attendance as a lens for vulnerability and has been working with schools and community partners in the Woodend, Moathouse and Henley Green (WEMH) area to focus on understanding the reasons for attendance difficulties, barriers to learning, and challenges for vulnerable learners. Through this work several pilot approaches were tested, including navigation for practitioners supporting families - Right Help, Right Time, enhanced year 6/7 transition package for children with a social worker, Early Help School link worker model, and raising aspirations. This pilot has now ended but we will continue to disseminate learning and good practice to schools across the city.
- 3.12 Within the statutory guidance the DfE have included a National framework for penalty notices. This has been introduced to provide consistency across the country with the issuing of penalty notices. To remain consistent with the 'Support First' approach Coventry have introduced a clear process for schools to ensure all efforts have been made to overcome the barriers to attendance before schools request legal intervention.
- 3.13 The Legal Services Team have also introduced more stringent guidance to schools to ensure parents have been afforded every opportunity to provide evidence before moving forward with a prosecution for non-payment of a penalty notice for a leave of absence.
- 3.14 The impact of the guidance and subsequent implementation in Coventry means consistent oversight of attendance in every school and provides the opportunity to ensure consistent advice and support to schools. This also facilitates a greater focus on all vulnerable groups including those known to the Virtual School and those with a social worker. The Team will continue to build on this to ensure a coordinated and collegiate approach across Local Authority services alongside the clear recognition of school attendance as a protective factor for children and young people.

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## Appendix A: School Attendance Matters Document

In Coventry it is our belief that good school attendance provides our pupils with the best chance of a bright and successful future. We do however realise that for some pupils there are barriers to attending school.

### Why school attendance matters

Regular school attendance is an important part of giving children the best possible start in life. The aim should be to attend 100% of the time.

Research shows that pupils who attend school regularly achieve at higher levels than those who do not attend regularly, and they also have wider life chances. Attending school on a regular basis also helps to develop:

- Friendships
- Social skills
- Life skills
- Career pathways

Missed days in school can have a significant impact on all the above.

Yearly attendance	Yearly days missed	Yearly learning hours missed	Learning hours missed during school life (YR-Y11)
100%	0	0	0
97%	6	30	360
95%	10	50	600
90%	20	100	1200
80%	40	200	2400
50%	100	500	6000

### Overall absence

Please note the latest full year data published is for the 2022/23 academic year.

In Coventry the overall absence rate for the academic year 2022/23 was 7.7%. This was 0.3% lower than the national average but remained the same as the previous year in Coventry.

### Persistent absence

Please note the latest full year data published is for the 2022/23 academic year.

Persistent absence (those pupils who miss 10% or more of school) was 23.6% in Coventry for the academic year 2022/23. This is 2.5% higher than the national average but 0.3% lower than the previous academic year in Coventry.



## **What are we doing in Coventry?**

The barriers to accessing education are far reaching and complex and do not solely begin and end with the school. Often these barriers extend further than school and are specific to individual pupils and their families.

With our One Coventry approach we will work alongside and in partnership with schools and services across Coventry to ensure all pupils are supported to be able to attend school and will work to remove the barriers to school attendance.

Good attendance is not something to be viewed in isolation and it is the role of all involved to work with and support pupils and their families as a collective.

Our key stakeholders in Coventry are.

- Pupils and their families
- Attendance and Children Missing Education Team
- Schools
- SEND
- Early Help
- Virtual School
- Social Care
- Health
- Others ( as appropriate)

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

### **Expect**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

### **Monitor**

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

### **Listen and understand**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

### **Facilitate support**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

### **Formalise support**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

### **Enforce**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

## **How are we delivering attendance support in Coventry?**

Coventry's Staged Intervention model works to support schools, pupils and families to secure the right help at the right time.

Schools will provide a named Senior Attendance Champion who will act as the main point of contact for the named Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO). Schools will also be provided with a named Early Help Assessment Coordinator (EHAC).

Schools should seek support from Social Care if the child is known to be under a Child Protection plan or Child in Need plan. School attendance should inform part of the plan and social workers would be expected to be involved in any concerns raised around school attendance where they are already involved.

### **Stage 1: Prevention**

**Criteria:** Attendance is between 91% and 100%

**Lead practitioner:** School

Pupils who have attendance between 91% and 100% will receive support from school and other universal services they may be accessing i.e., GP.

Schools should follow their school attendance policy when a pupil is recorded as absent i.e.

- First day absence contact.
- Letter sent if absence falls below schools' attendance target.
- If attendance does not improve request a meeting with parent/carers

Schools can contact their LAAO via phone or email for advice and guidance around attendance issues.

## **Stage 2: Early Intervention**

**Criteria:** Attendance is between 51% and 90%

**Lead practitioner:** 1<sup>st</sup> school – 2<sup>nd</sup> LA Supporting Families team if 3 of the criteria for Supporting Families input is met

Pupils who have attendance between 51% and 90% may require support from other services outside of school through a multi-agency response and universal services at stage 1.

LAAO will attend targeting support meetings with the school to discuss severely absent and persistently absent pupils. *(See Appendix 1 for details of the Targeting Support Meetings)*. If the pupil is looked after the Virtual School and Social Worker should be invited to attend the Targeting Support Meeting if the pupil is due to be discussed.

Schools should consider.

- Letters home
- Meeting with parent/carer in school
- Home visits
- Pastoral support
- Mentoring/counselling
- Part time timetable
- SEMH&L
- SEND
- Extended School Non-Attendance Advisory Panel (ESNAAP)
- Social Care/Supporting Families teams (Children's Service)

Please note this list is not exhaustive.

Schools should also complete an Early Help Assessment to better understand the needs of the child and their family so that an early help plan can be developed to meet the needs with a clear focus on the outcomes and changes needed to address attendance concerns.

As part of the plan the school should consider the following in conjunction with the list above:

- Identifying appropriate agencies to form the Team Around the Family (TAF) who can offer specialist support.
- Registering the family with their local Family Hub and promoting the services on offer including the digital offer.

Schools must initiate an Early Help Assessment, and they can access support from an EHAC, who will be able to support to undertake the Early Help assessment and deliver the Early Help plan. The EHAC support may include helping staff to record on EHM, joint home visits, attendance at Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings, making

necessary referrals, signposting and navigating to available services and advice and guidance relating to Right Help Right Time (RHRT) thresholds.

If during the completion of the Early Help Assessment, it is identified that the child and their family meet the Right Help Right Time level 3 i.e. multiple issues requiring a multiagency plan, the family may benefit from an intensive family support offer. The school can get advice from their EHAC regarding this and if a decision is made that the school is best placed to act as Lead Practitioner, the professional from school should request their EHAC to support them to complete a Request for Help for the family and for them to be allocated a Supporting Families Worker who will deliver the family support. School will be required to participate in the Early Help Assessment and Early Help plan as a key member of the TAF.

In most situations, the Children's Service Supporting Families team will be best placed to take the role of the Lead Professional and deliver a whole family plan, when the family's needs are complex and require a multiagency plan (i.e 3 or more SF criteria). However, there will be some occasions where schools are the best placed agency to be the lead professional. The decision for this will be made following the Early Help Assessment.

If a family does not meet 3 of the Supporting Families criteria, an early help request can be made and a more suitable agency to lead may be identified. The school should also support the family to register with their local Family Hub where they will be able to access a range of services and activities such as groups and activities and these can be included in the TAF as part of an Early Help plan that is led by a school.

At this point schools may also request a Notice to Improve be sent out via the LA. Should the pupil's attendance not improve then a Penalty Notice can be issued following the monitoring period. *(See Appendix 2 for details on National Framework for Penalty Notices)*

**A Penalty Notice can only be issued by a head teacher, or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), a local authority officer or the police.**

### **Stage 3: Targeted Support**

**Criteria:** Attendance is below 50%

**Lead practitioner:** LAAO

Pupils who have attendance below 80% may require multi-agency support in addition to that provided at stage 2.

When all attempts to engage with the pupil and family at stages 1 and 2 have failed school can discuss legal intervention with their LAAO. Schools will be asked to complete either the Stage 2 PN Attendance Intervention Request Form and/or the Stage 3 Prosecution Attendance Contract Referral Form with attached evidence that everything has been done to support the pupil in improving their attendance at school.

If the LAAO is satisfied that the criteria have been met for legal intervention, they will support the school to complete one of the following.

- Attendance Contract
- Attendance Prosecution
  - School Attendance Order (only used where a pupil is not on a school roll)
  - Section 444(1) or 444(1A)

*(See Appendix 3 for details on Legal Framework and Court Preparation)*

## **School Attendance Matters (APPENDIX 1) – Targeting Support Meetings**

### ***Pre-meeting***

Information to be provided to LAAO 1 week before meeting via the proforma which schools will be provided with.

- Overall current attendance
- Severely absent figures (less than 50%)
- Persistent absence figures (less than 90%)
- Pupils who have had zero percent attendance September
- Pupils who have not attended at all in the last 3 weeks for unauthorised reasons other than CME (unless detailed in the zero percent)
- Pupils the school would like to discuss during the meeting

LAAO will analyse the information provided and seek clarification from school prior to meeting if required.

LAAO will check Attendance Intervention forms to ensure all avenues have been exhausted prior to advising on legal intervention.

### ***Meeting***

The length of meetings may vary for different schools depending on the levels of need and number of pupils or pupil cohorts to be discussed.

#### **Attendees**

- School Attendance Champion
  - School Attendance Lead (if not the Attendance Champion)
  - LAAO
  - Head of house/year head – where required
  - Pastoral lead – where required
  - Social Worker – where required
  - Virtual School – where required
- 
- LAAO to chair meeting
  - Each professional in attendance will be responsible for recording their own actions from the meeting.
  - LAAO will record any advice given on specific students within their own database.

Joint approaches for SA	Joint approaches for PA	Agreeing legal actions	Horizon scanning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who are the severely absent children?</li> <li>What's working/ not working for them?</li> <li>Do they have a multiagency plan in place?</li> <li>How do we intensify support?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How is the school reducing PA?</li> <li>What's working well?</li> <li>Which PA children need more?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FPNs</li> <li>Attendance contracts</li> <li>Notices to improve</li> <li>Etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What's the current position?</li> <li>What can we see ahead?</li> <li>What are the emerging themes to be aware of?</li> </ul>

### ***Follow up – legal intervention.***

If legal interventions have been discussed and agreed the LA/O agrees a time frame of support with schools around these interventions.

## **School Attendance Matters (APPENDIX 2) – National Framework for Penalty Notices**

To underpin the principle of support first and to improve the consistency of approach for pupils and parents across the country, Coventry City Council will prioritise the 'support first' approach expecting that support will have been offered to families in cases where it is appropriate. However, Penalty Notices can be issued without a Notice to Improve in cases where support is not appropriate (such as leave of absence in term time) or when support has not been engaged with.

### **Leave of Absence (LOA)**

Unauthorised absence for holiday goes direct to **Stage 3** under Attendance Prosecution 444(1A).

Evidence required is detailed below and would not require the interventions as detailed above.

- Schools' complete on-line application form for 10 sessions (5 or more days). This can be consecutive or non-consecutive in line with the National Framework on pages 56-60 of [Working together to improve school attendance](#).
- Schools **MUST** provide
  - full name and address of parents to be issued an PN. **It is a school decision as to whom should be issued with a PN** (consideration of circumstances around the LOA should be taken into account).

- copy of Parent Leave of Absence Application Form (if requested in advance)
- copy of school letter informing parent that LOA has been declined\*.
- School letter informing parent that the LOA will evoke a PN.
  - *School letter should make it clear that a Penalty Notice will be requested for unauthorised absence to the LA and that exceptional circumstances has been considered.*
- Registration Certificate (on child returning to school) displaying the G code (unauthorised absence).
- If the criteria are not met, the LA will **not issue** a PN.
  - Please note that contact with the school will not be made for further information if not provided at the initial referral stage.
- Enquiries regarding PN's are to be made through [Attendance@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:Attendance@coventry.gov.uk).

\*Schools need to ensure their letters are updated stating Attendance and Children Missing Education Team not Children and Family First Service, Education Entitlement Service, Targeted and Specialist Services or any other descriptor for the LA department.

### **Irregular Attendance (IA)**

Penalty Notices can be requested by schools when there have been 10 sessions (5 or more days) of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period.

#### **Stage 2 – Attendance 51% - 90%**

- School may apply for a monitoring period as an indicator that school attendance is becoming a cause for concern.
- Parent(s) will receive a Notice to Improve of the possibility of an PN being issued and a maximum of 20 school days to affect an improvement.
- An attendance target will be issued with the formal warning.

#### **Stage 3 – Attendance 50% and below**

- Schools must evidence that attendance has not improved following the monitoring period and has now dropped below 50%.
- Schools must complete an 'Attendance Intervention' form evidencing that an Early Help Assessment has been offered/taken and other interventions have taken place before any legal action or a 1A prosecution can begin.

### **School Attendance Matters (APPENDIX 3) – Legal framework and court preparation**

#### **Leave of Absence.**

After the unauthorised absence of a pupil, schools can request the Council to issue a penalty notice (PN) to each parent. If this is paid, nothing further happens.

W the PN has not been paid, schools will receive an email from the LAAO advising the PN has not been paid.

If schools wish to move to prosecution, they will need to take the following steps.



1. Use the template wording attached to the email to contact the parent by email, text or letter to find out any additional information and tell them they could now be taken to court by the Council. This will substantiate the school's decision that there are no "exceptional circumstances" in this case.
2. After the 7 days given in the communication to the parent, schools will then need to decide whether they want to proceed with a prosecution and if so:
  - a. Complete and sign the section 9 statement so that the Council can issue court proceedings.
  - b. Sign the attached attendance certificate.
  - c. Send the LA all of the exhibits referred to in the statement including a copy of the school's latest email, text or letter to the parent and any response. The LA will attach these to the statement.

The school's statement will be sent to court as evidence. The LA will send school a copy of the complete statement with the exhibits and a copy to Legal Services. If the parent pleads not guilty, the school will be called to give evidence at trial.

If the LA do not hear from school within **14 days** of receiving the non-payment notification email, the LA will assume the school does not wish the Council to go ahead with a prosecution against the parent.

### **Irregular Attendance Stage 3**

(Section 4441(A) Prosecution – Aggravated Offence)

Use of the Attendance Contract.

When evidence indicates that all avenues of support have been offered to effect a change to school attendance, the LAAO will formalise the Contract using evidence that school have provided to them, via the Stage 3 Attendance Contract Referral Form.

- The Attendance Contract will be formulated by the LAAO, detailing the offers of support school have made and the interventions implemented, to effect a change to the school attendance pattern.
- The LAAO will send a Formal Warning Notice (standard template) inviting the parent/s into school for the Attendance Contract Meeting.
- The LAAO will chair the meeting and ensure that all relevant agencies working with the family are present (either in person or by Microsoft teams).
- The Attendance Contract is a voluntary agreement between school and parent/s with the LAAO acting at the Supervising Officer in the case.
- The LAAO will outline to the parent/s the offers of support made to date and give a further opportunity for parent/s to engage in the offers of support. This may require a further action plan if barriers (not known previously), are identified at this meeting.
- The LAAO will outline the Offence (Section 4441A) and the possibility of prosecution in the Magistrates Court, if school attendance fails to improve during

the set 6-week period. The LAAO will set a date for an Attendance Contract Review (end of the Contract period).

- If parent/s fail to attend the meeting and no contact has been received asking for a re-scheduled meeting, the Attendance Contract meeting will proceed.
- The Attendance Contract will then be hand delivered by school, to the family home(s), in a final attempt to engage the parent/s in the process. A covering letter will be supplied by the LAAO (ahead of this planned meeting), for use if the home visit is unsuccessful. This letter will inform the parent/s of the Attendance Contract that has been implemented.
- The Attendance Contract will run for the 6-week period identified at the meeting. School and parent/s are expected to continue to work together during this period to address school attendance issues and carry out actions as identified at the meeting.
- When the Attendance Contract has run for the 6-week period, the LAAO will review the case with the school and the parent/s.
- If improvement or signs of improvement have taken place, there will be no further legal action at this stage.
- If there has been no improvement and unauthorised absences are still prevalent, the LAAO will inform the parent/s of the next steps of Prosecution.
- An Advisory Letter will be prepared by the Senior Officer from the School Attendance Team, inviting the parents to attend an Interview Under Caution (PACE). This will be hand delivered to the parent/s by the school.
- The PACE Interview will be held at the Council House in a formal setting.
- A Section 9 Witness Statement will be completed by the school.
- The LAAO will act as the Supervising Officer and advise on amendments/adjustments to be made to the S9 Statement. The LAAO will prepare the Certificate of Attendance using the evidence period, for Headteacher to verify and sign.
- The LAAO will complete all other required components of the court file before submitting to the Legal Team for Prosecution.

## Appendix B: School Attendance Data

### Attendance 2019 – 2023

<b>Overall Attendance</b> <i>(N.B the academic year 2019/20 was not collected during Covid, and 2020/21 would have been affected by Covid)</i>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>Aut/Spr 2023/24</b>
Coventry	95.2%	93.7%	92.3%	92.3%	93.0%
National	95.3%	94.1%	92.4%	92.6%	93.1%
Diff. Nat +/-	-0.1%	-0.4%	-0.1%	-0.3%	-0.1%

<b>Persistent Absence</b> <i>(N.B the academic year 2019/20 was not collected during Covid and 2020/21 would have been affected by Covid)</i>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>Aut/Spr 2023/24</b>
Coventry	11.5%	18.8%	23.9%	23.6%	20.2%
National	10.9%	16.9%	22.8%	21.1%	19.2%
Diff. Nat +/-	0.6%	1.9%	1.1%	2.5%	1.0%

Data Source: DFE

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# Agenda Item 6

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) Work Programme 2024-25

Last updated 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Please see page 2 onwards for background to items

<b>11<sup>th</sup> July 24</b>
Early Years Strategy
<b>12<sup>th</sup> September 24 - cancelled</b>
<b>17<sup>th</sup> October 24</b>
Family Valued and Reunification Project Child-friendly Cov
<b>28<sup>th</sup> November 24</b>
Cost of Children's Placements (Update Report) HAF Update Social Worker Recruitment and Retention
<b>16<sup>th</sup> January 25</b>
Safeguarding Board Annual Report Attendance – changes to statutory guidance
<b>13<sup>th</sup> February 25</b>
School Performance Children's LGA Peer Challenge
<b>13<sup>th</sup> March 25 PM (moved from 27<sup>th</sup> March 25)</b>
SEND Strategy Sufficiency – Early Years, Mainstream and SEND Section 19 Policy
<b>17<sup>th</sup> April 2025</b>
Family Health and Lifestyles Service – health inequalities
<b>Items for 2024-25</b>
Youth Provision in Coventry Health and Wellbeing in Schools Early Help
<b>Items for 2025-26</b>
Early Years Strategy
<b>Items taken for information</b>
Adoption Service Annual Reports – November Fostering Annual Report - November

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) Work Programme 2024-25

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer</b>
<b>11<sup>th</sup> July 24</b>	Early Years Strategy	Following a report on the Early Years Strategy, Members requested a further item including progress on and more detail on the Saplings Programme, as well as strategies to support reading in the early years. To invite Chair of SB5	Rachael Sugars Cllr Sandhu
<b>12<sup>th</sup> September 24 - cancelled</b>			
<b>17<sup>th</sup> October 24</b>	Family Valued and Reunification Project	A progress and impact report	Cllr Seaman Sukriti Sen
	Child-friendly Cov	A progress and impact report on the Child Friendly Coventry project	Cllr Seaman Sukriti Sen
<b>28<sup>th</sup> November 24</b>	Cost of Children's Placements (Update Report)	At their meeting on 23 <sup>rd</sup> November 2023, Member requested an update item to report on progress in addressing the cost of placements	Sukriti Sen Cllr Seaman
	HAF Update	To consider progress on delivering the HAF programme	Adrian Coles Cllr Sandhu
	Social Worker Recruitment and Retention	A progress update following the previous item in November 2024 – to consider how the use of agency staff has been reduced. To also include work being done to reduce sickness and support the well-being of staff.	Sukriti Sen Cllr Seaman
<b>16<sup>th</sup> January 25</b>	Safeguarding Board Annual Report		
	Attendance – changes to statutory guidance		
<b>13<sup>th</sup> February 25</b>	School Performance		
	Children's LGA Peer Challenge	To consider the recommendations from the LGA Peer Challenge on Children's Services	Cllr Seaman Sukriti Sen
<b>13<sup>th</sup> March 25 PM (moved from 27<sup>th</sup> March 25)</b>	SEND Strategy	Following on from an item on 18 <sup>th</sup> April 2024 the Board requested an update to be circulated to the Board	Cllr Sandhu Jeannette Essex

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) Work Programme 2024-25

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer</b>
	Sufficiency – Early Years, Mainstream and SEND	To tie in with the Cabinet Report due in February. To provide previous report as background from 18/4/24	Rachael Sugars Cllr Sandhu
	Section 19 Policy	How the Council will support the education of pupils out of school due to medical reasons	Rachael Sugars Cllr Sandhu
<b>17<sup>th</sup> April 2025</b>	Family Health and Lifestyles Service – health inequalities	To looking in more detail at how the service is tackling health inequalities and targeting services at those in need on a localised basis. School nurse provision.	Bill McCann, Angela Baker Cllr Caan
<b>Items for 2024-25</b>			
	Youth Provision in Coventry	How and where we work with outside partners (and specifically the third sector) to deliver it	Sukriti Sen Cllr Seaman
	Health and Wellbeing in Schools	To look at what is being done to promote health and well-being in schools and universities – including the school nursing service	
	Early Help	To include workforce plans and placements for apprenticeships etc	Sukriti Sen Cllr Seaman
<b>Items for 2025-26</b>	Early Years Strategy	To come in 2025 and to include progress on actions requested on 17/7/24 re: oral and dental health	R Sugars Cllr Sandhu
<b>Items taken for information</b>	Adoption Service Annual Reports – November	Annual report – including information about the diversity of the adoption panel and adopters as well as support to birth mothers after their children have been adopted	Cllr Seaman
	Fostering Annual Report - November	For Members to consider whether a full item is required	Cllr Seaman

### Work Programme Decision Flow Chart

