

# Safeguarding Arrangements for Children and Young People in Devon – Our response to Working Together 2018

This document sets out how agencies in Devon will work together in the safeguarding of children and young people in the County. We are proud to be one of the national early adopter of these important changes and we look forward to working with colleagues across the country in opening up our work for their benefit and to learn from others as they make their changes.

The Devon Children and Family Partnership described here is still relatively new and we continue to build on our learning and experiences to make these arrangements as effective as they can be and to respond accordingly. It is our intention to commission a formal, independent external review of them in the Autumn 2019.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Protecting children, especially the most vulnerable, is the core duty and responsibility for all agencies in the County. Protecting, safeguarding and ensuring the well-being of children are complex tasks that can only be successfully achieved by agencies working together in a coherent and effective manner.
- 1.2 The complexity of the task is compounded by the multiple and elaborate partnership arrangements in Devon, set out in Section 2.
- 1.3 However, at the heart of the partnership are some simple value propositions that guide our safeguarding work:
  - The welfare of the child is our paramount consideration and our overall purpose is to ensure children and families can get the right support, in the right place, at the right time;
  - We will achieve this through shared management of risk and a strengths-based, restorative approach in our work with children and their families;
  - Our strength and capacity are greater when we work together and working together in partnership is our default position;
  - Safe and effective practice is rooted in purposeful quality assurance and challenge – and purposeful challenge is rooted in mutual respect, transparency and honesty which underpins our approach to scrutiny and practice improvement;
  - We are developing a model of practice evaluation based on learning from what works as well as looking openly and forensically when the system does not work as well as it should or needs to.
- 1.4 Partners in the Devon area came together in 2017 to form the Devon Children and Families Partnership (DCFP), the successor to the DSCB (Devon Safeguarding Children Board) and the Children's Alliance (the Trust arrangements).



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- 1.5 The DCFP needs to be understood as a complex system of dynamic, moving parts made up of people. It is a very deliberate attempt to move away from a traditional hierarchical structure:
- At its centre are four Locality Partnerships, co-terminous with their corresponding community safety partnerships. These Locality Partnerships bring together the operational system leaders who have the greatest impact on the quality of multi-agency practice. The depth and breadth of the relationships established through these partnerships are crucial; they are the arteries, veins and capillaries oxygenating the frontline;
  - The Locality Partnerships are supported by other parts of the system. The Executive acts as the controlling mind supported by the joint commissioning group.;
  - The Expert by Experience system fulfil some functions of the heart, keeping us close to what it feels like for the service user;
  - The QA system are the anti-bodies, roaming all over the system, detecting abnormalities and dysfunction and acting to protect the body and restore it to health. Our anti-bodies are also tasked to recognise and celebrate the system's healthy functioning.
- 1.6 The DCFP has constructed this Safeguarding Plan to meet the statutory duty to:
- Set out how in Devon partners will work together to identify and respond to the needs of children in our area;
  - How we will commission and publish child safeguarding practice reviews;
  - How we will ensure the effectiveness of our arrangements are subject to robust and independent scrutiny.
- 1.7 The scope of the Safeguarding Plan is deliberately narrow. Our ambitions for children and families will be set out in the DCFP Children's Plan, in development now, to be operational from 1.4.2019

## **2. The Area Covered by this Plan**

- 2.1 Children and families in Devon are served by:
- A Police force that covers four local authorities – Devon, Cornwall, Torbay and Plymouth;
  - 2 Clinical Commissioning Groups (Northern, Eastern and Western CCG and South Devon and Torbay) working together within one STP, and exploring the option of a single CCG;
  - Providers of health services include acute and community services; mental health and learning disability services for children and adults; children's services; urgent care and out of hours services and primary care services;
  - Devon County Council is a two-tier authority with eight district councils;
  - There are 367 schools in the County;



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- A large and active community and voluntary sector.
- 2.2 Plymouth and Torbay are the two unitary Councils within the wider Devon and STP footprint. For this Plan, the Safeguarding Partners (SPs) are:
- Devon County Council;
  - Devon and Cornwall Police
  - Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)
- 2.3 DCFP exercises its strategic and operational leadership responsibilities within three interrelated domains – child protection, safeguarding and well-being, each is led by one of the SPs and each working to a slightly different footprint.

**Child Protection** – is the lead responsibility of Devon County Council and works to the DCC footprint. The South West Child Protection Procedures (SWCPP – <http://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/>) sets out the agreed processes by which this work is done.

**Safeguarding** – is the lead responsibility of the Police. Community Safety Partnerships sit at district and unitary level with a County-wide Safer Devon Partnership (SDP). Some safeguarding responsibilities are delivered across a wider a peninsula footprint that includes Cornwall; most notably work to safeguard children and young people at risk of all forms of exploitation including CSE and County Lines

**Well Being** – is the responsibility of the CCGs and is delivered on an STP footprint. The STP has a children and young people’s workstream. There is a renewed central emphasis on children within the STP and CCGs leadership

Details of the work of the SDP and the STP can be found here (<https://new.devon.gov.uk/emergencies/safer-devon-partnership/> and <http://www.devonstp.org.uk/>)

**Serious Incidents that warrant notification to Ofsted and the National Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, the completion of any subsequent rapid review and local child practice safeguarding review, will only be for children within the Devon County Council boundaries.**

### **3. Leadership and DCFP Structure**

- 3.1 DCFP is led by the Safeguarding Partners. Terms of reference for all the sub-systems of the partnership can be found here <https://www.devonchildrenandfamiliespartnership.org.uk/board/dscb-subgroups/>.
- 3.2 The DCFP structure recognises that we need to work in three different planes to ensure impact:



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- Geographically – through the work of the Locality Partnerships and the District Council Safeguarding Network;
  - Thematically – through groups such as Complex Safeguarding, Child Sexual Abuse and Child Exploitation;
  - Sector-based – through the Education and Health Sub-groups.
- 3.3 Appendix 1 details all the relevant agencies who, through their membership of DCFP, contribute to the safeguarding of children and young people in the County.
- 3.4 There are several key partnerships in the County. Primarily through common membership and leadership, the DCFP ensures its work is aligned with and adds value to the work of the Sustainable Transformation Partnership (STP); the Health and Well Being Board; the Safer Devon Partnership and its' constituent parts, the Channel and Prevent Boards and the Devon Safeguarding Adults Board.
- 3.5 As an early adopter of the policy reforms that shaped the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together 2018, Devon partners have significantly reshaped their strategic partnership. The ambition of the SPs is to create a single strategic partnership for Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, mirroring the arrangements already in place through the STP work.
- 3.6 The respective Chief Officers of the SPs are in full support of this Plan and have endorsed its approach and content.

## **4. Quality Assurance**

- 4.1 The QA function has been constructed to ensure there is some 'clear blue water' between the work of DCFP to commission develop and deliver services on the one hand and to ensure the quality and effectiveness of them on the other – and most importantly, to offer a reassurance that those services are keeping children safe.
- 4.2 Operational managers, up to and including the Chief Officers in the Safeguarding Partners are both managing and challenging their own services all the time. They are aware where standards and practices are not as good as they want them to be or they need to be, and they are continually seeking to improve outcomes for children and families in the County. The Partners all have their own internal checks and balances, whether from corporate and political scrutiny, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner or the role and input of Non-Executive Board Members.
- 4.3 The DCFP Quality Assurance has to add value to, and not replicate this work. The focus and core objective for the DCFP will therefore be on the **outcomes** for vulnerable children and the extent to which the **individual work of the partners is coming together to safeguard and promote children's well-being, reduce the risks**



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**they face and enable them to live safely within their own families and communities.**

- 4.4 DCFP has developed a programme of ‘walkabouts’ across the safeguarding system. Walkabouts are designed to test the safeguarding work of a relevant agency primarily through discussions with front line staff. There is an agreed methodology and process - <https://www.devonchildrenandfamiliespartnership.org.uk/uncategorized/quality-assurance-framework/>. Walkabouts will be the prime tool used in the assessment of relevant agencies compliance with their Section 11 (Children Act 2004) duties and responsibilities.
- 4.5 Agencies which cover more than one safeguarding partnership area will not be asked to complete more than one Section 11 assessment and all assessments, whether through walkabouts or audit completions will focus exclusively on the safeguarding duties of that specific organisation. District councils will be assessed collectively. The assessment will be designed to work with the relevant agency to define what ‘good looks like’ in its safeguarding duties and assess against those standard
- 4.6 The safeguarding partners will hold each other to account through the Executive and QA groups.

## **5. Practice Evaluation**

- 5.1 Evaluating the impact of our collective work on individual children and their families is the essence of our quality assurance work. Our commitment is to develop an approach to practice evaluation which has practitioners at the heart of it, that enables them to become much more responsible for auditing their own work, that identifies learning quickly and feeds that learning back into the system quickly and that encourages (and expects) local challenge and local improvements.
- 5.2 Working with ‘Research in Practice’, we are developing a model based on an ‘appreciative inquiry’ approach designed to enable groups of practitioners to come together to evaluate and learn from their work together with children. SPs have each put forward a member of staff to work with RiP to develop the model and when complete will form the basis of how individual service delivery is monitored and judged.
- 5.3 Of critical importance, our model of appreciative inquiry will seek to learn from work that has been particularly successful in safeguarding children and reducing the risks they face. DCFP is committed to an approach to learning based on what works and disseminating and publicly owning those key messages as ‘the way we do things around here’.



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- 5.4 There will be times when work has not gone well, where the system has not worked well and where risks to children have not been reduced and safeguarding not enhanced. DCFP has developed a 'Case Resolution Protocol' (<https://www.devonchildrenandfamiliespartnership.org.uk/documents/2018/02/case-resolution-protocol.pdf/>) which sets out the expectations on staff both raising and receiving disagreements about cases. At the heart of the Protocol lies the following commitments:

*“Effective safeguarding of children is absolutely predicated on practitioners and front line staff wanting the very best for children and being ready to stand up in their best interests even if this brings them into disagreement with other practitioners, with other organisations or with their own managers and employing bodies.... Escalating concerns about a child is not simply allowed for or tolerated in the Devon system – it is expected. Safeguarding children is not a science, there are no absolutes and no automatic right answers. Discussions and debates about the best way forward for children are part and parcel of safeguarding work.”*

- 5.5 The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group (CSPRG) sits within the quality assurance function of DCFP. That group will be the first recipient of any notifications of incidents that might require further case review. These notifications **must** be made when it is known or suspected that a child has been abused or neglected and:
- A child dies or is seriously harmed in the local authority's area, or
  - While normally resident in the local authority area, the child dies or is seriously harmed outside England

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- 5.6 The CSPRG will seek agreement from the Chair of the QA Group and one other Safeguarding Partner that a case meets these criteria, that the appropriate notification is forwarded to both Ofsted and the National Child Safeguarding Review Panel within five days of the incident.
- 5.7 The CSPRG will then lead the 'rapid review' within a further 15 days as required by Working Together. This will generate a report that will set out initial findings and proposed ways forward. This report will identify:
- (a) Whether the case appears to raise particularly complex issues or ones of potential national significance and interest – in these circumstances the Chair of the QA Group will act as the main link with the National Panel;
  - (b) Whether the rapid review has generated enough learning to identify improvements needed in the local safeguarding system such that further review is not deemed necessary - this recommendation will be tabled with the Executive for endorsement;
  - (c) Set out the terms of a local child safeguarding practice review, including proposed methodology and indicative terms of reference for such a review – the CSPRG will identify and work with the identified reviewer to ensure its



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completion within six months. The RiP methodology described above will be the default methodology unless otherwise indicated.

- 5.8 All notifications and rapid review reports, regardless of their conclusions or next steps, will be copied to Executive members to ensure the leaders of the system are routinely sighted on individual cases. This is both an important principle but also a recognition of their responsibility to lead any necessary system changes.

## **6. Independent Scrutiny**

- 6.1 DCFP strongly endorses the need for and the benefits of strong, independent scrutiny. Well targeted and informed scrutiny adds enormous value to the work of the partnership, especially in bringing attention to those areas of practice which are either not central enough in the Partnership's plans; not functioning as well as they need to compared to other parts of the country or not yet being addressed in the County.
- 6.2 Independent scrutiny has to be sharply focussed, add an expertise not available within the system and be delivered with a view to generating usable learning and system improvements. Every April DCFP will set out an annual scrutiny programme. The programme will be developed by the QA Group and endorsed by the Executive.
- 6.3 The contribution of independent scrutiny to the work of DCFP is too important to be vested in one individual or one preferred model. Our model will be based on scrutiny processes that are the best fit for the area of work being scrutinised.
- 6.4 DCFP will, for example, make use of some or all of the following processes in conducting its scrutiny work:
- Developing partnering arrangements with neighbouring safeguarding partners to provide peer reviews;
  - To buy in expert scrutiny from national bodies and/or acknowledged experts as needed;
  - To generate a system of internal peer reviews within Devon – e.g. a team of practitioners from one area peer reviewing the work of a team from another;
  - To ensure the practice evaluation work described above generates locally based scrutiny with local safeguarding systems and that those lessons are disseminated more widely across the County as needed.

## **7. Workforce Development**

- 7.1 As part of our new arrangements our workforce development strategy and training offer has been reviewed. As a result, there are three priorities identified:
- Multi-agency induction



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- Strengths based practice
- Supervision

7.2 In addition, we are considering the specific training areas needed to ensure delivery of the aspirations of strategies within the partnership and connected strategic work such as; Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy and Early Help Improvement Plan.

7.3 We are focusing on supporting skills development rather than information sharing. Therefore, offering a more flexible and tailored approach to the relevant workforce driven from within their organisation with the principles of continuous learning and professional development and supported by tools and evaluation networked across the partnership.

## **8. User Involvement**

8.1 One of the key groupings within the DCFP is the 'Expert by Experience' group. Focussing mainly on the views and experiences of young people, this group offers a powerful voice into the work of the Partnership.

8.2 Developing this work and in particular ensuring that the voice of parents, carers and extended family members are also heard is a key target for DCFP in 2018-19 and beyond.

## **9. Thresholds**

9.1 The threshold document (<https://www.devonchildrenandfamiliespartnership.org.uk/documents/2016/02/dsc-b-handy-threshold-tool.pdf/>) outlines Devon's criteria for action when a family requires support. This tool is designed to be transparent, accessible and easily understood by families and professionals alike. The support that is offered to families should increase in line with the level of concern or risk, including referral to children's social care for assessment for statutory services.

9.2 Devon's document is in the process of being updated. It will include the strengths-based approach being developed across the partnership, which seeks to build on families strengths and resilience to resolve problems and reduce risk. It will also integrate indicators about contextual safeguarding guidance in light of growing concern about exploitation and harm caused to young people outside of their family environment. The document will articulate the process of early help assessment and the type and level for early help services to be provided.

9.3 It is anticipated that the new document will be launched early in 2019.



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## **10. Secure Children’s Home**

- 10.1 There is one secure children’s home in Devon – the Atkinson in Exeter. The QA group will receive the Annual Ofsted Report and the notes of regulatory visits. The QA group, on the basis of its assessment of risk, may decide to undertake a walkabout visit.

## **11. Funding and Support**

- 11.1 The Safeguarding Partners have agreed a budget and funding formula to support the delivery of this Plan and the work of the DCFP. An in-principle agreement has been reached that the cost of the partnership should be shared equally by the Partners. This presents a challenge in year one 2018/19 as significant adjustments have to be made; exceptional arrangements have been agreed for this year. This will be further explored through the first year of the Plan. Investment in business intelligence and service user engagement are key priorities.

## **12. Reporting on the Plan - Annual Review**

- 12.1 The DCFP will commission an annual external review of the impact of the arrangements described in this Plan. The review will identify where there has been progress in the safeguarding of children in the County and contribute to the setting out of objectives and areas of focus for the year ahead.

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## Appendix 1 – DCFP Partner Agencies

- [Devon Safeguarding Leads](#)
- Devon County Council – Childrens social work service & child protection – [Safeguarding Information](#) and [Structure Chart](#)
- Devon Integrated Childrens Services – [Safeguarding Information](#) and [General Information and Contact Details](#)
- Devon and Cornwall Police – [Safeguarding Information](#)
- New Devon CCG – [Safeguarding Children Information and Key Contacts](#)
- Virgin Care – Public Health Nursing Hubs – [Safeguarding Information](#) and [General Information and Contact Details](#)



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