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Portsmouth's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Strategy



2023-26

Purpose

Portsmouth's Children's Trust Plan articulates six clear priorities for improving the lives of children and families in the city and how partner agencies will work together to enable children, young people and families to enjoy their childhood - be happy, healthy, safe and engaged in learning as they grow into young adults.

Each of these priorities has an accompanying strategy, and these are:

1. Improve education outcomes - the Education Strategy
2. Improve early help and safeguarding - the Safeguarding Strategy
3. Improve physical health - the Physical Health Strategy
4. Improve Social, Emotional and Mental Health - the SEMH Strategy
5. Improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers - the Corporate Parenting Strategy
6. Improve outcomes for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities - the SEND Strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to:

- Set out how the Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership will respond to the Children's Trust ambition to improve early help and safeguarding arrangements in the city.
- Set out the priorities, key areas of work and success measures for the Safeguarding Strategy and the PSCP over the next three years.

Vision

Our children and young people within Portsmouth will grow up being and feeling safe, protected, and cared for by their families and in their community. As a multi-agency partnership, we will achieve this by working with families to enable them to keep their children safe from all types of harm by providing the right advice, support and intervention, from the right services, at the right time.

Principles

As set out in Working Together 2018 the responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in Portsmouth lies with the Safeguarding Children Partnership. The partners have a statutory duty to support and enable local organisations and agencies to work together in a system where they collaborate, share and co-own the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children. To also challenge appropriately and hold one another to account for when these arrangements are in need of improvement.

To make sure that our early help and safeguarding arrangements across the partnership are effective, we will work together to make sure that the following principles are embedded into practice across the multi-agency workforce:

- Professionals have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in keeping children and young people as safe as they can be; and that early help and safeguarding pathways are understood and used appropriately.
- Core safeguarding practice is effective in keeping children and young people as safe as they can be; and that safeguarding policies, procedures are understood and adhered to in practice.
- There is effective communication within and between agencies in order to enable timely and effective sharing of information to enable appropriate safeguarding actions.
- That the views and lived experience of children, young people and families/carers inform safeguarding outcomes.

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- That a trauma informed, relational based model of practice that embeds restorative principles across multi-agency leadership is embedded into practice to strengthen the safeguarding system.
- There is a well understood and embedded whole family approach to improving outcomes and reducing harm to children, by working with the adults in the family. That practitioners work together to support the adults to address their difficulties in order to support children to live safely at home with their families.
- To continue to build a culture of learning and improvement in Portsmouth, based on intelligence led safeguarding. Appropriately using the available data, learning from audits and from safeguarding practice reviews to be able to report on both the scale of need, quality of response and impact on children's lived experience.
- Professionals receive the appropriate training to reflect their role in safeguarding children, which encompasses both their statutory duties and the model of practice in Portsmouth.

Strategic Priorities

1. We will ensure that children's and family's needs are identified at the earliest point and that they will receive effective early support and help
2. We will make sure that families will receive effective and timely support when children are at risk of experiencing neglect
3. We will work to ensure that families receive effective and timely support when children are at risk of experiencing sexual abuse
4. We will seek to ensure that young people will be kept as safe as possible from all forms of extra-familial harm, and there will be effective transitional safeguarding arrangements in place to support vulnerable young adults
5. We will make sure that children and young people have access to appropriate support that recognises the impact of trauma resulting from adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
6. We will ensure that there is an effective response to safeguarding children with additional needs and those from diverse communities
7. We will ensure there is sufficient professional and organisational development to provide an effective response to safeguarding children within Portsmouth
8. We will make sure there is a good understanding of safeguarding risks for children within education settings and an effective response to these

The governance arrangements, objectives, and the performance measurements for each of these priorities is set out in Appendix A. Progress against these will be reported to the PSCP on a 6 monthly basis with a summary of the effectiveness and impact detailed in the Annual Report.

Appendix 1 - Governance Arrangements, Objectives and Delivery Plans for the Priorities

Year One: 2023-24

<p>Priority 1 - Children and family's needs will be identified at the earliest point and they will receive effective early support and help</p>
<p>Why are we doing this? We know that if we work together to identify the emerging needs of children, young people and their families as soon as possible, we can work with them more effectively to identify the right support and prevent their needs from escalating.</p>
<p>Who is responsible for oversight of this work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Early Help Board, chaired by Director of Children, Families and Education
<p>What is the difference we want to see?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That universal services are confident and knowledgeable to identify when a family needs additional support to ensure the child's welfare and safety needs are met appropriately. • Families tell their story once in a Family Support Conversation ○ Family Support Plans are co-developed with the family and their support network which they understand, own and lead on ○ The child or young person's is heard, and their voice acted on to improve their everyday lived experience. ○ A clear indicators of need within the Portsmouth Thresholds Document helps support professionals to identify the right support for a family and assists their decision making. ○ That there is effective and seamless step-up and step-down arrangements between universal Family Support and targeted Early Help
<p>How will we achieve this?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and implement our Multi-Agency Early Help strategy. 2. Review the Thresholds Document to ensure the indicators of need across all tiers is clear, consistent with current legislation and appropriate to all ages and stages of childhood. 3. Review early help pathways and continue to embed the Family Support process across universal settings. 4. Ensure there is adequate provision of training (both multi and single agency) to support practitioners in their development of relational and restorative based practice. 5. Ensure there is a well understood and embedded pathway of support across the first 1001 days of a child's life. 6. Continue to develop and embed evidence-based interventions in response to local family need, at the right time.
<p>How will we measure impact? Key performance indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Family Support Plans submitted • Number of contacts into MASH: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual Contacts - Individual Children • Number of contacts that result in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Signposting to universal services - Referral to Early Help & Prevention - Referral to Children Social Care • Rate per 10,000 children who are Child in Need • Rate per 10,000 children with a Child Protection Plan • Rate per 10,000 children who are Looked After

Priority 2 - Families will receive effective and timely support when children are at risk of experiencing neglect

Why are we doing this?

National research, as well as local experience, tells us that when children are neglected not only does this impact on their development through childhood, but that it will also have an enduring effect on achieving a safe, happy, secure and successful adult life. Experience of neglect during childhood currently represents the highest incidence of child abuse both locally and nationally

Who is responsible for oversight of this work?

- PSCP Executive Committee, chaired by PSCP Independent Chair & Scrutineer

What is the difference we want to see?

- To tackle neglect at the earliest opportunity to prevent having a long-term impact and to improve the lives of children and young people who are at risk of, or have experienced, neglect.
- Promote a shared understanding of neglect, how it impacts upon children and how multi-agency partners work with families to identify, intervene and support children and families that is consistent across Portsmouth.
- Families are more aware of the support and resources available and are seeking these out when worries for them emerge

How will we achieve this?

1. To improve the awareness and understanding of neglect within communities and universal services to share preventative messaging so that early identification can be achieved.
2. The indicators of need relevant to neglect will be reviewed in the Thresholds Document to ensure they are appropriate for all ages and stages of childhood.
3. The lived experience and voices of children and young people will be captured, recorded and responded to by embedding the Day in the Life Tools.
4. To promote the use of Re-Think conversations to support practitioners where they are stuck and to encourage professional curiosity

How will we measure impact? Key performance indicators

- Number and percentage of S.47 enquiries for neglect:
 - Joint agency
 - Single agency
- Percentage of Child Protection Plans due to neglect
- Number of crimes recorded for neglect
- Percentage of children with dental decay:
 - Year 8 pupils
 - Year 10 pupils
- Percentage of obese school children:
 - in Year R
 - in Year 6

Priority 3 - Families will receive effective and timely support when children are at risk of experiencing sexual abuse

Why are we doing this?

Despite research and policy initiatives, there continues to be a vast difference between the identification of sexual abuse in children and the numbers disclosing child sexual abuse in adulthood

Who is responsible for oversight of this work?

- PSCP Executive Committee, chaired by PSCP Independent Chair & Scrutineer

What is the difference we want to see?

- To provide a coordinated approach to preventing child sexual abuse (CSA), and improve the identification, protection, and support for victims, survivors and their families.
- Raise awareness of the newly created HIPS CSA Strategy.

How will we achieve this?

1. Develop and promote appropriate materials to support practitioner's understanding and recognition of sexually abusive behaviour.
2. Ensure appropriate, consistent and timely responses across all agencies.
3. Explore and evidence the incidence of child sexual abuse to inform the planning of services and support for children who have been sexually abused and their non-abusing family members.
4. To work with schools to ensure guidance introduced in Keeping Children Safe in Education relating to child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment has been embedded and is effective.

How will we measure impact? Key performance indicators

- Number of children referred for a child protection specialist child sexual abuse medical assessment
- Number of children referred to Children's Social Care as a result of child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation or harmful sexual behaviour
- Percentage of Child Protection Plans due to sexual abuse
- Children subject to sexual crimes
- Number of child sexual abuse victims where perpetrator is a child:
 - Ages 5 - 10
 - Ages 11 - 15
 - Ages 16 - 17

Priority 4 - Young people will be kept as safe as possible from all forms of extra-familial harm, and there will be effective transitional safeguarding arrangements in place to support vulnerable young adults

Why are we doing this?

As children and young people grow in independence and go into spaces and places away from the family home, they can become vulnerable to risks outside of the home. As children build relationships and connections beyond the family the nature and level of risk changes. We would like to build a joined-up approach that supports child and adolescent resilience.

Who is responsible for oversight of this work?

- Portsmouth Youth Forum, chaired by Hampshire Constabulary (tbc)

What is the difference we want to see?

- Fewer children at risk and presenting with unsafe behaviours to themselves or others within our communities.
- Raised engagement and attendance from pupils in school as not distracted or prevented/persuaded to be out of school and at risk.
- There is a well understood picture of how exploitation affects children in the city and a robust multi-agency response in place to disrupt and address this.
- There is a clear focus on the prevention of harm through identification, disruption and prosecution of offenders.
- Ensure that our approach to adolescent safeguarding includes the need to understand and to respond to a child's special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Provide effective support and guidance to children and young people to help them stay safe online.
- That there are effective transitional safeguarding arrangements in place to support young people at risk of (of experiencing) exploitation once they are no longer eligible for support from Children's Services.

How will we achieve this?

1. Develop and embed our response to adolescents who are vulnerable to safeguarding risks beyond the home including peer on peer abuse, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, and other forms of harm related to the social and relational contexts in which young people live and relate to other young people and adults.
2. Ensure that multi-agency staff understand the Portsmouth Integrated Pathway from children who are exploited, missing and/or trafficked. To consider the adequacy of the current learning opportunities (both single and multi-agency) and engagement with these, and to review if they are appropriate at all tiers of need.
3. Embed the Portsmouth MET Pathway to ensure staff are confident in how to identify children at risk at the earliest opportunity, know how to respond appropriately and understand their responsibilities in work with the family and professional network to develop an appropriate plan of support.
4. To work with the Safeguarding Adults Board to ensure the Transitional Safeguarding Framework is embedded within practice in Portsmouth. So that vulnerable young people continue to receive appropriate support into adulthood.

How will we measure impact? Key performance indicators

- Numbers of missing children:
 - Total number of episodes
 - Total number of children
- Number of children going missing - 3 times in 90 days or more
- Percentage of children with a missing episode who have a Return Home Interview
 - Open to CSC
 - Open to Early Help
 - Not open to C&FS (Tier 2)

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- Number of children whose risk level of either CSE or CCE rose to high (from low or medium) during the quarter
- Percentage of children flagged at high risk of CSE &/or CCE for 6+ months
- Total number of children flagged at risk at the end of the quarter of:
 - Sexual exploitation
 - Criminal exploitation
- Children flagged at operational MET Group as:
 - Low risk of sexual exploitation
 - Medium risk of sexual exploitation
 - High risk of sexual exploitation
 - Low risk of criminal exploitation
 - Medium risk of criminal exploitation
 - High risk of criminal exploitation
- Number of arrests linked to CSE
- Number of new reported crimes of CSE online
- Number of CAWNS (child abduction warning notices) served
- Number of Victims of Trafficking offences under 18
- Number of NRM referrals (completed by police) relating to those U18
- Children Subject to Crime:
 - Violence
 - Sexual
 - Acquisitive

Priority 5 - Children and young people have access to appropriate support that recognises the impact of trauma resulting from adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

Why are we doing this?

ACEs can include direct experiences such as sexual, physical or verbal abuse and emotional and physical neglect and indirect experiences such as parental separation, substance misuse, mental illness, incarceration or domestic abuse. Exposure to these can lead to an increased risk of poor physical and mental health, as well as poorer social outcomes in adulthood.

Who is responsible for oversight of this work?

- PSCP Executive Committee, chaired by PSCP Independent Chair & Scrutineer

What is the difference we want to see?

- Those services working with adults experiencing and/or perpetrating domestic abuse identify the impact upon any children living in the household and ensure appropriate support is in place for them.
- Communities that protect children from the things that harm them.
- Children develop lifelong resilience through responsive relationships with supportive adults.
- Professionals that are confident in identifying and assessing the impact of adverse childhood experiences on the child or young person.

How will we achieve this?

1. Core safeguarding training includes impact of abuse, exploitation and adverse childhood experiences on children, young people and adults, and provides professionals with tools and resources to assess risks.
2. Ensure that practitioners working with adults experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse understand their duty to consider the impact upon the child and are confident in ensuring appropriate support is in place for them.
3. Continue to embed a whole family approach to safeguarding across the workforce, so that there is appropriate identification and support where parents/carers are experiencing domestic abuse, substance misuse, mental illness and/or incarceration.
4. Work with commissioners to ensure that children who experience trauma have access to the appropriate support and recovery services that they need.
5. To ensure the HIPS Trauma Informed & Trauma Responsive Knowledge & Skills Framework has been embedded effectively across partner agencies practice

How will we measure impact? Key performance indicators

- Number of Children Linked to high-risk Domestic Incidents:
 - Total domestics
 - Number of children
- Rate per 10,000 of hospital admissions caused by:
 - Injuries (0-14 years)
 - Injuries (15-24 years)
 - Alcohol specific conditions (0-18 years)
 - Substance misuse (age 15-24 years)
 - Self-harm (10-24 years)
- Percentage of Child Protection Plans due to:
 - Emotional Abuse
 - Physical Abuse
 - Domestic Abuse is present

<p>Priority 6 - There is an effective response to safeguarding children with additional needs¹ and those from diverse² communities</p>
<p>Why are we doing this?</p> <p>Children and young people who have disabilities are at an increased risk of being abused compared with their non-disabled peers.</p> <p>The absence of professionals having a basic level of cultural understanding and awareness when working with children and families from diverse backgrounds may lead to an inaccurate outcome within the family and may result safeguarding issues being overlooked.</p>
<p>Who is responsible for oversight of this work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSCP Executive Committee, chaired by PSCP Independent Chair & Scrutineer
<p>What is the difference we want to see?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everyone who works with these children understands how to protect them against people who would take advantage of their increased vulnerability. ○ For professionals to work from culturally competent perspectives, particularly where a safeguarding assessment is required. ○ Professionals should seek to understand the experiences of the child, young person and their family within the wider community. Taking into account the barriers they may face to accessing support (including barriers because of racism, discrimination, and prejudice). ○ Using our local data and needs assessment to consider whether there is any identification of disproportionality within this, and to take decisive action to address this.
<p>How will we achieve this?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that professionals have received appropriate training to equip them with the knowledge and awareness to assess the risk of harm to the child arising from a disability and know what action to take. 2. Ensure that professionals have received appropriate training in cultural competence, appropriate to their role and responsibilities. 3. Ensure that there are sufficient resources are available children and young people's basic right to communication is always met. 4. Explore any potential barriers to accessing services that children, young people and families may face (arising from physical or communication obstacles or from discrimination) and consider how these can best be overcome.
<p>How will we measure impact? Key performance indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of children with an Education, Health & Care Plan • Percentage of children on a Child Protection Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Who have a disability ○ Who are from a majority ethnic community • Number of reported hate crimes against children

¹ By disability we include children who have a learning disability; a physical disability; have a sensory impairment; have a long-term illness; or are neuro divergent.

² By diverse we mean children from the ethnic majority population, including people of diverse faiths and cultures, and those who identify as LGBTQ+

<p>Priority 7 - Providing sufficient professional and organisational development to ensure there is effective response to safeguarding children within Portsmouth</p>
<p>Why are we doing this?</p> <p>A statutory function of the PSCP (as set out in Working Together) is to support and engage local agencies to work together in a system where learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice. To support practitioners to be effective in identify the symptoms and triggers of abuse and neglect the Partnership should consider what training is needed locally and how they will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this. In addition to multi-agency training all members of the Partnership also have a duty to ensure that their staff receive appropriate safeguarding children training internally</p>
<p>Who is responsible for oversight of this work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSCP Executive Committee, chaired by PSCP Independent Chair & Scrutineer
<p>What is the difference we want to see?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone who works with children and families understands their statutory safeguarding functions, roles and responsibilities outlined in national guidance and local arrangements for safeguarding children and in promoting their welfare. • There is a process to evaluate, and quality assure both multi-agency training and single-agency training to ensure that it is meeting these aims. • It is recognised that multi-agency training should complement single-agency training
<p>How will we achieve this?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Compact Audit of Early Help & Safeguarding Arrangements, learning from data and audits, and from both local and nation Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews LSCPRs will be used to help identify the training needs to the workforce in Portsmouth. 2. The PSCP will facilitate and coordinate high quality multi-agency training events that respond to the learning identified from a range of local and national sources and provides guidance on the early help and safeguarding responsibilities and pathway in Portsmouth. 3. Will work closely with the PSAB and other LSCPs across HIPS to share training programmes and identify opportunities for joint events as appropriate. 4. Provide oversight and quality assurance of single agency training provision to ensure it adequately meets the needs of its workforce. 5. To engage senior strategic leaders from partner agencies within the Safeguarding Improvement Hub to consider how they can best implement change and/or overcome any organisational or cultural barriers to improving practice. 6. Provide access to organisational development support to ensure there is an appropriate safeguarding culture within settings
<p>How will we measure impact? Key performance indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of attendees at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PSCP Multi-agency training programme ○ Single agency / bespoke or Inset training in schools ○ PSCP Restorative Practice multi-agency training, bespoke and single agency training • Number of attendees at PSCP training from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Portsmouth City Council ○ Solent NHS Trust ○ Portsmouth Hospitals Trust ○ Hampshire Constabulary ○ Education settings ○ Early years settings • Number of organisations in receipt of organisational development support • Percentage of services returning the Compact Audit on time • Total number of allegations

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- Number of allegations against members of staff:
 - Schools
 - Social Care
 - Foster Carers
 - Police
 - Health
 - Voluntary Sector

<p>Priority 8 - We will ensure there is a good understanding of safeguarding risks for children within education settings and an effective response to these</p>
<p>Why are we doing this?</p> <p>To ensure there is a good understanding of the safeguarding risks for children who are excluded from education and/or receiving reduced hours provision (not in full-time education). That practitioners understand their role in supporting the full attendance and positive participation by children in school life.</p>
<p>Who is responsible for oversight of this work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portsmouth Education Partnership
<p>What is the difference we want to see?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education settings will have adequate and robust safeguarding cultures • Education settings will feel confident in their response to allegations of sexual harassment/sexual abuse by pupils • The impact of severe absence and/or suspensions from school on the safeguarding of children will be better understood, and there will be evidence of a multi-agency response to support education settings in managing these where appropriate • Children will feel safe and adequately supported in their school communities, with good attendance
<p>How will we achieve this?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To review Education settings' understanding and confidence in responding to allegations of sexual harassment/sexual abuse. To develop a training resource to support education settings in this area. 2. Build into the compact audit a measure around Education settings' response to peer-on-peer allegations and work with those requiring further support. Review compact audit responses to identify and work with education settings where this is an ongoing challenge 3. PSCP to receive regular information on the population of children who are suspended or severely absent from school; who are receiving reduced hours provision; or are electively home educated. To be able to have an overview of the scale of this issue and monitor impact of improvement activity 4. PSCP to seek assurance from agencies on how they work together to protect children not in education / full time education from being vulnerable to broader safeguarding risks 5. To consult with children and young people on their experiences within school, how safe they feel and how effectively they feel safeguarded (through the Youth Parliament and Council of Portsmouth Students) 6. To act upon the feedback from children to support education settings in understanding their concerns and work with Education settings to consider how these can be addressed 7. Review compact audit returns and safeguarding area of inspection, engagement with DSL network and training and feedback from link co-ordinators and head of school improvement to develop a view on the effectiveness of safeguarding culture within education settings 8. Work with education settings and the education department and link-coordinators to address any emerging issues or concerns regarding their safeguarding culture. To identify and agree this support through the termly school resource allocation meetings
<p>How will we measure impact? Key performance indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of school age children a reduced timetable for over 6 weeks • Chronic non-attendees (% pupils missing 50% or more possible sessions) • Persistent absence Rate (% pupils missing 10% or more of possible sessions): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Primary ○ Secondary • Number of Fixed Period School Exclusions • Number of school aged pupils whose family whereabouts are unknown and have been removed from a school roll

