

**Bristol Safeguarding Children Board
Strategic Plan
April 2018 – June 2019**

Vision

The BSCB is committed to a vision of Bristol where safeguarding children effectively is “Everybody’s Business”. This requires us to work together to ensure that all organisations in Bristol prioritise safeguarding and commit resources to working in partnership. As we enter a period of change for the strategic partnerships in Bristol, we will prioritise keeping understanding the needs and day-to-day lives of children at the centre of all we do. We are resolved that change is only made if it can improve our ability to safeguard children from abuse and neglect.

We recognise that children are only truly safeguarded when everyone understands and enacts their safeguarding responsibilities. We will continue to provide resources and support to professionals in order to raise standards and improve outcomes for the vulnerable and disadvantaged. Members of the BSCB will act with integrity and own their responsibility to drive improvements, scrutinise practice and challenge others to achieve effective change in the interests of children.

We believe that children in Bristol should receive support at the earliest opportunity to enable them to thrive. We will act together to enable families in Bristol to receive the right support, at the right time from services that work well together.

Guiding principles

This strategy sets out our approach to safeguarding children in Bristol. In order to be successful, our strategy needs to be grounded in the culture and ethos of the Bristol partnership, and as such it will adhere to the following principles:

- 1. Child focused practice** – Bristol has an ambition to be a child friendly city and our approach to helping the most vulnerable children, young people and families in abusive or neglectful situations needs to reflect these values. Interventions with children should be measured and reviewed. Professionals use the Signs of Safety approach to ensure that children’s experiences, and the impact on them, is at the forefront of all interventions and reviews;
- 2. Voice of the child** – in all of our work it is vital to hear and respond to the child’s voice. We must focus on children’s lived experiences and the impact that neglect and abuse has - and is having - on their lives. The safety and wellbeing of the child or young person is paramount, and they must be kept at the centre of all of our work;



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making safeguarding everybody's business

3. Participation of parents and carers – as with hearing the voice of the child or young person, it is equally important that parents and carers are involved in discussions and decision making which impacts on them. Participation of parents and carers ensures that they are able to contribute to assessments and plans in relation to them and their families, and can identify and build on strengths and skills to make lasting changes;

4. Effective Support Early – we want children, young people and families to receive the right support and help at the right time, as early as possible in the life of a problem. Preventative and early help responses to neglect are critical to avoid issues from escalating and children experiencing further harm. Interventions need to be of a kind and duration that improves and sustains the safety of children and young people into the future;

5. Think Family – children live in families, and the abusive or neglectful environments that some children and young people live in are often linked to the chaotic lives, needs and difficulties of their parents and/ or carers. Our approach to safeguarding must recognise and respond to the needs of all family members holistically; we cannot lose sight of the child in addressing the needs of their parents and carers, or provide children and young people with short-term responses without addressing the root causes with their parents;

6. Culture of Challenge and Escalation – the partnership are committed to challenging each other appropriately and effectively to ensure that outcomes for children and families are the best possible. This will be demonstrated by our senior leaders who will hold courageous conversations transparently and will respond to escalation and disagreement in a constructive way.

Strategic Priorities April 2018-June 2019

Our strategic aim is to safeguard all children and young people in Bristol. The Board is responsible for scrutinising and assuring a wide-range of work in this regard. However, we will focus our work in 6 areas of practice in the next 18-month to drive meaningful improvements as a multi-agency partnership. These areas have been identified through consultation with children in the city, undertaking case audits, Serious Case Review Findings, data performance analysis and inspections.

1. Strengthen strategic safeguarding arrangements

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 removes the requirement for an LSCB. This provides an opportunity for us to determine what arrangements are most locally appropriate for effecting lasting positive change for children and families. The Board will oversee a smooth transition to new safeguarding arrangements and will be responsible for ensuring that the functions of the Board are not negatively impacted during this time of change.

2. Reduce Neglect

A Joint Targeted Area Inspection in October 2017 highlighted a range of areas in which organisations in Bristol could improve the safeguarding of children from abuse and neglect. It is the priority of the Board to act robustly to these findings and launch the BSCB Neglect Strategy to drive forward improvements. This work will link closely to Bristol City Council's Attendance Improvement Strategy, and the Board is committed to supporting a whole city approach to safeguarding children through improving attendance at school.

3. Safeguarding Boys and Young Men

The BSCB is concerned that the vulnerability of boys and young men is not being as effectively responded to in Bristol as we would expect. We have a high rate of adolescent boys entering care and low numbers of boys and young men being identified as victims of sexual violence. We also recognise that the Bristol Boys Project has found that there is already an educational attainment gap for boys at the age of 5 compared to their female peers. We are committed to improving the identification of boys and young men as vulnerable, removing structural barriers to safeguarding them and engaging them more effectively with services.

4. Responding to Domestic Abuse, Coercive Control and Violence in Families

Domestic abuse is the highest referred issue to the Children and Families Service. 26,355 of incidents and 13% of crime recorded in Avon and Somerset Constabulary in 2016-17 were related to domestic abuse. 2017-2018 has seen an increase in the number of domestic homicides resulting from domestic abuse and coercive control in Bristol. Two Serious Case Reviews in the last three years have also met the criteria for a Domestic Homicide Review highlighting the vulnerability of our older adolescents to violence. Recent Serious Case Reviews have highlighted that professionals and systems in Bristol have too narrow a focus on domestic abuse and do not always recognise incidents of domestic abuse when they are perpetrated by non-intimate partners such as siblings, older adults, or children. We recognise that we need to improve cross-working with adult services and address systemic barriers to these forms of abuse being recognised and responded to.

5. Safeguarding Children with Complex Health and Mental Health Needs

Children with disabilities, SEND, complex health and mental health needs are more vulnerable to all forms of abuse and neglect than their peers. Despite this there are very low numbers of children with an allocated Disabled Children's Team social worker who are subject to a Child Protection Plan. A number of serious incidents have highlighted gaps in the provision for children with mental health needs, and a lack of multi-agency coordination for those in alternative education or transitioning back from inpatient care.

Furthermore, work to update the Safeguarding Children, Young People and Young Adults with Disabilities policy has highlighted that there is a lack of safeguarding specific communications tools, and that many professionals lack confidence in this area. Furthermore, recent cases have highlighted that there is insufficient provision in the city for children with mental health needs or poor emotional wellbeing. The BSCB will take a robust approach in seeking assurance that these issues are responded to effectively.

6. Improving Assessments

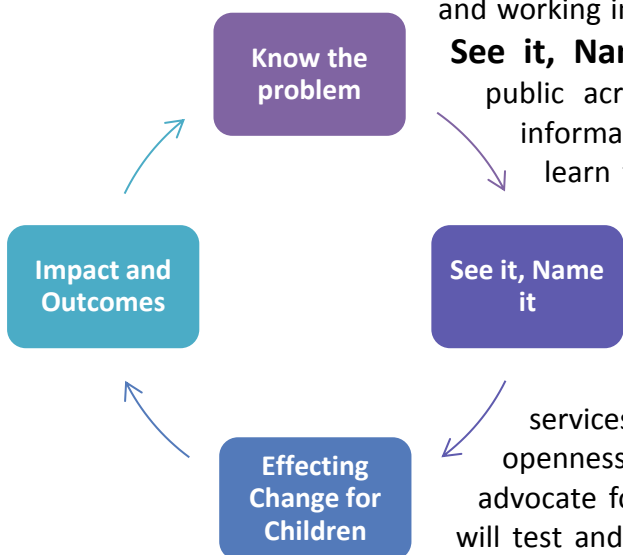
Good quality assessments that are clearly communicated between professionals of different disciplines are the cornerstone of effective partnership working and safeguarding. They rely on: robust information sharing systems; a culture of open and transparent partnership with children, families and other professionals; evidence-based tools; outcome-focused interventions; and clear understanding of child development and needs. We recognise that to achieve our vision of an integrated, effective system for children we need to improve single and multi-agency assessment processes. This includes formal and on-going assessments.

Approach

In each of these six priority areas we will take the following approach. We will ensure we **Know the problem** by reviewing accurate performance data, undertaking audits, learning from reviews, engaging with operational professionals and working in partnership with children and families. We will

See it, Name it and ensure that professionals and the public across the city's workforce have the tools and information they need to identify and respond to abuse, learn from cases, and hear what our priorities are to define their focus. It is our responsibility to ensure everything we do is **Effecting Change for Children**. We will provide support and resources to operational and strategic professionals to use in delivery of services. We will facilitate and model a culture of openness, discussion and disagreement in order to advocate for and achieve the best possible outcomes. We will test and check that actions are completed. We will use data, feedback and audits to understand whether our work

has **Impact and Outcomes** which make improvements for children. Where we have not affected change we will be transparent about this and refocus resources to make improvement.



Governance and Accountability

This strategy is owned and overseen by the Bristol Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB). The BSCB will monitor progress against the strategic objectives on an annual basis. The effective delivery of the strategy will be reported to the Board through highlight reports from sub groups.

Key Indicators of Effectiveness

The following outcome indicators will demonstrate the effectiveness of the strategy and its implementation:

- Reduction in number of adolescent boys entering care
- Increase in the number of boys and young men identified at risk of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation
- Increase in number of referrals to MARAC for non-intimate partner violence
- Increase in the number of disabled children subject of child protection plans
- Increase in the number of agencies using safeguarding communication tools
- Increase in attendance by school-age children
- Reduction in the number of enquiries to First Response which do not progress
- Reduction in the number of children subject of child protection plans for over two years
- Reduction in the number of children subject of repeat child protection plans

Action Plan

A detailed plan will be developed to state what will be required to put into action the aims and objectives of this strategy. This will be overseen by the BSCB Executive.