

Our Learning Transcript

The yearly report for 2023-24, focuses on our learning. This presentation gives an overview of the work of the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) Learning and Inquiry Group (LIG), which includes any rapid reviews, local child safeguarding practice reviews and local learning events.

The LIG is a standing group of the HSCP with the purpose of ensuring that multi-agency learning is identified to improve safeguarding practice. The functions and tasks of this group include the identification and review of serious child safeguarding cases, which may raise issues of importance for the local area. Multi-agency members of LIG take this responsibility very seriously and case discussions are conducted in a respectful, restorative way based on high support and high challenge within and across agencies.

The LIG met on a monthly basis during 2023-24 and was chaired by the deputy director for children and families in Hampshire County Council. The criteria and guidance that supports the work of the LIG are Working Together to Safeguard Children, with additional guidance from the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.

The procedure supporting the work of LIG have been updated to incorporate the changes to the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children, published in December 2023. In particular, this includes the development of a shared decision-making model for the safeguarding partners to identify serious safeguarding cases, which should be notified to the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. The requirement for local safeguarding partners to undertake a rapid review within 15 working days of the submission of the serious incident notification remains unchanged.

Data for the 2023-24 reporting year

The referral's considered by the HSCP LIG were at nine during 2023-24 with two rapid reviews undertaken, six cases resulting in no further action following consideration by the LIG and one local learning event undertaken. No local child safeguarding practice reviews were commissioned in the reporting year 2023-24.

In terms of referring agencies during this reporting period, these included the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board, Hampshire Hospitals Foundation Trust, Southern Health Foundation Trust, Hampshire Children's County Council's Children's Services and Hampshire

and Isle of Wight Constabulary. The breakdown of agencies submitting referrals to the HSCP LIG is consistent with the pattern from previous years.

During 2023-24, five referrals were received by LIG for infants under the age of one year old. The remaining referrals have been for children aged from two to 16 years old. It is noted that the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel state within their annual report for 2022-23 that the age distribution and rapid reviews received by the panel shows a bimodal pattern for the predominance of infants under the age of one and a second peak in the 11 to 15 age group. Of the five referrals received for children under the age of one year old, this included infants where the child had been harmed through non-accidental injury, or where the child had sadly died with overlay, or possibly unsafe sleep being a presenting feature. There are a range of resources available for practitioners to support their safeguarding practice with infants and babies, including unborn babies.

HSCP has undertaken two rapid reviews within the 2023-24 year. Learning identified through the first rapid review process highlighted the importance of the inclusion of parental mental health within level three child safeguarding training for emergency healthcare responders. This case highlighted the need to consider more frequent review of medication for a parent's mental health where there is a significant history of mental ill health and inconsistency from the parent with taking their medication. Learning from this case identified the importance of adhering to the HIPS Protocol for the management of actual or suspected bruising or other injury in infants who are not independently mobile, to allow any injury to be assessed in the context of a child's medical and social history, or for information to be shared with multi-agency partners.

The second rapid review undertaken by HSCP also identified parental mental health as a feature. Learning was identified for the multi-agency workforce in strengthening understanding of the ways in which the mental ill health of a parent may impact the safeguarding and welfare of a child. This was taken forward as a recommendation for further action. The need to strengthen information exchange was also highlighted, particularly across universal services such as health providers and education settings, regardless of whether a child has a social worker.

The child's voice was particularly powerful in the information gathered for the rapid review and the referrals made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub by the child's school were found to be of good quality and to advocate well for the child.

The child was noted as a protective factor in respect of the parent's mental ill health. It was

identified as not appropriate for children to be seen as protective factors for parents. This has been taken forward as learning and as a recommendation for further action.

The national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel agreed with the decisions arising from both rapid reviews that no further review was required as learning and effective practice had been identified with necessary recommendations to improve and strengthen safeguarding practice.

There are referrals of serious safeguarding cases which are considered by the LIG, where the criteria for a serious incident notification and therefore a rapid review, have not been met and it is agreed that there is further work required to identify or clarify multi-agency learning.

The HSCP LIG may agree a local learning event is necessary. During the 2023-24 year, HSCP LIG made the decision to undertake a local learning event for an infant with non-accidental injuries. The local learning event was undertaken by multi-agency senior managers from the LIG. Learning highlighted that where a referral is made for an infant under the HIPS Unborn Baby Safeguarding Protocol, it is important that agencies share all relevant information that is known to their agency. While professionals may consider the information is likely to be already known to children's social care, sharing information in a timely manner with multi-agency partners allows for a complete chronology to be built, and an analysis of risk to be undertaken and shared. The importance of responding to every incident of bruising in a non-mobile infant through adherence to the HIPS Bruising Protocol was also highlighted.

Importance of professional curiosity regarding who is involved in the care of a child and any risk that they may present for the child was also evidenced. There were gaps in multi-agency awareness regarding the adults who are providing the care for the child and any risk they might present.

The importance of understanding the relationship between a child's parents and identifying any risk presented to the child from domestic abuse was identified. Domestic abuse was disclosed at the time of the child's injuries but had not been disclosed previously. Routine enquiry about domestic abuse by multi-agency professionals can help to normalise the conversation for the parent and work to reduce the concern around disclosing any domestic abuse within a relationship. Where professionals are not able to ask routine domestic abuse questions due to the other parent or adult in the relationship being present, this should be recorded, and the opportunity explored to speak safely with a parent on their own.

A reflective learning report was commissioned by the HSCP LIG following a referral regarding children who were at times or had always been electively home educated. The threshold for

a serious incident notification and therefore a rapid review, was not met. The referral was considered by HSCP LIG, who decided to consider local and national learning, guidance and research in this area to inform any necessary recommendations for multi-agency safeguarding practice.

Considered within the reflective learning report were relevant referrals or case reviews to the HSCP LIG since 2020, child safeguarding practice reviews undertaken in other local authority areas, national work including the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panels briefing on Safeguarding Children in Elective Home Education and the possible introduction of new legislation by the Children Not In School Bill. The learning and effective practice arising from this will form part of the 2024-25 HSCP yearly report.

HSCP LIG take account of the findings from local learning events, rapid reviews and local child safeguarding practice reviews, where learning is identified through these processes and recommendations outline the action that will be taken.

Ongoing scrutiny of the action arising from recommendations is undertaken by the HSCP LIG on a regular basis to monitor progress and seek assurance of the expected impact. This is on behalf of the safeguarding partners.

In line with recommendations, HSCP have developed practitioner guides on the role of a social care practitioner, health visitor and school nurse. A practitioner guide has also been developed to support professional understanding of strategy discussions; a set of practice principles has been developed and is now available on the HSCP website to support the completion of chronologies of significant events for children and families.

The day in the life tools for use with children are within the HSCP and Isle of Wight Safeguarding Children Partnership Neglect Toolkit and these have been updated to include consideration and impact of parent-oriented issues on the daily lived experience of children.

Recommendations have identified the need for HSCP to develop multi-agency training on the following areas of safeguarding:

- Physical abuse, which will be delivered as a webinar within the existing HSCP multi agency training offer.
- An eLearning course for multi-agency professionals on the HIPS Bruising Protocol.
- An eLearning course on information sharing, which has been informed by the recently updated information sharing advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services.

- Training to support professionals in considering the ways in which parental care or carer mental ill health can impact on the safeguarding and welfare needs of children, which will be delivered as a webinar within the training offer.

Recommendations also link with areas of work that are currently under way, including a review of the HIPS Escalation and Resolution Protocol and an update to the Voluntary and Community Sector Safeguarding Toolkit. HSCP are also collaborating with the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership to develop a Safeguarding Children and Domestic Abuse Toolkit to support professionals in safeguarding children from domestic abuse.