

# SOUTHWARK

## SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP



## ANNUAL REPORT

2020 - 2021



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## Foreword



It is my pleasure to introduce the Southwark Safeguarding Children Partnership's annual report 2020/21. This is the second annual report of the SSCP, it covers the period from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.

This annual report provides information as to what has been achieved in Southwark and includes updates on priorities and learning. Whilst the year has undoubtedly been dominated by the COVID 19 pandemic and the unique challenges this has presented, day to day safeguarding issues and the wellbeing of children and young people have remained at the forefront of our minds and efforts. Colleagues from across the partnership, led by the local authority, the police and health in their role as the safeguarding partners, came together to respond to these new challenges whilst maintaining essential service provision. In my role as Independent Chair, I observed a firm commitment to safeguarding; sharing timely and relevant information, agreeing priorities, and taking effective action. The safeguarding partners were visible and active in their respective and joint roles throughout 2020/21 maintaining an effective line of sight to our most vulnerable children and young people.

This report recognises the progress the SSCP has made throughout the year and sets out our commitment to continue to address the challenges that remain in 2021/22.

The challenges brought about by the past year and the COVID-19 pandemic, have further emphasised the benefits we can derive from proactive collaborative partnership working. We are extremely proud of the way our partners responded and as we work towards a period of recovery, we recognise the vital role the SSCP will continue to play in coordinating a response that places best outcomes for children and families at its centre.

Finally, I would like to thank the team that has supported the work of the Southwark Safeguarding Children Partnership, Cabinet elected members, SSCP members and all of the staff who work in this challenging and complex area.

**Anna Berry**  
**Independent Chair**  
**Southwark Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP)**



# 1. The Southwark Local Safeguarding Context

## Southwark Children Demographics

**70,800** children and young people aged 0-19 live in Southwark.



Southwark is one of the **20%** most deprived districts/unitary authorities in England and about **23.2%** of children under 16 (**12,355**) are living in poverty.



Southwark has one of the highest population turnover rates in the country. Between 2016 and 2017 approximately **29,300** people moved into Southwark from other parts of the UK, with **32,000** residents moving out.



**2.6%** of school pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs.



The population is projected to grow by almost **20%** by 2030



Southwark's population is very diverse, with **78.7%** of school children coming from minority ethnic groups

We ♥ Southwark



Data Sources:  
[Southwark Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#)  
[Office for National Statistics](#)  
[Index of Multiple Deprivation](#)

## 2. The Partnership

### Our Vision

*All children in Southwark have the right to be safe and protected from harm. We will work together to protect children and young people through high quality services that enable children to reach their full potential and achieve the best possible outcomes.*

Southwark Safeguarding Children Partnership's primary objective is to assure itself that local safeguarding arrangements and partners act to help and protect children.

The partnership will hold agencies to account for their key safeguarding responsibilities, so that:

- All those who work with children and young people know what to do if they are concerned about possible harm.
- When concerns about a child's welfare or concerns about harm are reported, action is taken quickly and the right support is provided at the right time. This covers the spectrum from early help when issues first arise through to emergency action needed to keep children and young people safe.
- Agencies that provide services for children and young people ensure that they are safe, and monitor service quality and impact.

### Key Strategic Questions for the SSCP

- Is the help provided effective? How do we know our interventions are making a positive difference? How do we know all agencies are doing everything they can to ensure children and young people are safe?
- Are all partner agencies meeting their statutory responsibilities as set out in Working Together 2018?
- Do all partner agencies quality assure practice and is there evidence of learning and improving practice?
- Is safeguarding training monitored and evaluated and is there evidence of training and learning impacting on practice?

## 2.1 Our Partners

Partnership work is vital to the successful delivery of safeguarding services and interventions in Southwark. We remain confident that safeguarding is at the heart of the services delivered by statutory and voluntary services in Southwark, and we also remain committed to maintaining an open dialogue with all our partners, and working jointly with partners to ensure the best, person-centred outcomes for children and young people.

### New Partnership Arrangements

Following Sir Alan Wood's review of local arrangements for safeguarding children, we implemented our new arrangements in June 2019. In December 2020, the SSCP felt it timely to review the effectiveness of our current arrangements and the independent chair, Anna Berry, will lead this review, in conjunction with all partners. It will include strengthening the current structure to include a Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) subgroup and an Adolescent at Risk subgroup. This review will be completed in 2021/22, and the outcomes will be reported in our next annual report.

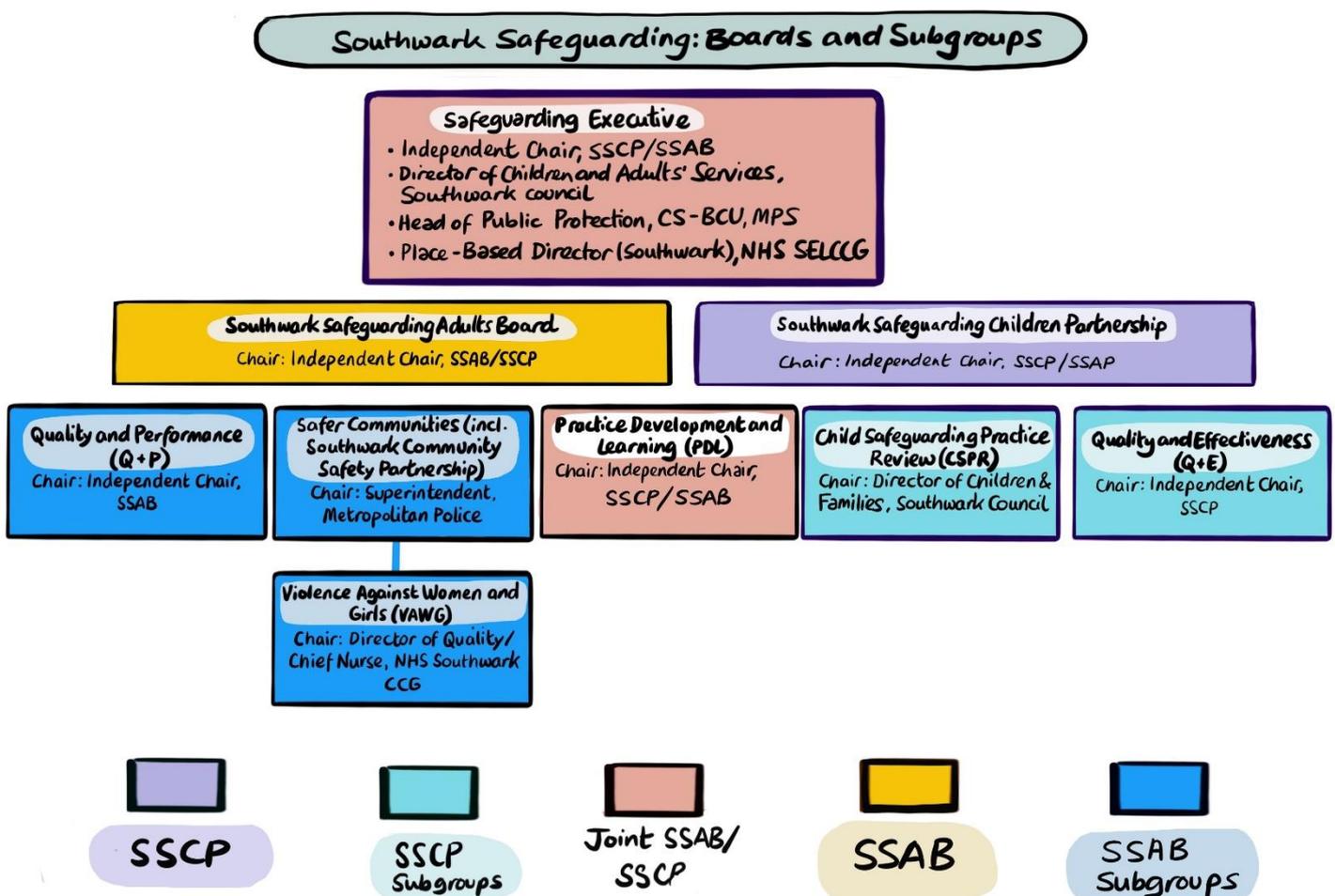
### Membership

Southwark Council	CCG/NHS	Police	Other Organisations
Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Adult Care	Place-Based Director, Southwark NHS SEL CCG	Borough Commander	Borough Commander, London Fire Brigade
Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Public Health	Designated Nurse, Safeguarding Children, NHS SEL CCG	Superintendent in charge of public protection	Head of Service, Lewisham and Southwark Probation
Strategic Director of Children's and Adults' Services	Named GP for Safeguarding Children, NHS SEL CCG		London Community Rehabilitation Company
Strategic Director of Housing and Modernisation	Designated Doctor for Safeguarding Children		CEO, Community Southwark
Director of Children and Families	Designated Doctor for Looked-After Children		Primary and Secondary School Heads
Director of Communities	Named Nurse for Looked-After Children		Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Services (CAFCASS)
Director of Education	Head of Safeguarding children (GSTT)		Provider Representatives
Director of Commissioning, Children's and Adults' Services	Head of Safeguarding Children (KCH)		
Director of Public Health	Named Nurse for Safeguarding Children (SLAM)		
Assistant Director, Family Early Help	AMH Child Safeguarding Lead (SLAM)		
Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Care, Children's Social Care			
Assistant Director of Commissioning, Children, Adults and Families			
Assistant Director, Community Safety and Partnerships			
Head of QA and Practice Development, Children's Social Care			

## 2.2 Communications

It is vital that key messages are cascaded to front line staff and as a partnership we are committed to continually strengthening our approaches to this. As a result, during 2020-21, a quarterly newsletter was established jointly with the SSAB. This is circulated to all members of the SSCP and subgroups, and shared widely with partners, including the community and voluntary sector. Copies of the newsletter can also be accessed from our [website](#).

## 2.3 SSCP Subgroups



## Practice Development and Learning (PDL) Subgroup:



The Safeguarding Practice Development and Learning (PDL) subgroup is a joint subgroup of the SSCP and SSAB. It is chaired by the SSCP/SSAB Independent Chair.

The SSCP is committed to promoting a culture which values and facilitates learning and in which the lesson learned are used to improve future practice and partnership working. This approach has facilitated robust mechanisms to review, analyse and develop practice. We are confident that our approach to learning and development drives improvements in the wider safeguarding system as well as in the outcomes experienced by users of services.

Traditionally there has been an emphasis on “training” and although uptake of training programmes can be measured, we require further assurance as to the impact this has on practice. As a result, during the latter part of the year we reviewed our current model and as we move into 2021-22 we will transition to a strengthened approach where learning is embedded in the culture of all safeguarding practice.

## Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Subgroup:

Responsibility for how lessons are learned locally from serious child safeguarding incidents lies with the safeguarding partners, via the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Subgroup. The terms of reference for this group have been revised to take into account the new statutory guidance.

The subgroup is responsible for identifying cases which meet the criteria for a Child Safeguarding Practice Review. For cases that fall below the threshold the group determines if there is relevant possible learning from the case, and recommends the process and methodology for understanding the learning.

The group also identifies any themes or trends within local referrals and national reviews that may further improve the quality and impact of safeguarding in Southwark.

Once a review has been completed, the implementation and impact of any multi-agency lessons to be learned are monitored to ensure that the learning from all case reviewing activity is embedded in practice.

The group considered two cases for Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews in year, and both were felt to meet the criteria for a review. More information can be found in [section 4](#).

The CSPR subgroup also reviews Youth Offending Service Community Safety and Public Protection Incident reports (CSPPIs). Work is ongoing to establish best practice for quality assuring these reviews and sharing any learning across the partnership.

### **Quality and Effectiveness Subgroup:**

The purpose of the Quality and Effectiveness subgroup is to build and maintain an accurate picture across the SSCP of:

- the quality and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements
- areas of strength and good practice
- areas of risk and vulnerability
- actions related to improve outcomes for children

The subgroup works to strengthen the partnership's assurance process by:

- Developing and ratifying borough- wide strategies, policies and guidance.
- Monitoring and analysing safeguarding indicators across the partnership to identify whether safeguarding practice and arrangements have led to improved outcomes for children and young people.
- Providing challenge and monitoring action plans identified through section 11 audits.
- Identifying and commissioning multi-agency audits to evaluate safeguarding practice and its impact on children, young people and families.
- Monitoring the progress of action plans arising from any local or national reviews.
- Demonstrating that the voice of the child has been heard and using this information to improve services and the effectiveness of professional practice.

In year, a key piece of work of the subgroup included updating the [SSCP escalation policy](#).

Work is under way to review the existing performance dashboard and align it with the partnership's agreed priorities.

### **Section 11 self-assessment audit**

[Section 11 of the Children Act 2004](#) places a duty on organisations to ensure that they take into account the safeguarding and welfare of children when carrying out their functions. [Working Together 2018](#) states that safeguarding children partnerships must monitor the work of partner agencies in this area. In Southwark, we use the London Safeguarding Children Partnership audit tool for this purpose, with agencies being asked to complete it annually.

Naturally, the 2020/21 audits identified Covid as a key thematic area. There was a recognition of the challenges brought by COVID, with concerns around capacity and workforce resilience. However, this was negated by agencies enhancing their safeguarding supervision offer to support the challenges faced by staff. The partnership also acknowledged that during the first lockdown, the offer of virtual appointments to patients and service users were not as desirable as face to face appointments in identifying potential risk factors. However, partners identified that joint working had improved during the COVID period. Meetings were all held virtually, which had facilitated partnership attendance and engagement.

The thematic areas of focus that were identified through the partnership section 11 audits were Children and Young People's mental health and Extra Familiar Harm, which tie in with the identified partnership priorities of the SSCP for the coming year.

The self assessment also identified that key partners of the SSCP should continue to strengthen how key messages are cascaded to frontline staff, and also to strengthen the connection with the voluntary and community sector.

## 2.4 SSCP accountability

### Core child protection activity

	Southwark 20-21		Southwark 19-20		SN 20-21	England 20-21	London 20-21	Southwark change
	Number	Rate*	Number	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	
Referrals	3510	533	3579	548	494	494	497	-1.9%
Re-referrals	681	19%	573	16%	18%	23%	19%	18.8%
Completed assessments	3299	501	3021	463	474	518	469	9.2%
S47 enquiries starting	1298	197	753	115	172	164	154	72.4%
ICPCs held	534	81	344	53	53	60	52	55.2%
CPP (31/3/21)	392	60	285	44	36	41	36	37.5%
CPP 2+ years (31/3/21)	18	5%	21	7%	4%	2%	3%	-14.3%
CPP starts in year	458	70	279	43	45	53	45	64.2%
CPP ceased in year	350	53	322	49	45	54	43	8.7%
LAC (31/3/21)	449	68	458	70	63	67	47	-2.0%
LAC starts in year	166	25	204	31	25	24	21	-18.6%
LAC ceased in year	178	27	222	25	28	23	23	-19.8%

- Rate per 10,000 0-17 population (ONS mid-year estimate) unless given as a percentage

The rate of referrals to Children's Social Care decreased across the country in 2020/21 compared with 2019/20. This pattern is consistent across all comparator groups (England, London, Statistical Neighbours). In line with this national decrease, the rate of referrals in Southwark also decreased, but not to the same extent and is now higher than all comparator groups whereas in the previous year it was broadly in line with England and London and lower than the Statistical Neighbour average.

Re-referrals (the proportion of new Referrals in the year within 12 months of a previous Referral) increased for the second year running, but is still comparable with similar Local Authorities and below the England average.

Importantly, there was a great increase in child protection activity in 2020/21 compared with the previous year. The rate of children subject to S47 enquiries starting in the year increased by 72.4% and is now far higher than all comparator groups at 197 per 10,000 (0-17). This compares with just 115 in the previous year, which was far below all comparator averages (167, 164, 154 in England, Statistical Neighbours, London respectively). A significant amount of work continues to be carried out to understand the reasons for the increase including reviewing threshold standards and audit. However, it is likely to be in part a response to the

onset of the Covid pandemic and its effects on families living in an inner London Authority, and to the initial suspension of face to face work via the Department for Education (DfE) as nationally and without a vaccine programme, Covid rates had to be controlled.

This upward trend had a knock-on effect on the number and rate of Initial Child Protection Conferences (55% increase compared with 2019/20) and number and rate of new Child Protection Plans (64.2% increase compared to 2019/20).

Although Southwark has recorded a higher rate of Child Protection Plans (CPPs) compared to London and Statistical Neighbour averages over several years, this difference became far starker in 2020/21; at 60 per 10,000 children, this is far higher than the average of 36 per 10,000 for London and Statistical Neighbours. To achieve this rate, Southwark would need a CPP population of around 240 children. Recently, numbers and rate and number of child protection plans have lowered; at the end of December 2021, 318 children were subject of Child Protection Plans (48.3 per 10,000).

Children becoming subject to a CPP for a second or subsequent time (18% of new CPPs in 2019/20) remains comparable with London (18%) and Statistical Neighbours (19%) and slightly below England (22%).

The looked after children (LAC) cohort has remained more stable. The overall rate of looked after children has fallen by 2% from 70 per 10,000 to 68 per 10,000. However, this remains greater than the rate for comparators. This is accompanied by a decrease in new accommodations (-18.6% compared with 2019/20) and a decrease in accommodations ending (-19.8% compared with 2019-20). This suggests that the increase in safeguarding activity has not resulted in any major changes to the LAC population.

### **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**

LADO responsibilities are set out in Working Together Chapter 2, the London Child Protection Procedures Chapter 7 and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

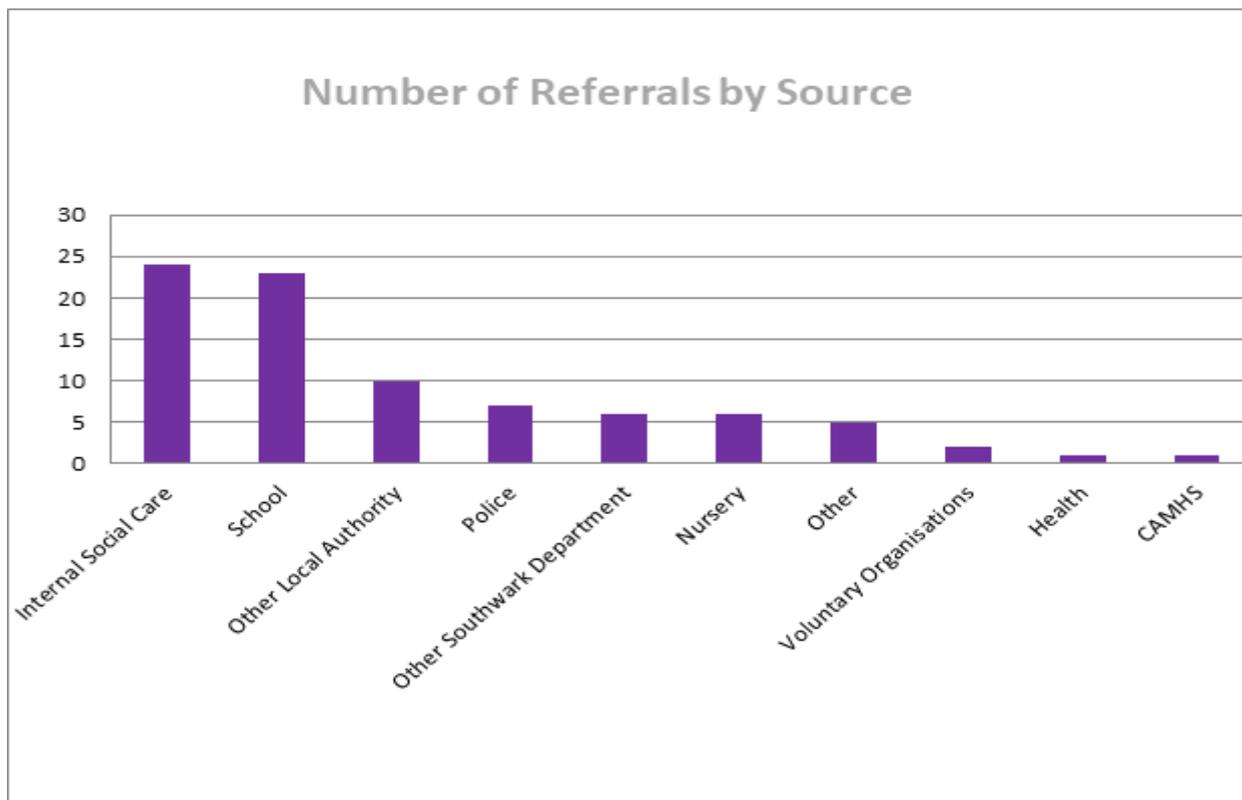
Referrals to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) decreased by 49% in the last year, with a total of 85 referrals. This is a significant decrease from the preceding four years (average referrals over 4 years from 2016/17 to year end 2019/20 was 160 per annum) and is most likely as a result of the closure of schools and other settings such as nurseries and colleges due to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in this reporting year (2020/21).

Around 164 consultations were completed in 2020/21, the majority of which were made by and about staff in education and foster carers (48% of all consultations completed) which correlates with what we see in the data for referrals.

In light of the drop in referrals likely due to schools and nursery closures throughout 2020/21, the LADO will seek to re-establish the function across key partner agencies through training and events in 2021/22 and improve the reach of the LADO with 3rd Sector agencies and independent organisations, including faith groups.

Furthermore, as we move into 2021/22, LADO Consultations will be recorded on the Children Social Care database. Previously the LADO only recorded referrals onto Mosaic but there are a large volume of consultations that do not meet threshold for a referral and this information needs to be captured.

The Southwark LADO continues to host and chair the quarterly London LADO meeting and had input into the revised London Child Protection Procedures.



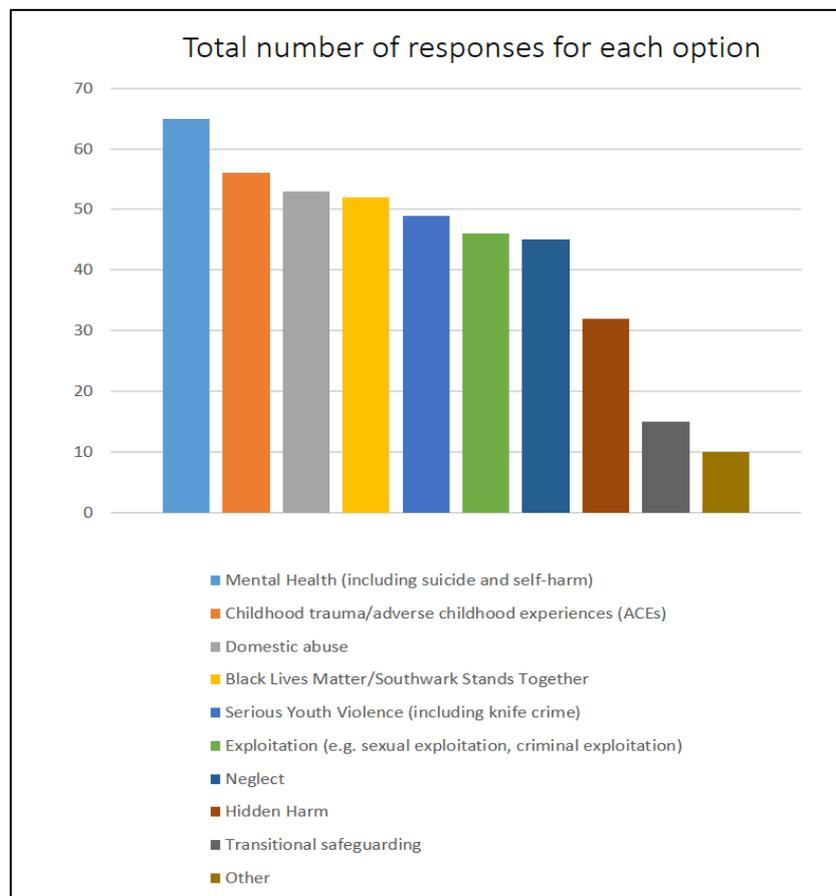
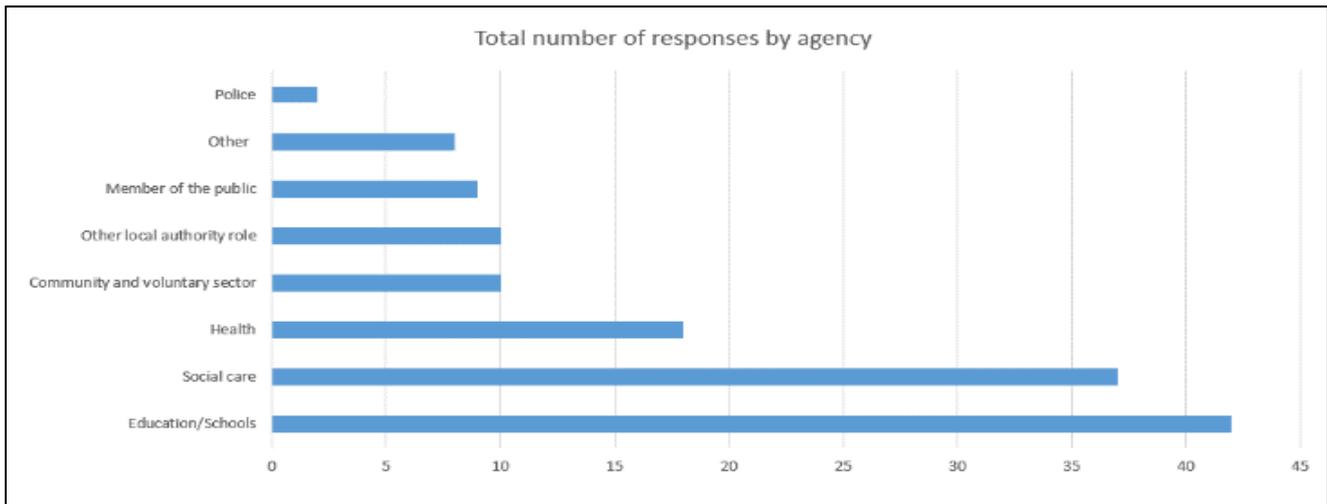
## 2.5 Financial arrangements

The SSCP receives financial contributions from a number of agencies and other forms of in-kind support. Contribution received in 2020-21 include:

Contribution	Total
Police (MOPAC)	£5,000
Southwark CCG	£55,000
London Fire Brigade	£500
London Borough Southwark	£63,421.50
<b>Total from contributions</b>	<b>£123,921.50</b>

### 3. Our Priorities

At the beginning of 2020/21, the SSCP undertook a consultation with the partnership to ascertain views on priorities for the SSCP for the forthcoming year. A survey was developed and shared widely, including with our Young Advisors. Despite being at the height of the pandemic, we received a total of 136 responses; the majority being from front line staff.



From the survey, and further discussion at partnership meetings, the following four priorities were agreed:

1. Domestic Abuse (joint with SSAB)
2. Complex Safeguarding Themes / Extra-Familial Harm
3. Mental Health
4. Childhood Trauma / Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's)

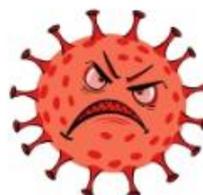
Quotes from survey respondents:

“Black Lives Matter should be integral to every priority. Not seen as a side issue”

“I would hope Black Lives Matter /Southwark Stands Together will be incorporated into any planning”

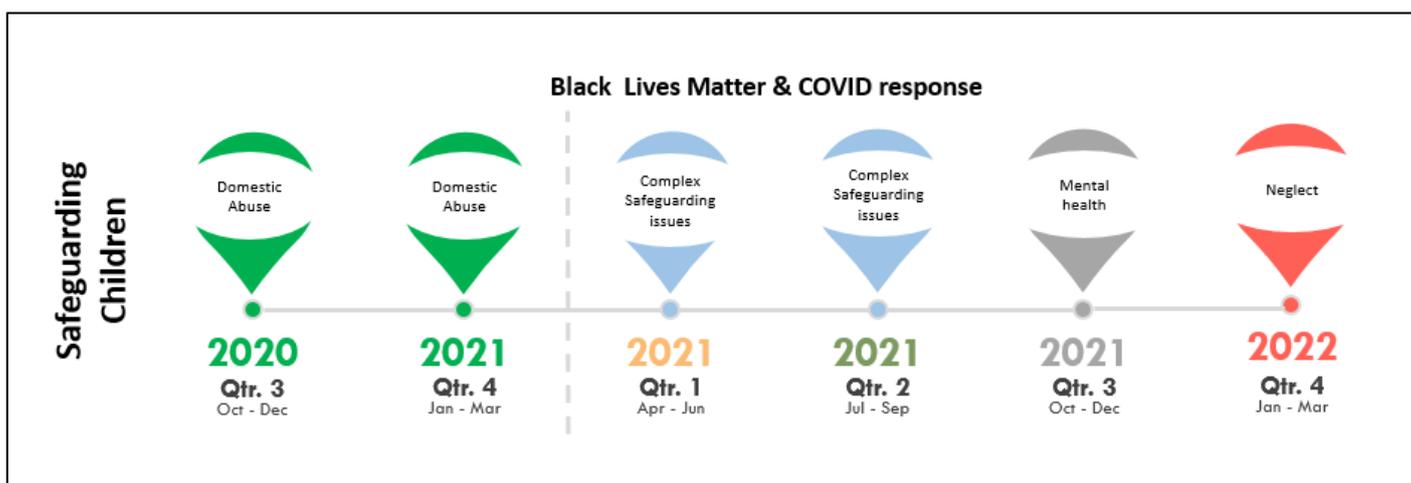
The partnership also felt that there should be two cross-cutting themes running through all four priorities:

1. COVID-19
2. Black Lives Matter/Southwark Stands Together



It was agreed that these priorities should run until March 2022. While the partnership will work on all the priorities during this period, there will be a quarterly focus on particular priority areas.

### Quarterly areas of focus



### 3.1 Domestic Abuse

“...because of the lockdown and the potential of intermittent localised lockdowns in the coming months / year, domestic violence is an important issue to focus on as it will likely impact more families and with greater severity as the stress pressures increase and social isolation becomes part of day to day life.”



Domestic Abuse (DA) was agreed as a joint priority across the SSCP and SSAB. It was acknowledged that DA has many interconnectivities with other complex behaviours and situations and thus in order to be effective, it was essential to identify specific areas of focus and development. Partnership discussions about this priority identified the following areas of challenge;

- Can we be more proactive and preventative and intervene earlier?
- Are we assured that younger (teenage) victims are sufficiently identified and supported?
- Do we adequately consider other factors such as language barriers and cultural assumptions?

A task and finish group was established in year to take this work forward, and an initial data collection exercise was commenced. A half day event is planned for 2021/22 to do a deep dive into case studies identified by partner agencies.

### 3.2 Extra-Familial Harm



“Criminal and sexual exploitation seem to be the most urgent safeguarding issues for Southwark to address at the current time.”

In the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 there were 1372 children whose social care assessments identified extra-familial harm as a factor. Most children (87%) were assessed as having additional vulnerabilities such as neglect, domestic abuse, own or parental drug and alcohol abuse, or mental health concerns, highlighting that this priority area cannot be viewed in isolation.

At the end of 2020/21, the pan-London Child Exploitation Protocol was released. This is a multi-agency document which is jointly owned by the police and local safeguarding partnerships. The purpose of the protocol is to:

- Identify children at risk of exploitation and keep them safe
- Upskill all Safeguarding Partnerships to achieve a standardised collaborative approach to Child Exploitation
- Provide early intervention opportunities to stop or prevent children becoming victims of exploitation
- Provide front line responders with the correct disruption tools

In year, the MACE was reviewed and strengthened, with the scope being widened to include all exploitative behaviours. An extensive ‘problem profile’ was established which identified the extent of specific risk factors and enabled interventions to be more targeted.

Going forward into 2021/22, the partnership will establish a task and finish group to develop an extra-familial harm strategy. This group will also develop a continuum of need matrix for extra-familial harm risk factors and exploitation concerns, and incorporate extra-familial harm as an additional category in the existing threshold document.

### 3.3 Mental Health



“children and young people are showing an increase in mental health difficulties during Covid-19; which in turn has a significant impact on parental stress / anxiety. Mental health difficulties have a long-term impact on social relationships, education and economic standing.”

During 2020-21, the partnership identified these initial themes within this priority area:

- A strong correlation of child and young person mental wellbeing with the cross cutting themes of Black Lives Matter and the impact of COVID.
- The importance of promoting emotional wellbeing in educational settings
- Recognition of the intrinsic links with adult Mental Health and Domestic abuse.
- Health inequalities and early risk awareness
- Strengthening the connectivity between children & young people, parents and communities is essential.

The SSCP priority areas were agreed until March 2022, and mental health and wellbeing of children and young people will be a specific focus area next year and thus will be reported on in more depth in the 2021/22 annual report.

### 3.4 Neglect/ACEs



“ACEs...are insidious, pervasive and hugely significant in children’s development. If resources are geared towards this, many of the other issues are impacted on.”

The partnership have noted the correlation between neglect and ACEs and some of the other priority area.

Due to the pandemic, the partnership did not agree its priority areas until September 2020 and agreed they would be our priorities until March 2022. The partnership did not have the opportunity to specifically focus on this priority area during 2020/21. However, as with all of our agreed priorities, they cannot be seen in isolation and thus neglect and adverse childhood experiences are factors that feature within our other agreed thematic areas; Domestic Abuse, child mental health and extra familiar harm and the SSCP are assured that childhood neglect is continuously being identified, assessed and addressed across the partnership in the every day delivery of services. However, more indepth scrutiny into the effectiveness of the partnerships interventions when working with children, young people and families will be carried out in 2021/22.

## 4. Learning from Case Reviews

### CASE REVIEWS



Under Working Together 2018, local safeguarding partners must make arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases which, in their view, raise issues of importance in relation to their area.

Serious child safeguarding cases are those in which:

- abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected and
- the child has died or been seriously harmed (serious harm includes (but is not limited to) serious and/or long-term impairment of a child's mental health or intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development. It should also cover impairment of physical health

All Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews will result in a report, which is published and readily accessible on the SSCP website for a minimum of 12 months, unless there are overwhelming reasons why the report should not be published.

#### Reviews in 2020/21

In 2020/21 the SSCP completed reviews into the tragic deaths of two Southwark children. Due to the identifiable cause of death of one child, it has been agreed with the National Panel that this report will not be published. Publication of the other report has been delayed pending the completion of criminal proceedings. Both these reviews had a significant focus on health services and how their systems worked together. In summary, recommendations include;

- *Transient families' records - national level review*
  - a) Escalation to relevant national and pan-London bodies to address the problem of fragmented IT systems. The challenge of the sharing/transference of records between agencies and across geographical boundaries with particular relevance to vulnerable, transient and sometimes deliberately evasive families is an area of risk.
- *Professional practice: local learning*
  - a) A review of how maternity services identify past and present factors that may impact on parenting capacity, how this information is shared when care is transferred to another hospital, and how the information is passed on to health visitors at any stage in the pregnancy.
  - b) Reiteration of guidance and support to health visitors to be 'professionally curious' and to ensure that a full history is obtained on every child in a timely way following transfer-

- in to the borough. To ensure that policy and practice emphasises the importance of obtaining historical information on factors that may impact on parenting capacity.
- c) Assurance to be gained that GP systems are fit for purpose in recording historical and current Child Protection and Looked After Children information and the GPs utilise this information when assessing parenting capacity.
  - d) Hospital trusts to satisfy themselves that existing or planned training / developmental sessions make clear to Health Visiting Teams and evaluate compliance with the Expectations (rooted in National Institute for Health and Care Excellence – NICE - guidance) of the management of ‘faltering growth’.
  - e) The hospital should undertake an audit of the rate of completion of informative and timely discharge letters.
  - f) The CCG should satisfy itself that notifications from 999 / 111 services received by local GP Practices are clinically evaluated before inputting into a child’s medical record.

Despite neither of the two reviews undertaken being in the public domain, the key learning has been identified and cascaded across the partnership and action plans have been developed and progressed and are routinely monitored.

## 5. Looking Ahead

The SSCP priorities identified for 2020/21 will also be the area of focus for the partnership in forthcoming year (2021/22). However, to ensure the partnership remains agile, a review was undertaken at the end of the year to ascertain if there are any further areas that require strengthening. Responses are displayed below;



The word cloud tool highlighted that a key area to strengthen is our engagement with young people and families, together with hearing the voice of child. The partnership will continue to work to improve in this area in 2021/22.

Another area which comes out strongly is the importance of reviewing the impact of partnership work. The Quality and Effectiveness Subgroup plan to carry out more thematic reviews into the partnership’s identified priority areas to assess impact. The Practice Development and Learning Subgroup will incorporate evaluation of the effectiveness of learning and its impact on the frontline into its model going forward.

## Contact information

If you have any questions about the content of this report, or thoughts about what we should include in future reports, please contact [sscp@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:sscp@southwark.gov.uk).

If you are concerned about a child at risk in the borough of Southwark you should notify us immediately on [MASH@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:MASH@southwark.gov.uk).

If the child has been injured you should seek advice from their GP, or in an emergency call 999.

If you believe a crime has been committed you should notify the police.