

Dudley **Safeguarding**

protecting children and young people

Dudley Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB) **Annual Report** April 2015 to March 2016





Dudley Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB) **Annual Report** April 2015 to March 2016

July 2016

Dudley Safeguarding Children Board
C/O Safeguarding & Review Service
Directorate of Children's Services
Corbyn Road Dudley
DY1 2JZ

or visit our website www.safeguarding.dudley.gov.uk

This report has been prepared by Jassi Broadmeadow, Head of Safeguarding Children and Young People and Beverley Czyz, Interim DSCB Business Manager on behalf of the Independent Chair of Dudley Safeguarding Children Board

Foreword



Liz Murphy

I am delighted to introduce the Annual Report of Dudley Local Children Safeguarding Board (DSCB) covering our period of activity from April 2015 to March 2016 and commenting on our plans for our future work in 2016-17.

This document is intended to reach all the agencies and individuals for whom safeguarding is a primary responsibility, but will also be of interest to the general public. It is worth remembering that we all have a role in assuring the safe and secure development of children in our communities and especially to protect those who may be the most vulnerable to abuse, neglect and exploitation.

I would like to thank my predecessor, Roger Clayton who led the Board's work during the period covered by this report; Roger worked tirelessly to champion the needs of children and young people in Dudley. I have been in role since April 2016 and took over during a period of rapid change and improvement for both DSCB as well as children's services. The need for improvement had been recognised by senior leaders prior to an Ofsted inspection carried out in January 2016 of both Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council's (DMBC) Children's Services and DSCB; both of whom were judged to be 'inadequate'.

This report sets out the work coordinated by the Board to support improved safeguarding arrangements and practice during 2015-16 and also provides an analysis of the effectiveness of the local safeguarding system in Dudley. Whilst at times the report contains some hard hitting messages about what the Local Authority and its partner agencies need to do in order to provide a consistent and safe response to vulnerable children and young people, it is my responsibility to ensure that DSCB provides an honest and transparent account of the effectiveness of the local safeguarding system.

You will see that there has been a significant amount of activity carried out and some successes include the creation of a single point of access for Children's social work services and the creation of a multi-agency child sexual exploitation team. Going forward, there is much to do to continue to improve the safety of vulnerable children and young people in Dudley as well as to ensure that DSCB is delivering its scrutiny and challenge role more effectively. Key DSCB priorities for 2016-17 are:

- To improve the quality of referrals made by partner agencies to Children's Services and ensure that there is an increased understanding across partner agencies of when a child should be referred to Children's Services;
- To provide help and support to children and their families to meet their needs in a timely way; this will mean partner agencies embracing their role and responsibility to carry out early help assessments and coordinating the support required;
- To ensure all agencies contribute to child protection conferences and core groups so that information is shared and risks are regularly reviewed and in a timely way;
- To improve the recognition and response to children who are neglected;
- To improve the quality of assessment and planning for sexually exploited children as well as working creatively to disrupt those who target, groom and exploit children without relying on a disclosure from the child.

Dudley MBC Children's Services has its own improvement plan and its priorities include:

- Securing a stable and permanent children's social care workforce;
- Supporting social workers to consistently carry out good quality assessments;
- Providing effective management oversight of cases to reduce drift and delay

I am responsible for implementing an improvement plan designed to ensure DSCB fulfils its statutory duties in full; progress is routinely reported to the DSCB as well as to an independently chaired Improvement Board. Board partners and I recognise the size of the journey we face to deliver our scrutiny and assurance role effectively and also to drive local learning and improvement. Having sufficient capacity in the DSCB Business Unit as well as effective business support processes is critical as is the

contribution of all Board partners; both at Board and sub group level as well as on the front line.

We all have a part to play in improving the safety of children and young people in Dudley. It is our individual responsibility to take action at an operational level to improve the lives of individual children whilst it is our collective responsibility to work to improve the safeguarding system. In challenging times like we face in Dudley, I want to emphasise that every day you have the opportunity to contribute to improving safeguarding practice and arrangements or in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "Be the change you wish to see in the world"

I would like to place on record my thanks to all partners, including front line practitioners and staff in the DSCB Business Unit, who have contributed to the work of the Board during the year.

I look forward to working with you next year

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Liz Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L' and 'M'.

Liz Murphy
Independent Chair

Contents

Foreword	3
Executive Summary	9
Dudley Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB)	11
Purpose of the Annual Report.....	11
Key roles and relationships	12
The Independent Chair	12
Partner agencies	12
Governance and Accountability Arrangements	13
Strategic priorities	13
DSCB Business plan 2015/16.....	14
Safeguarding Board Structure	14
Board attendance.....	15
Financial Arrangements	15
Lay Member	16
Dudley Demographics.....	19
Strategic Priority 1:.....	20
Contacts, Referrals and Assessments	20
Children on Child Protection Plans.....	26
Looked After Children	29
Domestic Abuse.....	31
Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)	32
Children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation	33
Training and awareness	36
Data	36
Children missing from home, care and education	37
Analysis of return home interviews	39
Duration of missing episode	40
CSE and Missing	41
Missing and Looked After Children (LAC)	43
LAC placed out of the Borough	43
LAC, Missing and Child Sexual Exploitation.....	43
Elective Home Education (EHE).....	45
Private Fostering.....	46

Local Authority Designated Officer	47
Working together to keep children safe online	50
PREVENT	50
Safeguarding Referrals.....	52
Strategic Priority 2.....	53
Early Help Services across Dudley	53
Single Point of Access and Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	53
Strategic Priority 3.....	54
Self Assessment	55
Local Government Association Peer Review	55
Ofsted	57
DSCB and DSAB Joint Board	57
Children and Young People’s Alliance	57
Subgroup Activity	59
Quality Assurance Sub Group	59
Section 11.....	59
Section 175 and section 157 audit	60
Multi- Agency Audit in Respect of contacts to Children Social Care	61
Serious Case Review Sub Group	63
Participation and Communication Sub Group.....	64
Workforce and Development Strategic Sub Group.....	66
DSCB Multi Agency Training Programme Summary 2015/16.....	66
Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)	69
Unexpected Deaths – Rapid Response Procedure.....	69
Causes of death:cases reviewed in 2015/16.....	71
Vulnerable Children Strategic Group	73
Conclusion	74
Looking Forward	76
Strategic Priority One.....	76
Strategic Priority Two.....	76
Strategic Priority Three	76
Strategic Priority One.....	76
Strategic Priority Two.....	76
Strategic Priority Three	77
Glossary.....	78

Appendices 79

Appendix A: LSCB membership as of 2015/16..... 79

Appendix B: Functions of LSCB..... 79

Appendix C: Dudley Inter-Strategic Board Protocol 79

Appendix D: DSCB Business Plan 2016-17 79

Appendix E: DSCB structure chart..... 79

Appendix F: Board Attendance 79

Appendix G: Financial Arrangements 79

Appendix H: Responses to section 11 audit 79

Appendix I: DSCB Thresholds Framework 79

Appendix J: DSCB Improvement Plan - May 2016 79

Executive Summary

DSCB in 2015/16 has faced significant challenges as well as evaluation of its role and function. The Board has challenged itself through participating in *Research in Practice's: evaluation of LSCB's*, formally through a Local Government Association peer review and finally has been subject of an Ofsted inspection review.

It is evident from the findings of all this activity that fundamentally DSCB has not been compliant with statutory requirements and has lacked the fundamental basics in robust processes of reviewing and challenging performance data, systematic quality assurance and learning from reviews. All of these are required to ensure a robust LSCB which can hold partner agencies to account and support learning and improvement.

This report therefore refers to an Improvement Plan devised to address all of these areas and Dudley Safeguarding Children Board will be held to account by the Children's Improvement Board which the new Independent Chair of Dudley Safeguarding Children Board/Dudley Safeguarding Adults Board Liz Murphy is a member of.

The Annual report provides an account of a journey of change through the identification of concerns for children's wellbeing and safety. Change that has been at significant pace in the year for Children Social Care in particular, but required for all agencies to ensure compliance with safeguarding procedures and statutory requirements.

The first section of this report concentrates on Dudley MBC, its demographics and population. The following section describes the Safeguarding Board role, function and strategic priorities set in 2015. The ultimate aim of the Board is to keep children safe in Dudley and to undertake this through a robust partnership approach.

Based on three strategic priorities, the remainder of the report details the journey of change which commenced to address serious failings in the protection of children. The journey includes auditing activity within Children's Social Care to evidence concern, escalating this within the Council and Partnerships, the development and launch of CSE team, the development and launch of a single point of access through to what has been described as the 'dash to MASH'. It is recognised by all partners that there is still significant work to do to address. Within this the sub group activity has worked to maintain a focus on developing compliance in a number of areas such as child death and serious case reviews, whilst other sub group such as Vulnerable Children Strategic Group developed and implemented strategies such as Child Sexual Exploitation/Female Genital Mutilation/Missing children with an utmost ambition to address these concerns through a collective partner agency approach.

Early help has been a critical focus. The greatest impact in children's lives is the support they receive at the most earliest point of need: the right services at the right time and right place. In order for partner agencies to understand the right intervention for children and what level of need the child has, DSCB undertook a review of the threshold framework. This along with the early help strategy was

agreed in January 2016 to support partner agencies in their assessment and intervention with children and their families.

DSCB and its effectiveness in challenging partner agencies, in understanding risks and its relationship with other statutory boards within DMBC has itself been in a position of challenge, fundamental change and reflection. The various assessments, reports and related findings contained within clearly identify gaps. The final section delves into these and identifies what needs to be changed and how the Board can become more effective through the creation of a new Business Unit that has the capacity to effectively manage the Board's business. The unit will have oversight of the business plan that is specific and targets priority areas of activity rather than focussing on a range of objectives. The Business plan aims to strengthen partnership arrangements so that organisations and front line staff are clear about and act on their safeguarding responsibilities.

As with all safeguarding children activity, the critical question always centres on 'so what: what did we do and what difference did it make'? What has the impact been of the years activity, change in delivery, structures and processes. To summarise this, the report identifies performance data throughout which evidences:

- Timely responses to contacts which are now being centrally managed by a single point of access so the right decision is made in respect of how to meet children's needs
- Early help services that are managed under one umbrella and accessed through the front door and through Children Centre provision
- The most vulnerable child receives assessment and support through Single Assessments and Section 47 child protection enquiries
- DSCB has during 2015-16 begun to understand the needs of its operational staff and has in 2016-17 re-launched Working Together training which will assist in developing a workforce that understands its responsibility in responding to children's needs at all levels

DSCB understands and accepts it has to continue to change going forward to ensure a momentum is maintained focussing firmly on keeping children safe from harm.

Dudley Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB)

DSCB is the key statutory body overseeing multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements across Dudley and is governed by statutory guidance in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 and the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Regulations 2006. Dudley Safeguarding Children Board comprises of senior leaders from a range of different organisations. A summary of the functions and objectives of LSCBs can be found at [Appendix A](#). It has two basic objectives defined within the Children Act 2004:

1. To co-ordinate the safeguarding work of agencies
2. To ensure that this work is effective.

DSCB has been in existence since 2005 and is continually developing the best way to fulfil its role within a constantly changing and challenging context. It has been working on how to best understand the effectiveness of arrangements by ensuring it has the right information, to ensure it keeps in its horizon national agendas, and incorporates and develops regional activity. The primary aim of DSCB is to safeguard and promote the welfare of children through:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

[Appendix B](#) gives detail on the functions of an LSCB as set out in LSCB Regulations 2006. It specifies clearly the expectations for an LSCB to ensure a variety of roles and responsibilities including the following:

- Developing policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting welfare of children
- Communicating to persons and bodies in the area of the authority the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of what is done by the authority and their Board partners
- Participating in planning of services for children
- Undertaking review of serious cases and advise partners of lessons to be learned
- Collecting and analyse information about each death
- Having in place procedures for coordinated response to unexpected death

Purpose of the Annual Report

This annual report is produced to inform agencies involved in safeguarding children in Dudley about the work of the Board and also to enable the Board's assessment

and evaluation of its achievements, performance and challenges to be transparently reported to the public and professionals.

The publication of the annual report complies with the statutory requirements in Working Together Guidance 2015 to publish an annual report on the effectiveness of arrangements to promote and safeguard the children and young people of Dudley. This Annual Report will be submitted to the Chief Executive and Leader of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, the Local Police and Crime Commissioner and a range of statutory partnerships including the Health and Wellbeing Board. It is part of the way that DSCB accounts for its work, celebrates good practice and raises challenge issues for partners to address.

Key roles and relationships

The Independent Chair

During 2015/16 Roger Clayton was the Independent Chair of Dudley Safeguarding Children Board. He undertook a dual role as chair of both Children and Adults Safeguarding Board. Supported by a part time Board Business Manager and administration staff within the business unit, the Chair was tasked with ensuring the Board fulfils its statutory objectives and functions. Key to this is the facilitation of a working culture of transparency, challenge and improvement across all partners in respect to their safeguarding arrangements.

The Chair is accountable to the Chief Executive of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council. The Independent Chair and the Chief Executive met on a bi –monthly basis during 2015/16. The Director of People and the Interim Chief Officer for Children Services also continued to work closely with the Independent Chair on related safeguarding challenges having monthly meetings to progress priorities set by the Board and to ensure challenge and support from the onset of the improvement journey for Children Services.

Whilst being unable to direct organisations, Dudley Safeguarding Children Board does have the power to influence and hold agencies to account in respect of their role in safeguarding. This influence can touch on matters relating to governance as well as impact directly on the welfare of children and young people.

Partner agencies

All partner agencies across the DSCB are committed to ensuring the effective operation of DSCB. This is supported by a **DSCB Constitution** that defines the fundamental principles through which the DSCB is governed. In accordance with agreed improvement activity, work to update DSCB Constitution commenced February 2016. The revised constitution defines clearly the role of members of the Board regarding the need for them to hold a strategic role within their organisations and to speak with authority, commit to matters of policy and hold their organisation to account.

Throughout 2015/16, the interface with the schools sector in the Dudley continued to be supported by the Designated Safeguarding Leads Forum. This forum has been vital in ensuring the education sector in Dudley are kept abreast of key safeguarding initiatives and engaged in Board activity.

There is a clear expectation that Local Safeguarding Children Board's have highly influential strategic arrangements that directly influence and improve performance in the care and protection of children. There is also a clear expectation that this is achieved through robust arrangements with key strategic bodies across the wider partnership. During 2015/16, engagement continued with the Dudley Safeguarding Adults Board (DSAB), the Health and Wellbeing Board, Community Safety Partnerships, Police and Crime Commission Board and Children and Young People's Alliance. Further work is planned in 2016 to ensure that there is improved coordination amongst the Chairs of the named Boards and for each Board to effectively coordinate agreed priorities.

Inter-board protocols which can be found at [Appendix C](#) set out the interface across these forums to ensure clarity of strategic alignment and management of risk. From the Dudley Safeguarding Children Board's perspective, this ensures that the voice of children and young people and their need for safeguarding is kept firmly on the agenda in terms of multi-agency work across partner agencies involving vulnerable adults, health and wellbeing and the local response to crime.

There are additional opportunities for DSCB members to interface with elected members through cabinet meetings, Improvement Board and other related Boards operating in Dudley. The Independent chair is a member of Health and Wellbeing Board, Children and Young Person's Alliance and Improvement Board.

Governance and Accountability Arrangements

DSCB aims to work with, and alongside, a range of statutory and non-statutory partnerships in the knowledge that co-ordinating and maximising the effectiveness of safeguarding and promoting children's wellbeing is best achieved through collaboration, and holding to, or being held to account.

For example:

- The work of DSCB contributes to Dudley Children & Young People's Partnership goals of improving the wellbeing of vulnerable children.
- DSCB works in tandem with Dudley's Safe & Sound (Community Safety) Partnership to tackle both domestic and sexual abuse.

Strategic priorities

In order to set new strategic priorities for the Board, a development day was held in February 2015 whereby Board members reviewed the business plan for 2014/15 and considered the work of the Board going forward into 2015/16.

Young people from local secondary schools participated and led a workshop in which they shared their concerns for keeping safe in Dudley. Further information was

collated by Dudley Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) who contacted young people across the borough and this was shared during the workshop.

As a result the following three strategic priorities were agreed for the next three year period - 2015 to 2018.

- Children and young people are safe from harm in the home, outside the home and online
- Children and young people have access to the right service in the right place at the right time
- Effective partnership working and accountability to improve safeguarding outcomes for children, young people and their families

DSCB Business plan 2015/16

The Business plan which can be found at [Appendix D](#) was borne out of the strategic plan and the following objectives were agreed and approved by DSCB:

Strategic Priority 1

- The voice of children and young people will be heard and used to improve the services we deliver
- DSCB identifies the key risks to children and young people in Dudley and ensures an effective multiagency safeguarding response to these risks

Strategic Priority 2

- DSCB will ensure the development and implementation of the Multi- Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to ensure a consistent and timely response to children and young people in Dudley
- Agencies understand when to share information and how information should be shared and the appropriate referrals are made.
- There is a clear early help offer across partner agencies to ensure that children, young people and their families receive support services at the earliest opportunity

Strategic Priority 3

- Professionals and the public are able to recognise children who are at risk of harm and take the appropriate action
- DSCB understands its impact and uses self assessment and the views of its stakeholders to achieve this

Safeguarding Board Structure

The Safeguarding Board structure was reviewed alongside the new approved Business plan in order to deliver against the priorities. The structure chart for 2015-16 is attached as [Appendix E](#).

The revised structure agreed on the following sub groups to deliver against objectives:

- Vulnerable Children
- Participation
- Child Death Overview Panel
- Serious Case Review
- Strategic Workforce Development
- Quality Assurance

All these sub groups and their chairs reported into the newly formed Safeguarding Executive Committee chaired by Children's Services Chief Officer. The role of the Executive group is to have operational oversight of objectives and work plans for each sub group.

Board attendance

The Board continued to experience good attendance (100%) from key statutory partners during 2015/16. There continued to be challenges within the wider partnership, as can be seen in **Appendix F** this included both local and national statutory partners. The Independent Chair challenged the attendance at the board during 2015/16 and this has resulted in new members joining the board particularly from schools and education settings. This approach is intended to show additional value to co-ordinated partnership working going forwards.

Financial Arrangements

Partner agencies continued to contribute to the DSCB's budget for 2015/16, in addition to providing a variety of resources, such as staff time and training and meeting venues at no cost. The DSCB budget was identified as being insufficient and this was raised by the Independent Chair, Roger Clayton.

Appendix G sets out the financial arrangements and shows income and expenditure for DSCB for 2015-2016. The total budget for the DSCB during 2015/16 was **£208,017** this was made up of a combination of partners' contributions and income from training delivery.

By the end of the financial year Board expenditure totalled **£255,782** resulting in an overspend. The total staffing cost was **£149,338** of which **£36,123** went to fund interim posts. The end of year position was an overspend of **£47,765**.

There was recognition within the Ofsted Inspection report that the DSCB was not adequately resourced. Partners have therefore agreed enhanced financial contributions for 2016/17.

Lay Member



Karen Palk

The Lay Member for DSCB has played an important role championing child safeguarding activity in Dudley.

“As a Lay Member of Dudley Children Safeguarding Board (DSCB), I contribute to discussions, ask appropriate questions and also offer constructive challenge to Board members about safeguarding practices for children and young people in Dudley.

I am a resident of Dudley, and following a previous career in social work with a particular emphasis on child protection, I remain passionate about improving outcomes for children and young people. This includes ensuring that the ‘Voice of the Child’ is both captured and heard, which has remained a challenge for the DSCB during this past year as there is little evidence of the Voice of the Child informing the Board’s business. However, a Dudley Borough Youth Participation Strategy was developed in 2015-16 in order to assist various Boards’ including the DSCB to meet their statutory duty by involving children and young people in decision making. This is being led by Dudley Council for Voluntary Service (CVS). Several Voice of the Child workshops have subsequently been held which I have attended.

A significant amount of DSCB work is delegated to sub-groups, and in Dudley there are six, of which I presently attend three. When specific pieces of work are required to be undertaken then often Task and Finish groups are convened. I have this past year attended a short-term Task and Finish group which focused on arrangements for a Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) campaign in March across the Borough. More recently, I contributed to a Female Genital Mutilation Strategy and Action Plan, and currently sit on a Neglect Task and Finish Group.

A further aspect to my role is engaging with the wider community and raising the profile and public understanding of the Safeguarding Board's Child Protection work in an effort to help build safer communities. This was exemplified by my recent contribution to the CSE campaign in Dudley. As part of the government drive to raise awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation, 18th March 2016 was named as National CSE Awareness day.

As Dudley Safeguarding Children Board has a strategic priority to keep children safe from harm inside the home, outside the home and online, with a specific CSE objective, it was decided to undertake a week long awareness raising campaign across the Borough from 14 to 18 March 2016. The aim was to access as many members of the general public as possible, with the objective of increasing people's awareness and delivering key messages on how to detect the potential signs of CSE and how to report concerns. This was done verbally whilst additionally distributing leaflets, balloons, pens, wrist bands, and canvas bags, all advertising both the Dudley CSE team telephone number and promoting the [See me, Hear me website](#).

In addition to key agencies including Dudley Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) who coordinated the event, the Police, and CSE team, a group of eclectic Community Champions were recruited. These included staff from Phase Trust, a widely respected youth organisation; Jayne Ahmed, a foster carer, and founder of Chatback, a group involving young people who have produced numerous short films tackling the issues of sexual exploitation, Sarah Offley, who supports young people and adults with a learning disability or autism; Shaz Saleem, a well-known business man who has strong links within the Muslim Community and myself due to my own contacts within the local Catholic Community.

The campaign was well organised and demonstrated excellent partnership working. It certainly exceeded our expectations, being well received by the general public who appeared to have a good understanding of CSE. Concerns were raised by some individuals therefore it was important to have the appropriate agencies present to speak directly to them and in some cases to follow-up. Some individuals disclosed historic abuse they themselves had suffered, although this was not necessarily CSE. Again, we ensured they had received appropriate help and support.

I engaged with members of the local communities in Stourbridge, Dudley Town Centre and Sedgley where I organised the Co-operative supermarket as a venue to work from as I have strong community links in that particular area. The campaign was a highlight of the year for me as a DSCB member as CSE is an area of work I am passionate about.

In 2015-16, one of the priorities of the Dudley Children Safeguarding Board Business Plan is to improve inter-agency responses to young people at risk of, or who have suffered sexual exploitation. Therefore, the launch of the Child Sexual Exploitation Team in September 2015, was a key achievement as it's critically important to embed a multi-agency response to CSE

This past year has certainly been a period of both self-reflection, and inspection for the Safeguarding Board. There was a self-assessment undertaken in September 2015 by Board members, followed by an LSCB Peer Diagnostic undertaken by the Local Government Association. There has also recently been an Ofsted inspection. I was interviewed by both agencies as part of their processes. Furthermore, I also recently participated in a group interview chaired by Alan Wood, CBE, who has been commissioned by the Government to undertake a review of the role and functions of Local Safeguarding Children Boards”.

Karen Palk, Lay Member

Dudley Demographics

Local Needs Analysis completed in 2013 identified the population of Dudley as **314,400** of which there were **67,900** children and young people under the age of 18 living in the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley. Of this **50.8%** were female and **49.2%** male.

Dudley is an economically diverse area and is ranked as the **104th** most deprived of the **326** local authority districts in England, a lower ranking than five of the other six districts in the West Midlands conurbation.

Whilst Dudley is seen to be a relatively affluent area in some districts, this masks the disparity in levels of deprivation across the borough. The latest deprivation indices from 2010 showed that **23.9%** of the population from Dudley live in areas which are in the **20%** most deprived in England. These are principally found in a zone covering Dudley, Pensnett, Netherton and Brierley Hill, but also include parts of Coseley, Lye, Halesowen and Stourbridge. **22%** of children and young people have been identified as living in poverty within these areas.

The residents of Dudley are predominantly white and English is their main language, although around **18.3%** of the children and young people aged between 0-18 are recorded as coming from Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) backgrounds.

The attainment gap in Dudley between the percentage of disadvantaged pupils and their peers achieving 5+ A*-C grades including GCSE English and mathematics at Key Stage 4 is currently **3.9** percentage points wider than the corresponding National gap. For children from a non-disadvantaged background the percentage achieving 5+ A*-C grades including GCSE English and mathematics has increased by **1.1** percentage points from **61.2%** in 2014 to **62.3%** in 2015. For children from a disadvantaged background, the percentage achieving 5+ A*-C grades including GCSE English and mathematics has decreased by **1.3** percentage points from **31.4%** in 2014 to **30.1%** in 2015.

The gap between the percentage of disadvantaged pupils and their peers achieving 5+ A*-C grades including GCSE English and mathematics at Key Stage 4 in Dudley has widened from **29.8%** in 2014 to **32.2%** in 2015, an increase of **2.4** percentage points. The corresponding National gap has also increased, from **27.5%** in 2014 to **28.3%** in 2015, an increase of **0.8** percentage points. This shows children from disadvantaged backgrounds in Dudley are not achieving as well as their peers in meeting the expected standard at Key Stage 4 and that this gap in attainment is widening.

Dudley Children Services had operated its front door function through three geographical points to receive contacts into Children social care. This has meant that the application of threshold was varied, timeliness of response to referrals was poor and assessments completed were of varied quality. Internal audit activity identified significant weaknesses whereby in May 2015, DSCB was presented with a case study by the Head of Safeguarding highlighting significant failures in safeguarding

children. Whilst this was centred on Children's Services response to protecting the most vulnerable children in Dudley, it also raised significant concerns about partner agency responses which are laid out in statutory guidance. Further audit activity commenced within Children Services which led to representation being made to Cabinet members highlighting key significant concerns in the arrangements for protecting children from harm.

In consultation with the Chief Executive, Elected Members, Local Government Agency, the Strategic Director for People (who holds statutory responsibility for safeguarding Children) an Improvement Board was put in place and a subsequent Improvement Plan agreed to systematically work through addressing the concerns in the structure and delivery of safe services for children of Dudley.

Strategic Priority 1:

Children and young people are safe from harm in the home, outside the home and online

Contacts, Referrals and Assessments

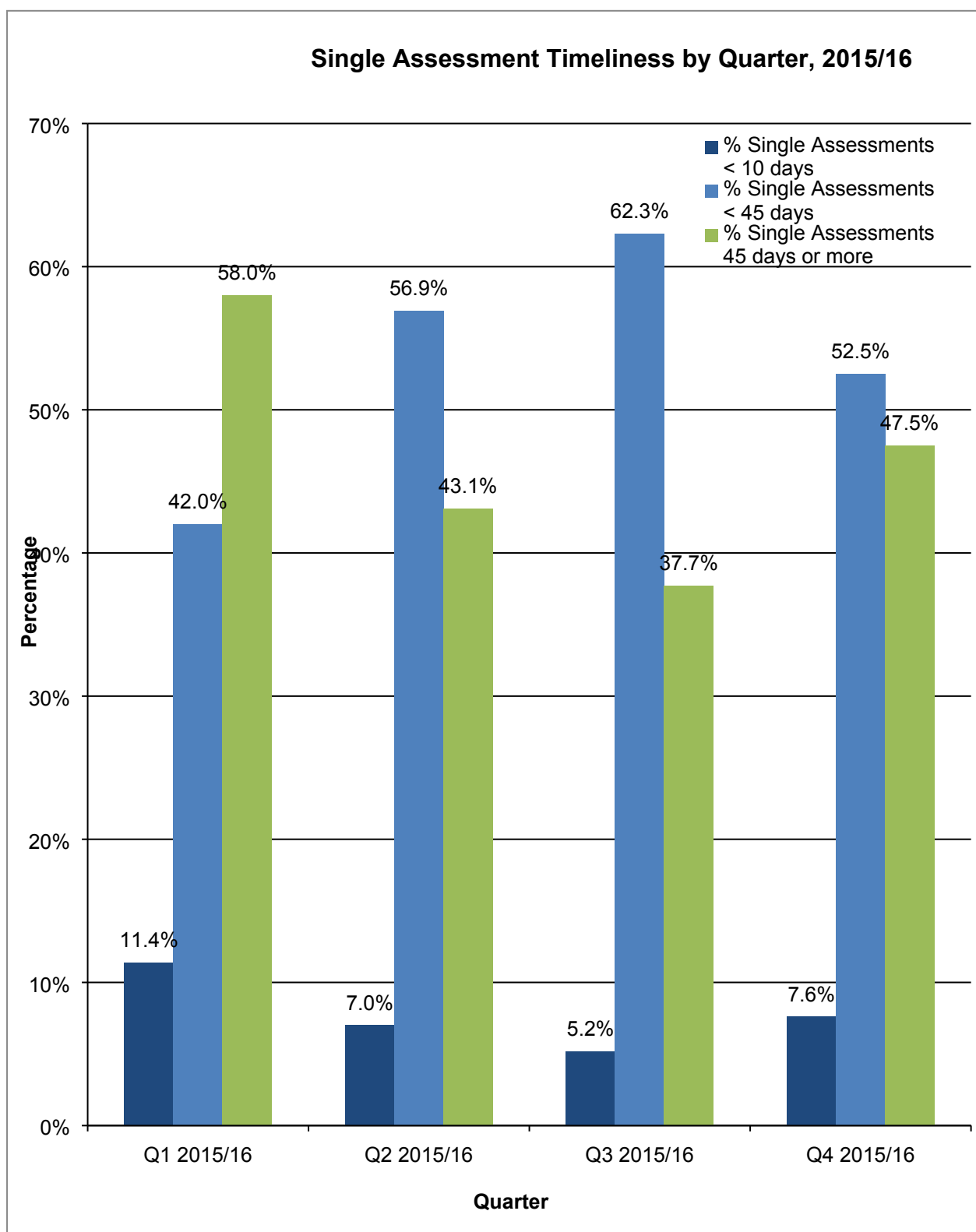
As part of the Improvement Plan, the need to ensure a consistent approach to contacts made to Children Services was a high priority. In December 2015 a Single Point of Access (SPA) for referrals to both Early Help Services and Children's Social Care (CSC) in Dudley was introduced. This provided consistent and responsive screening activities and ensures all contacts are immediately progressed within 24 hours in line with statutory requirements, to a referral, if the threshold for a statutory social work assessment is met. Signposting activity requires staff to have a continually updated knowledge of local services alongside a comprehensive understanding of the Dudley Threshold Framework (see [Appendix I](#)). A revised thresholds document was approved and training on this commenced across the partnership from February 2016.

Prior to the introduction of the SPA from April 2015 to November 2015 there were **9260** new contacts to Duty Assessment Teams. Since the SPA has been in operation, **4598** new contacts have been received between December 2015 and March 2016. Therefore a total of **13,858** contacts have been received into Children's Services for 2015/16. Of this **4,760** were screened to require an acute response by Children's Social Work Services. This amounts to a third of all contacts (34.35%) needing statutory intervention to safeguard and protect vulnerable children in Dudley. The remainder **9,098** contacts (two thirds – 65.65%) were either signposted to early help services or closed for universal services to continue to provide interventions. This provided evidence of a need for an increased understanding of the application of thresholds by partner agencies including Children's Social Care.

Of the **4,760** referrals, **1,944** children received an assessment under section 17, Children Act 1989 **Table A** and **Table B** shows the single assessment activity in the year and related timeliness of them. The referral rate for Children and Young People's single assessments has increased throughout the year. This identifies an increase in the number of children who need to receive a specialist provision from partner agencies.

However, the timeliness single assessments is of concern by the end of Quarter 4 as almost 50% of assessments took longer than 45 days to completed. Working Together requires all single assessments to be completed within the statutory timescales of 45 days. This is significant, as children require an assessment of their needs to be undertaken in a timely manner. This is therefore, an area of concern for DSCB who will be seeking further assurance on this in 2016/17.

Table A



NB: These indicators are cumulative e.g. during Quarter 4, the 7.6% of assessments completed in less than 10 days were part of the 52.5% completed in 45 days or less.

1,212 children received a response from early help services or returned to universal services. 1,604 children required a child protection response to their needs under Section 47 Children Act 1989.

In the same period 887 (18.6%) were re-referred into Children’s Services. This is significant for this cohort of children who have had previous statutory intervention, stepped down to early help provision and/or universal service only for them to return for specialist provision. The review of front door intervention, introduction of the SPA and more latterly the MASH and implementation of a revised Threshold Document in 2016 are all designed to continue ensuring children receive the right help as well as a timely response to their needs.

An audit undertaken of the activity at the front door in December 2015 and March 2016 highlighted developments were needed to ensure the consistent application of thresholds including by children’s social care.

Of the 1,604 children who have been deemed to be either at likely risk of harm or at risk of significant harm, they have required immediate intervention to protect them.

Table B

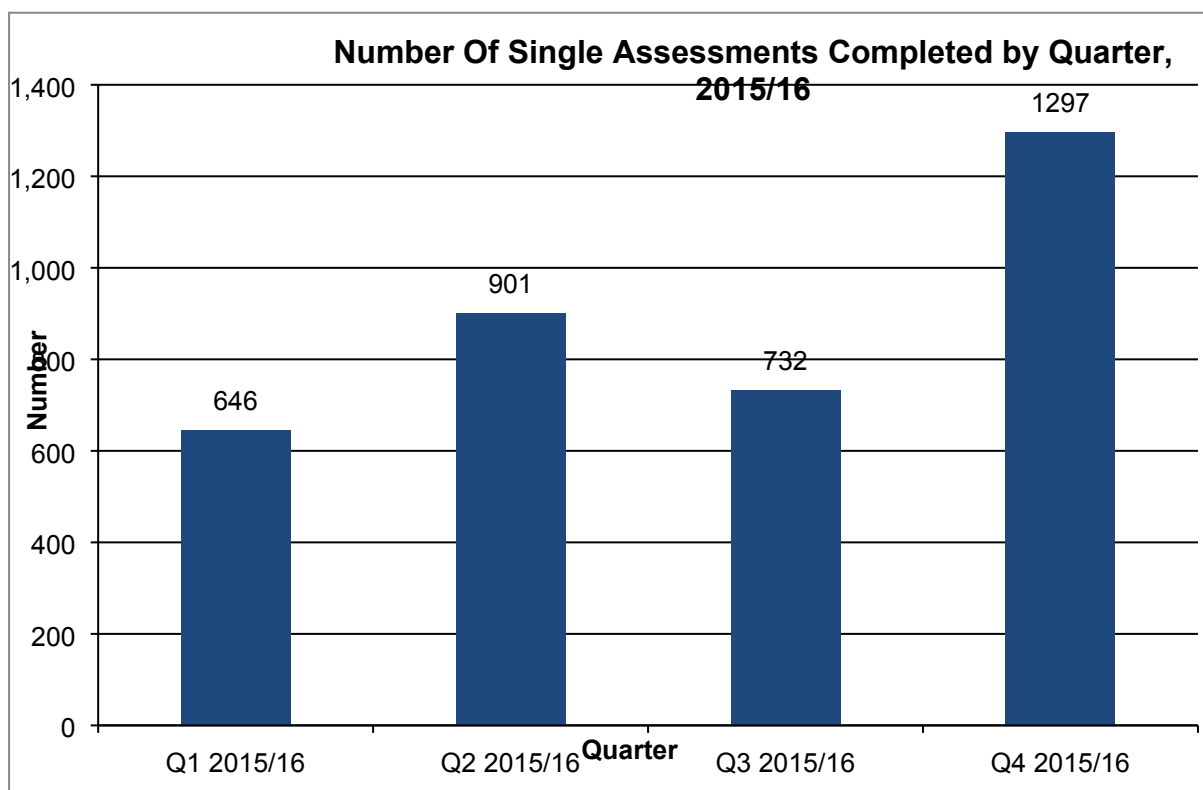


Table C

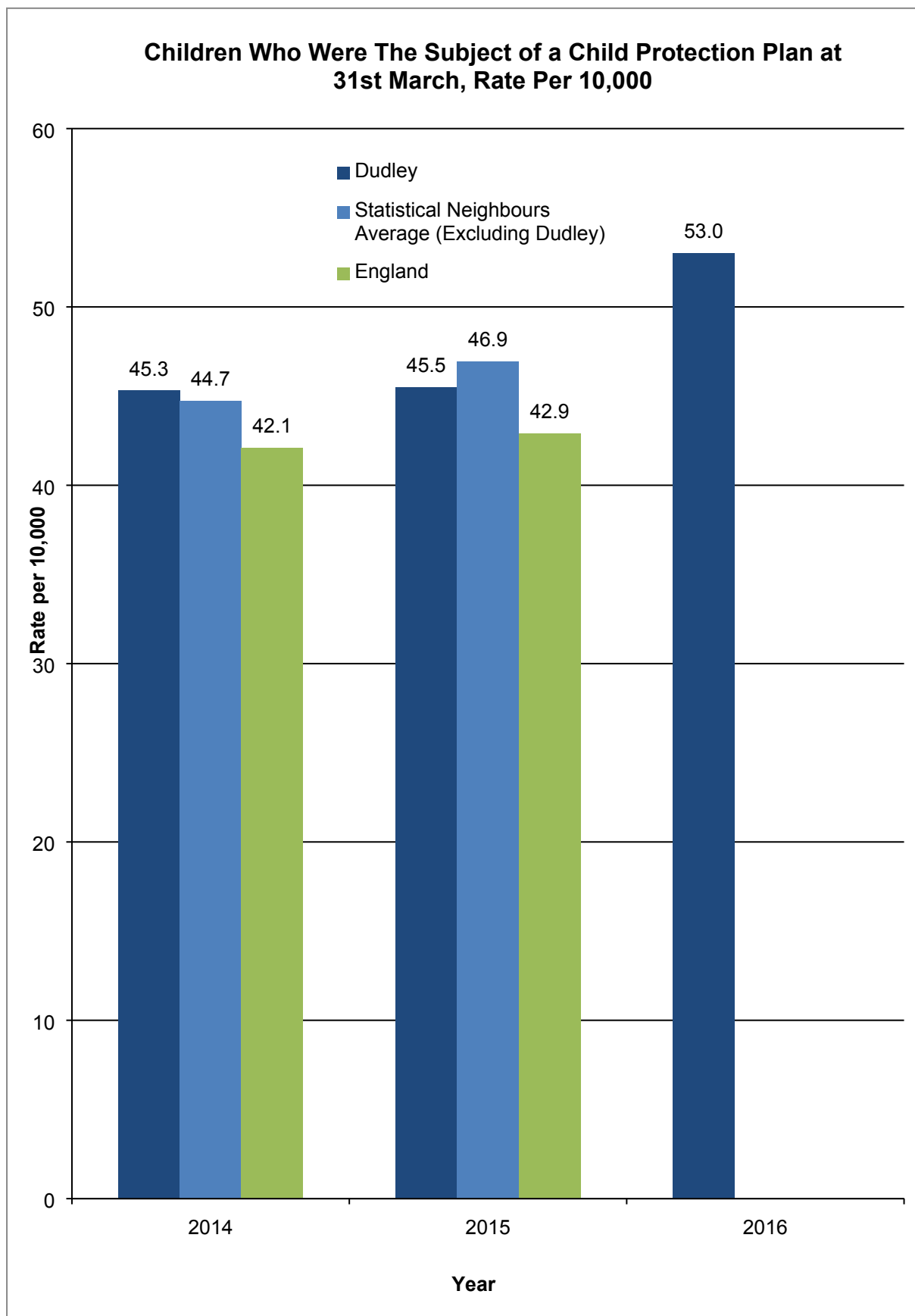
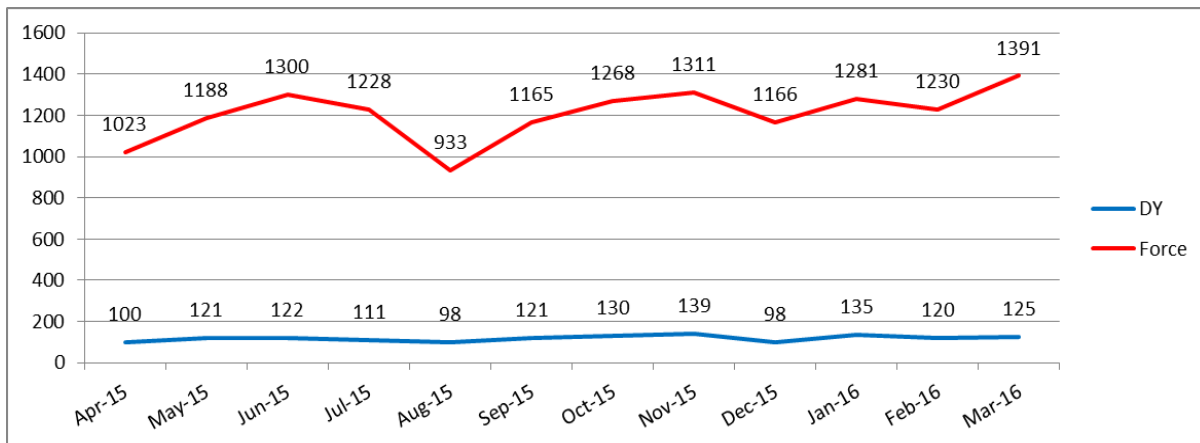


Table C above shows the number of children on a child protection plan during each quarter period against statistical neighbours and national data.

This data identifies that in 2015, Dudley’s rate of children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP), was higher when compared against statistical neighbours but was lower than the national average. The previous year the trend showed a different picture, with Dudley having a higher rate against both indicators. In 2016 we are able to report that the rate per 10,000 is **53.0** which is an increase of **7.5** from 2015. At the point of publication trend data was not available for 2016.

Table D

Reported figures from local policing unit for crimes against children in Dudley are detailed below and include a comparator to West Midlands force area.



- The **Red line** shows the total number of “Recorded” Crimes against Children within the whole of the West Midlands Police area. The **Blue line** shows the number of “Recorded” Crimes for Dudley Local Policing Unit – this is for **all** offences against children not just those committed by parents and carers.
- The volume of Recorded Crime against children in Dudley has followed the upward trend as shown by the Force wide figures over the year, reaching a peak in November 2015.
- The volume of Crimes against Children in Dudley over the year was 10% of the Force total volume which is a slight increase on the 9% in the previous year April 2014 to March 2015.
- The last quarter (January to March 2016) has seen increased demand for Dudley, 4% higher than quarter 3 (October to December 2015 and 32% higher than the same quarter in the previous year April 2014 to March 2015).

Children on Child Protection Plans

Following a child protection enquiry, where concerns of significant harm are substantiated and the child is judged to be suffering or likely to suffer, significant harm, social workers and their managers should convene an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC). An ICPC brings together family members (and children / young people where appropriate) with supporters, advocates and professionals to analyse information and plan how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child / young person. If the ICPC considers that the child / young person is at risk of significant harm or likely to suffer significant harm they will be made the subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP).

Children who have a child protection plan are considered to be in need of protection from either neglect, physical, sexual or emotional abuse; or a combination of one or more of these. The child protection plan details the main areas of concern, what action will be taken to reduce those concerns and by whom, and how professionals, the family and the child or young person (where appropriate) will know when progress is being made.

Table E

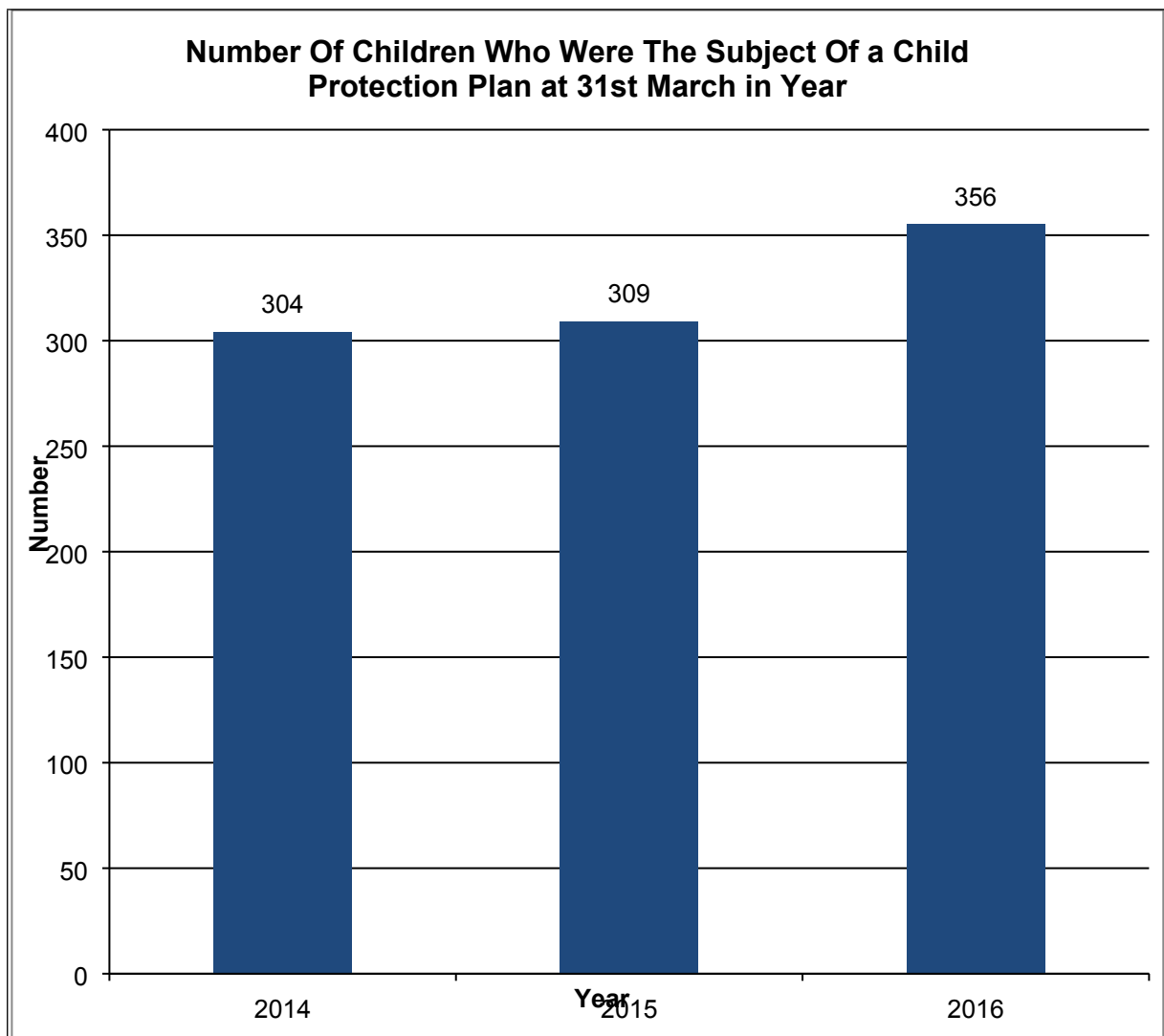


Table E above shows that **356** children were subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) at 31st March 2016.

Table F below shows children who were the subject of a Child Protection Plan based on rate per 10,000 and compares the data against Dudley children, England and Statistical neighbours. Since 2014/15 there is evidence of a year on year trend increase in the rate of children subject to a Child Protection Plan when compared to the England average. However, when compared to our Statistical neighbour's at the end of 2015 the Dudley rate was lower.

In 2016 the number of children subject to a child protection plan has increased, however comparator data is not available at the time of writing this report. If the trend is maintained then Dudley will continue to evidence a rise in numbers of children requiring services to safeguard and protect them from significant harm.

Table F

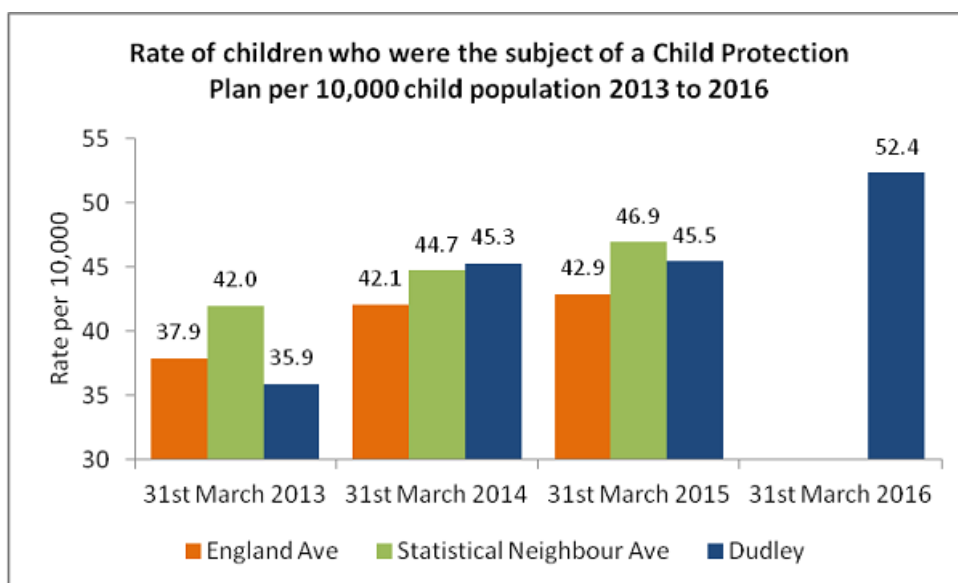


Table G

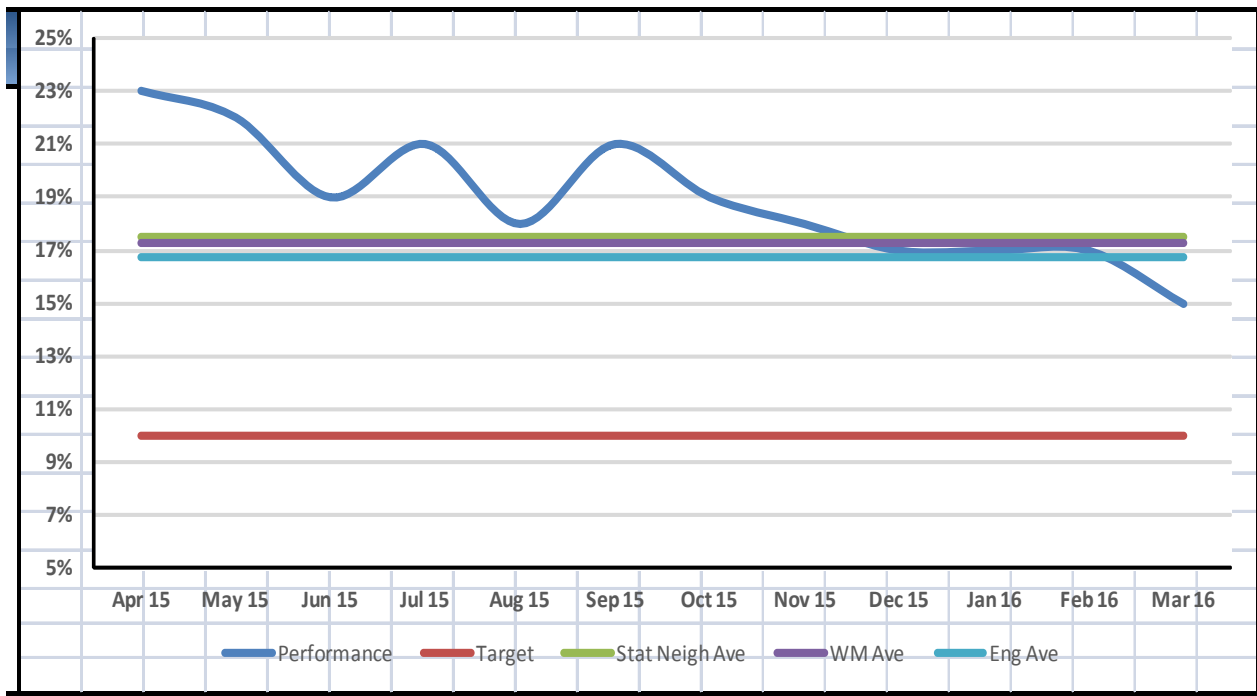


Table G above shows that for Children subject to a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time we are in line with our Statistical Neighbours at **13.9%**. Our target was set at **10%** based on national figures and high performing local authorities. Performance against this ambitious target is being monitored by the DSCB and DMBC Children’s Services Management Team.

Table H

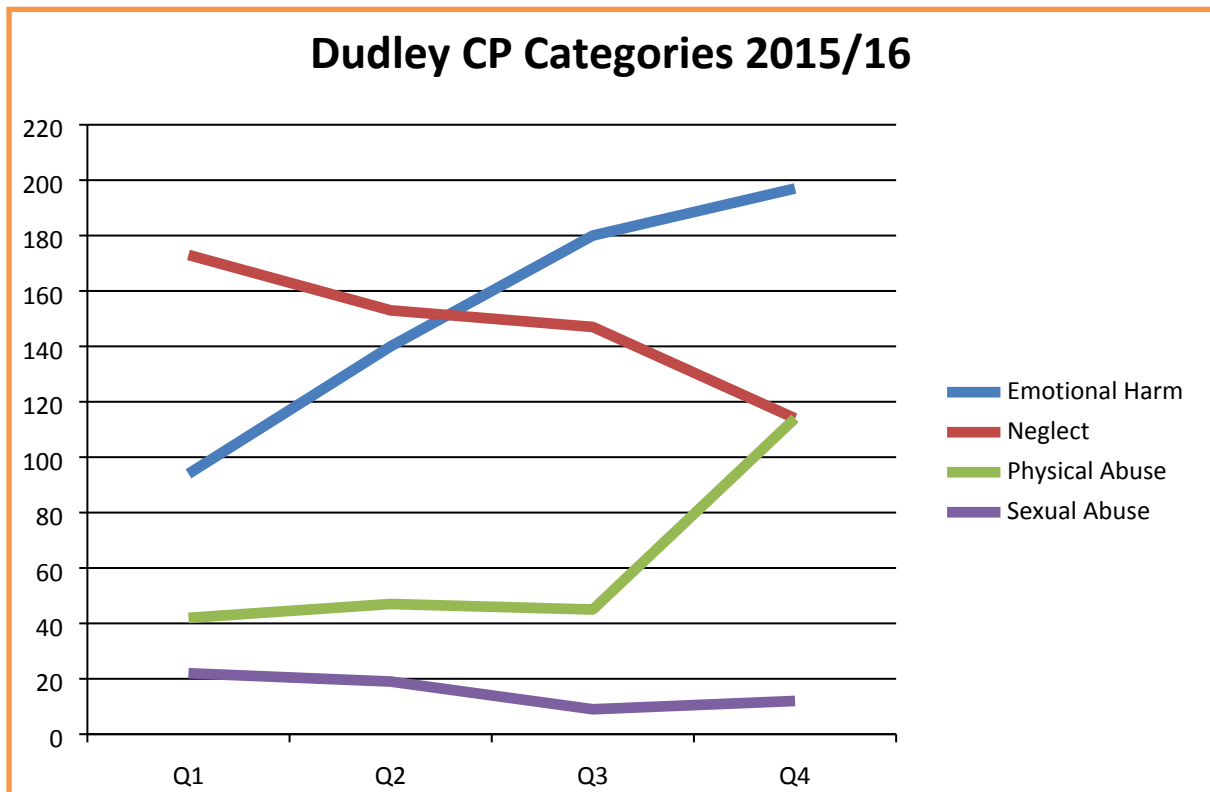
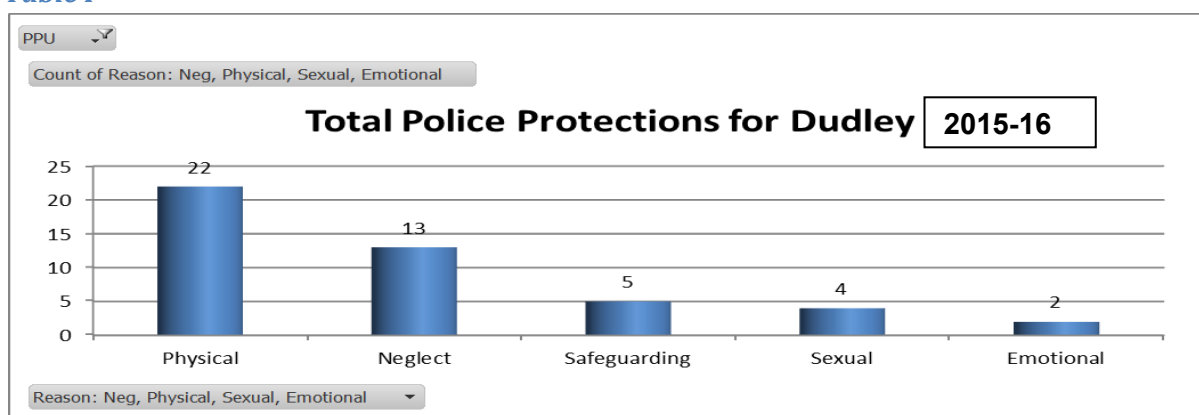


Table H above identifies the categories for becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan. This shows how earlier in the year, the category of Neglect was the highest concern and then by the end of March 2016, Emotional Harm had become more significant as nearly **200** children were subject to a Child Protection Plan under the category of Emotional Harm. DSCB have had Neglect as a priority from 2015 and a Neglect Strategy is being developed with an associated action plan to deliver against in 2016/2017.

A review of Emotional Harm cases is being progressed currently to offer an insight into the specific reasons for this trajectory and to understand the provision of services required in 2016/17. The current Domestic Abuse audit findings will further enhance this understanding.

Table I



In Dudley Borough between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 there were **46** instances which involved **66** children where it was deemed that they required immediate protection from harm through the use of Police Protection powers. Children’s Services were immediately notified of these children and they were assessed under section 47 of Children Act 1989.

Looked After Children

A child or young person who is in the care of the local authority can be accommodated voluntarily with the consent of parents under section 20, Children Act 1989 or they can be unaccompanied asylum seeking children. In other circumstances, Children’s Services and partners will intervene using legal powers to protect children because the child or young person is at risk of significant harm.

As at 31st March 2016, Dudley was responsible for looking after **728** children and young people. The Quarter dataset shows variance throughout the year:

Table J

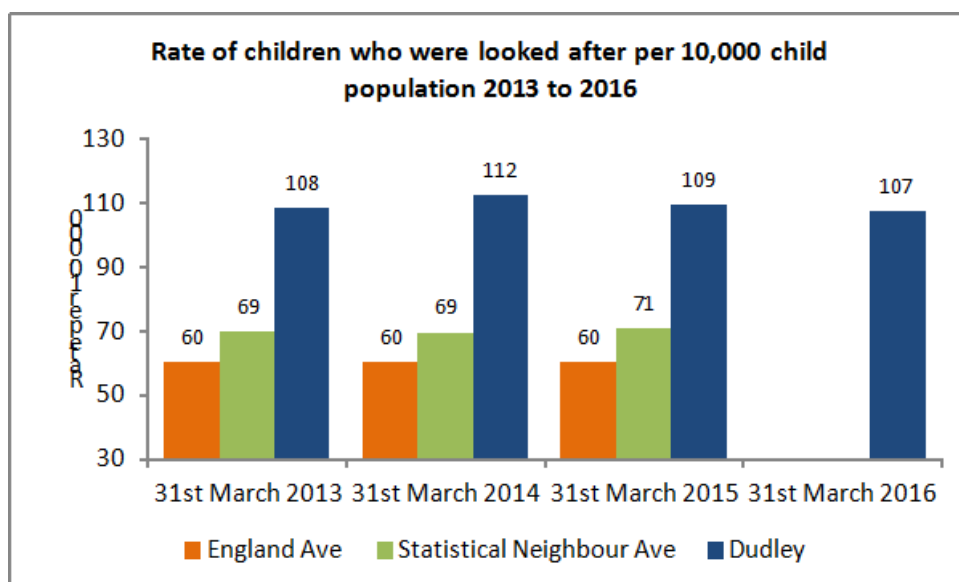
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
744	718	711	728

In 2015/16 there were a total of **60** new admissions with **41** children who have ceased to be looked after. Admissions have varied and have included newly looked after children but also children who have been subject of a child protection plan and have required intervention through care proceedings to safeguard and protect them.

Table K below gives detail on the rate of children who were looked after between 2013 and 2016 per 10,000 child population and compares the Dudley rate of admission to care against the England and Statistical neighbours.

Based on the trend since 2013, it can be forecasted that in 2016 we will continue to have a higher admission rate in comparison to both the England and Statistical Neighbour rates per 10,000.

Table K



From January 2016 to March 2016 there have been a total of **62** new care proceedings initiated. The number of care cases issued this year is up by **63%** in 2014/15. This means that children have met the following legislation criteria for a court to make an order to safeguard the child:

- a) That the child concerned is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm; and
- b) That the harm, or likelihood of harm, is attributable to—
 - (i) The care given to the child, or likely to be given to him if the order were not made, not being what it would be reasonable to expect a parent to give to him; or
 - (ii) The child's being beyond parental control.

Table L

Number of Cases Issued under the Public Law Outline in the year 2015/16

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
26	20	21	32

The quarterly average for applications under Public Law in previous years are:

- 2008/09: **59** – quarterly average of **14.75**
- 2009/10: **78** – quarterly average of **19.5**
- 2010/11: **60** – quarterly average of **15**
- 2011/12: **65** – quarterly average of **16.25**
- 2012/13: **93** – quarterly average of **23.5**
- 2013/14: **73** – quarterly average of **18.25**
- 2014/15: **61** – quarterly average of **15.25**
- 2015/16: **99** – quarterly average of **25**

This trend data (*which does not include non-PLO cases such as discharges, Secure Accommodation, freestanding Placement Order applications*) shows a year on year increase in the number of care proceedings being issued to safeguard children. In terms of applications to discharge care orders (*some by replacement with Special Guardianship Order's*) there are a number of these issued and running in court. This will have an impact in reducing the LAC population once proceedings are concluded as children will be placed within family settings and supported through universal, targeted or specialist provision as a child in need depending in their assessed outcome.

It is also of note that there were **35** children adopted in 2015/16 which is a slight reduction from 2014/15 at **37** children. However, numbers will be variable as it will depend on the number of children within families for whom adoption is agreed as the best outcome.

Domestic Abuse

In 2015/16 there have been **3,903** domestic abuse notifications from the police to Children Services where children have been in the household where domestic abuse is a feature. **1,655** of these referrals were repeat incidents. In quarter 4 of the year, **1005** children who were screened by Domestic Abuse Referral Team DART of which **41%** were repeat referrals within the past 12 months. This involved children who lived within **636** households in Dudley.

DART screening takes place daily from March 2016 as DART is co located in the SPA/MASH. This has already improved response times to concerns of domestic abuse and going forward into 2016, DSCB are currently undertaking an audit of domestic abuse cases where children have become subject to a child protection plan.

Table M

Sandwell Women's Aid	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Existing Service Users	110	84	55	149	320
New Service Users	132	233	543	901	1809
Closed Cases	158	262	449	730	1599
Service Users Carried forward to next quarter	84	55	149	320	608

Table M above shows the numbers of service users who accessed specialist domestic abuse services from Sandwell Women's Aid. While there is only one example of services being provided in Dudley it shows the throughput through the service. This data does not correlate with notifications of domestic abuse as service users can self refer to voluntary agencies and may not have children within the household.

Key achievements for Domestic Abuse strategic group have been:

- Positive progress against MARAC Improvement Plan and MARAC Coordinator appointed.
- Barnardos now attend MARAC
- Worked with partners to secure Home Office funding to improve refuge and other accommodation
- Refresh of Domestic Abuse Forum
- Young People in Abusive Relationships Pathway now in place and a service is provided through Respect (part of Family Solutions)
- Training offer developed in 2015/16 for delivery in 2016/17
- Contributed to the consultation and development of the Regional Domestic Violence and Abuse Standards.
- As part of the MASH developments there will be a closer working relationship between the DART and the DA Strategic Group
- To include Young people in abusive relationships in DART/MASH screening so there is multi agency information sharing.
- Work through the Domestic Abuse Forum to build relationships and enhance partnership working

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

MARAC is a regular local meeting to discuss how to help victims at high risk of murder or serious harm. An independent domestic abuse specialist (IDVA), the police, children's social services, health and other relevant agencies all sit around the same table. They talk about the victim, the family and perpetrator, and share

information. The meeting is confidential and together the agencies present write an action plan for each victim.

In 2015/16, **442** children were discussed at MARAC in Dudley. This is against a West Midlands figure of **4,423**. Domestic Abuse services from Churches Housing Association of Dudley and District (CHAAD), Sandwell Women's aid and Barnardos have continued to support families and provide comprehensive intervention to protect children and to support victims of Domestic Abuse.

Case Study

The case came to the attention of specialist domestic abuse services as the victim self referred to Churches Housing Association of Dudley District (CHADD). As well as CHADD, support services including housing, children's services and mental health services were provided in a timely manner. The case was referred into MARAC due to the high risk identified in the case history. The service user was supported to obtain a legal order to prevent the perpetrator contacting them.

The children were safeguarded due to offender's mental health issues being highlighted and addressed. A Prohibited Steps and Child Arrangement Order were issued by the family proceedings court to structure protection around the children. A MARAC was held bringing this case into Multi Agency setting with all attending agencies made aware of issues and concerns.

The children's mother has a greater understanding of protective factors to be employed via support groups and these were acted on. The children are identified as having greater support via school and group work with partner agencies. The mother also has better knowledge of the issues pertaining to her and her children's safety and knows in the future where to access support required.

Children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation

The partnership operational response to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Dudley is established and co-ordinated through a multi agency CSE Team which went live in September 2015. The CSE strategy action plan and pathway was signed off by the Board in September 2015 and is delivered through Vulnerable Children Strategic Sub group. The key elements of the strategy and action plan are to deliver services and a response to CSE through Prevention, Protection and Pursue.

The refreshed regional framework was launched in July 2015 whereby Dudley hosted a conference attended by guest speakers from Police and Crime Commissioner's office, Chair of Regional Protecting Violent and Vulnerable People Strategic Group; Nick Page (Chief Executive Officer, Solihull Council) and Chatback Productions.

Chatback productions, a theatre company which is led by looked after children from Dudley launched their second CSE video production focussing on CSE and the hotel industry.

Dudley's CSE strategy was developed in line within the refreshed Regional Guidance which can be found in the [Regional CSE Framework](#). The definition below is drawn from statutory guidance.

“Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive ‘something’ (eg. Food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child’s immediate recognition. For example being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person’s limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.”

During 2015/16, much has been done to further the collective understanding of the profile of CSE in Dudley:

The CSE team enabled all partner agencies to refer directly into the team any concerns they had in relation to CSE. The team was situated within Youth Services to enable a multi agency approach using services from early intervention, teenage pregnancy, sexual health, police officer for missing children and dedicated CSE police officer and CSE coordinator funded through the Board, representatives for the Third sector agencies: Phase Trust, Switch services and Streets Team.

The CSE Team worked with West Midland Regional colleagues to implement the regional CSE Framework. All referrals for CSE have been screened in a timely manner and responded to accordingly. For those case that have been assessed as being of Medium or High Risk, a Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) meeting has taken place in order to clarify what the concerns are, how the child is safeguarded, how the child can be supported and to consider disrupt and pursue activity by the Police.

Monthly Young People’s Sexual Exploitation meetings have taken place however they have focussed on discussing individual cases and it is recognised that there is further work to do to ensure a focus on sharing intelligence and identifying local themes and trends. Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) meetings are now being held on individual children and these will need to be further embedded during 2016/17. The work of Borough Police and specialist CSE Police has strengthened with the Police referral pathway embedded. A CSE specific referral to the Police is completed within the Public Protection Unit for all cases where a young person is thought to be at risk of sexual exploitation and these cases should be flagged on the Police National Computer (PNC) to ensure concerns are shared in a timely manner

to protect the most vulnerable children should they move across the authority/force boundaries.

Dudley participated in the pilot delivered by Barnardos for trafficked children. During the pilot which ran from April 2014 to June 2015, Dudley led on internally trafficked children which meant those children trafficked for sexual exploitation received planned intervention from Barnardos and were referred into the National Referral Mechanism for trafficked children. This intervention has led to positive outcomes for 8 children identified during the pilot where work continued following the pilot's conclusion with planned intervention to safeguard children at an early stage, good intelligence sharing and tracking of adults involved.

In further independent review of CSE in Dudley was commissioned in early 2016 which focused on the implementation of the CSE pathway in Dudley. A number of strengths which provide a strong foundation to further develop the operational response to CSE were identified including:

- The development of a CSE team
- The inclusion of CSE in the recently updated thresholds document
- Child and parental engagement in some MASE meetings
- Moves to integrate MASE meetings and CSE planning into existing planning processes
- Plan to invite CSE coordinator to Local Policing Unit CSE meeting

The review identified the following areas for development:

- Provision of up to date and accessible guidance and procedures for front line staff that are consistent with the regional framework and statutory guidance;
- The scope and accuracy of data collection arrangements and the use of data to inform the strategic response to CSE;
- Increased engagement of staff from all agencies in the CSE agenda;
- Recognition of CSE amongst particular groups of children;
- Record keeping in respect of children known to the CSE team;
- Integrating the response to CSE within Children's Social Care;
- Increasing the workforce's capacity to exercise professional judgement in assessing risk in CSE cases and;
- Further development of the Young People's Sexual Exploitation Panel so it has a greater focus on disruption of offenders and hot spots

The findings of this review have led to the co location of CSE team into the MASH, review of the strategy, action plan and pathways. Further work on reviewing CSE cases is planned to ensure that children's needs have been appropriately assessed and plans developed to safeguard them.

Training and awareness

The Safeguarding Board has delivered multi agency CSE training throughout the year. The key messages delivered by this training have been, understanding the nature of CSE, the local response pathway, the local, regional and national picture and services available to support families, children and young people.

Dudley partners have recognised the need to engage Licensed Taxi Drivers in our strategy to eradicate CSE in the borough. Dudley Safeguarding Children Board working in partnership with the CSE Coordinator and Taxi Licensing have worked with the trade to introduce a series of CSE awareness sessions for drivers. Colleagues have worked with the Taxi Forum, so they understand that their role is one of assisting the Safeguarding Board to be the 'eyes and ears' of the community and help identify potential CSE locations and perpetrators. To date, 130 taxi operatives have attended the CSE Awareness sessions with a number of future dates scheduled. The Taxi Forum, along with Council colleagues, will devise a pledge that can be used by the local authority and drivers to demonstrate their commitment to eradicating CSE and safeguarding children in Dudley.

The National Working Group CSE Awareness Day was held on 18th March 2015. In Dudley, during the week from 14th to 18th March there was a number of Awareness Raising Events taking place in the five townships. The events were co-ordinated by Dudley CVS and partners. Each day a team, consisting of representatives from Dudley Council for Voluntary Sector, community champions, voluntary organisations, CSE Team, Police and other partner agencies engaged with members of the public to highlight what CSE is, how to identify and how to report any concerns.

Whilst individual schools and education settings delivered PHSE programmes that included 'Looking for Lottie', 'My Dangerous Loverboy' and 'Anybody's Child' there was not an overarching coordination of the PHSE programmes delivered. However, following the review of CSE this is now part of the strategy and action plan for 2016/17.

Data

In March 2016 the CSE data¹ indicated that Dudley had knowledge of **95** children who were known to be at risk of being sexually exploited. This related to **66** at category 1 (at risk), **13** at category 2 (significant risk) and **16** at category 3 (serious risk). From this **87** (91.5%) were female and **8** (8.5%) were male. The ages of the children involved ranged from 11-17. Further work is to be completed to analyse and review this data to ensure its accuracy.

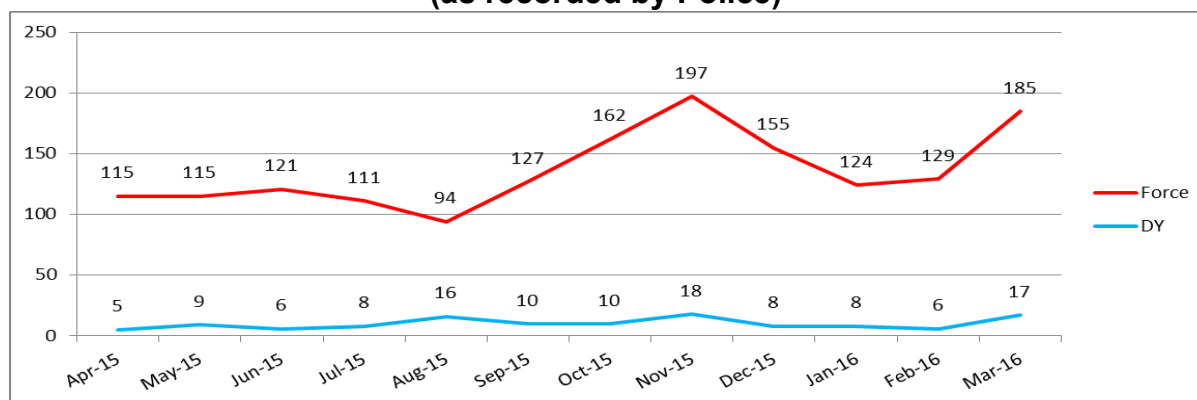
Quarterly data has shown an increase in the number of young people at risk of or being sexually exploited during each quarter period, with quarter 2 at **48** children and young people and quarter 3 at **62**. The increased numbers are an indication of how we are improving collectively as partners in identifying these vulnerable children and their need for safety. **Table N** below shows information collated by West Midlands Police. It is recognised that there is a disparity between figures reported by the

¹ Further work is required to ensure consistency in the data recorded and validation checks.

Police versus those reported by Children’s Services and that the Police trend data shows a reduction in the numbers in quarter 4 whereas the Children’s Services data shows an increase. This has been challenged and further information sought regarding the recording methodologies used and implications for safeguarding children.

Table N

**Volume of CSE Reports
(as recorded by Police)**



- The **Red** line shows the total number of Crime or Non-Crime records with a CSE “Special Interest Marker” Force wide – the **Blue** line shows the number for **Dudley**.
- There were **1635** CSE reports Force wide this year, which is **27%** higher than the 1291 in the previous year April 2014 to March 2015.
- The figures for **Dudley** were **121** reports this year compared to 102 the previous year April 2014 to March 2015 a **19%** increase.
- **Dudley** accounts for **7%** of all CSE reports across the Force area.
- The last quarter (January to March 2016) has seen reports for **Dudley**, **14%** lower than quarter 3 (October to December 2015) and **72%** higher than in the previous year April 2014 to March 2015.

Children missing from home, care and education

Children missing from home, care and education were a priority for DSCB in 2015/16. A new missing persons’ strategy, panel, procedure and pathway was developed in 2015 to ensure consistent application of statutory guidance for all partner agencies but primarily to ensure missing children are tracked and a clear strategy in place to locate these children and offer robust intervention when found.

In 2015/16, **271** children were reported missing with **77** young people going missing from care. This is higher than the number on 2014/15 of **212** yet lower than the **302** reported in 2013/14. The **271** individuals accounted for **700** episodes of children reported as missing. This is an increase from 2014/15 of **568** (22%).

The police system for recording missing persons is Compact Misper Live to which it has been identified that there were **854** episodes of missing which includes absence for children up to the age of 18 from the Dudley Borough in 2015/16. This number is

different to figure quoted above of **700** due to Compact recording children missing and absent from home and care.

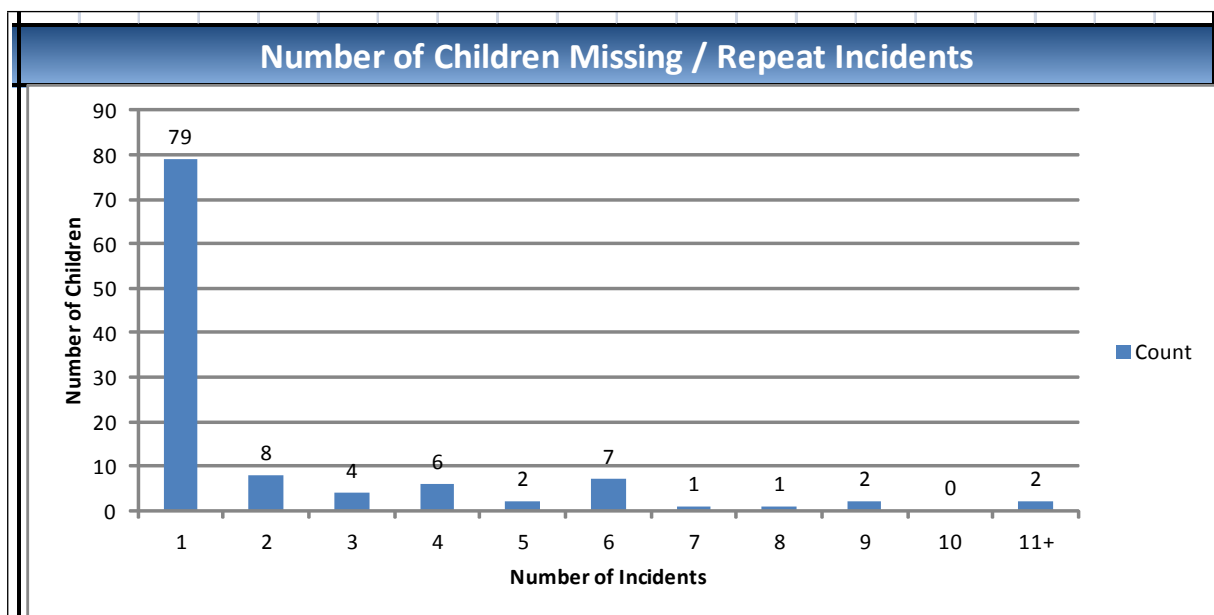
The breakdown by gender of the episodes relating to children missing from home, education and care shows the split between the genders is relatively close with girls being higher this year and overtaking the number of boys.

Across all quarters the average age for going missing is **15**, this also equates to the highest number of episodes both for girls and boys. The average age of onset of going missing is **13** years for boys and **14** years for girls.

The last quarter of 2015/16 saw a significant rise in the number of young people reported over the number of episodes. There were **64** individuals in quarter 4 2014/15 this rose to **112** individuals in quarter 4 2015/16.

Table O below shows the number of children missing against the number of repeat incidents of missing. From this it can be seen that there are **79** children who have been missing on one occasion and there are **2** children who have had more than **11** episodes of missing throughout the year. These children were rigorously tracked and subsequently have had changes in placements which have addressed their episodes of missing.

Table O



It is to be noted that in Dudley children who are deemed absent receive the same intervention as those deemed as missing and all absent children receive a return home interview.

Table P

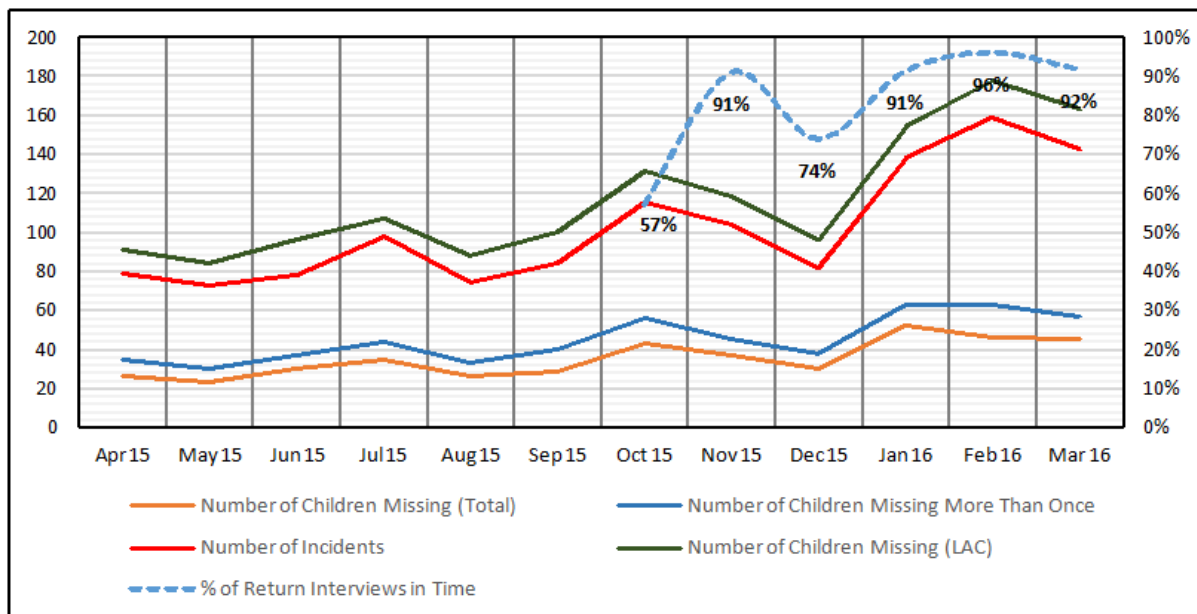


Table P above shows the trend data for children missing. This data has been broken down to show the number of children missing from care and the number of children missing more than once. As can be seen from the above table data for the percentage of return home interviews completed within 72 hours was collected from part way through quarter 3. While there was a dip at the end of quarter 3, performance increased from 57% in October 2015 to 92% by the end of quarter 4.

Analysis of return home interviews

Analysis of return home interviews has begun to take a greater focus since quarter 3 of 2015/16. At the end of 2016, 99% of missing and found cases were allocated in a timely manner, 53 % of cases received a return home interview and 93% of these within the 72 hour target. 76 episodes (37%) could not be completed. The two main reasons were the child was missing again before contact could be made 30 (39.5%) or the child refused to see the worker or engage in any sort of meeting. These two features are also often linked with child going missing regularly often from care.

41 children who were offered return home interviews took up the offer of further follow up meetings. In a number of instances (85%) the parent was also engaged in the process to reduce further missing episodes.

Push and Pull Factors

Aside from the well known factors around CSE, there is currently very little known in terms of either push or pull factors. Work is continuing on 2016/17 to better understand the local picture and factors why children go missing.

However, from what is known both LAC children and those missing from home have cited family fall outs, arguments around boundaries and rules as key factors in going missing. Some say they want to be with friends, this usually means they have gone somewhere and stayed with friends playing console games coming home late, well after the time they should have returned.

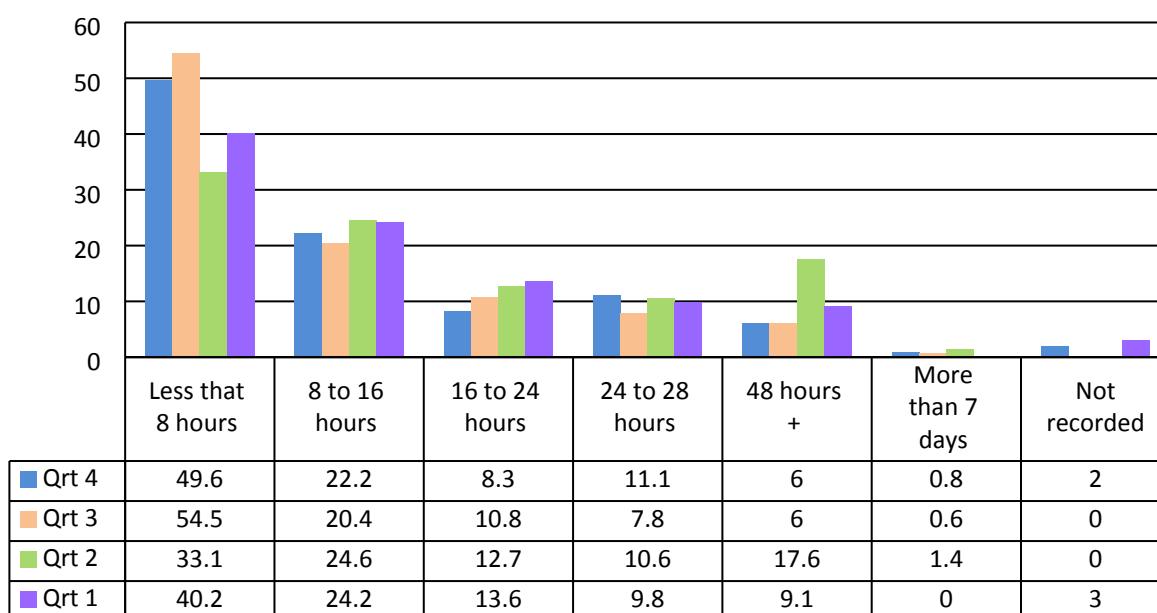
There appears to be no particular venue or locations highlighted as a pull factor although parks are sometimes referred to, however this is more often in the case of late returns.

Duration of missing episode

The data within **Table Q** below does not distinguish between absent and missing episodes. However, quarter on quarter we have a larger proportion of young people who go missing for less than 8 hours. From the chart below it can be seen that the time missing is evenly spread across the four quarters. However, there was a peak in Quarter 2 in those missing for 48 hours or more.

Table Q

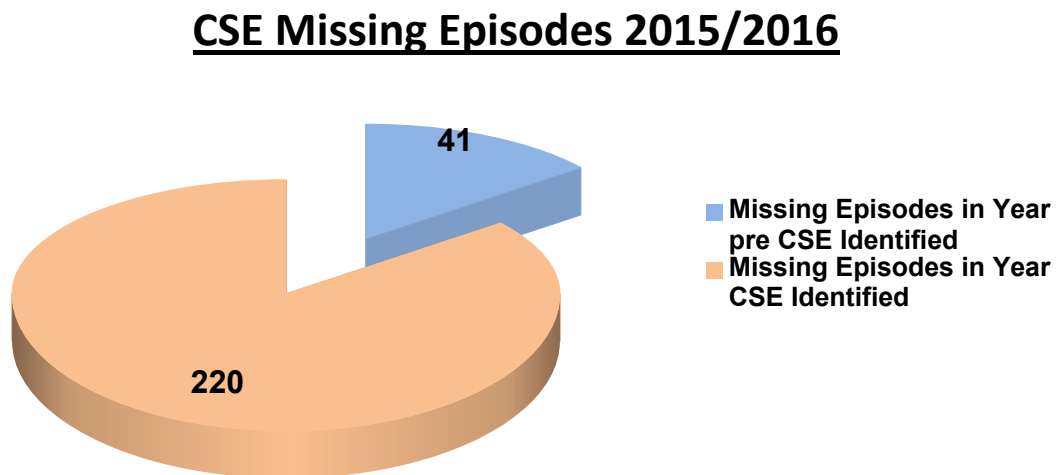
% Duration of Missing Episodes 2015/2016



CSE and Missing

Of the **700** episodes of “missing”, **220** (32%) related to known young people at risk of CSE a further **41** episodes predates concerns for CSE being formally identified. Of the **220** episodes **158** (72%) were female and **62** (28%) were male. This tells us missing is a significant indicator of CSE however the data also evidences that there are other risks to children who go missing.

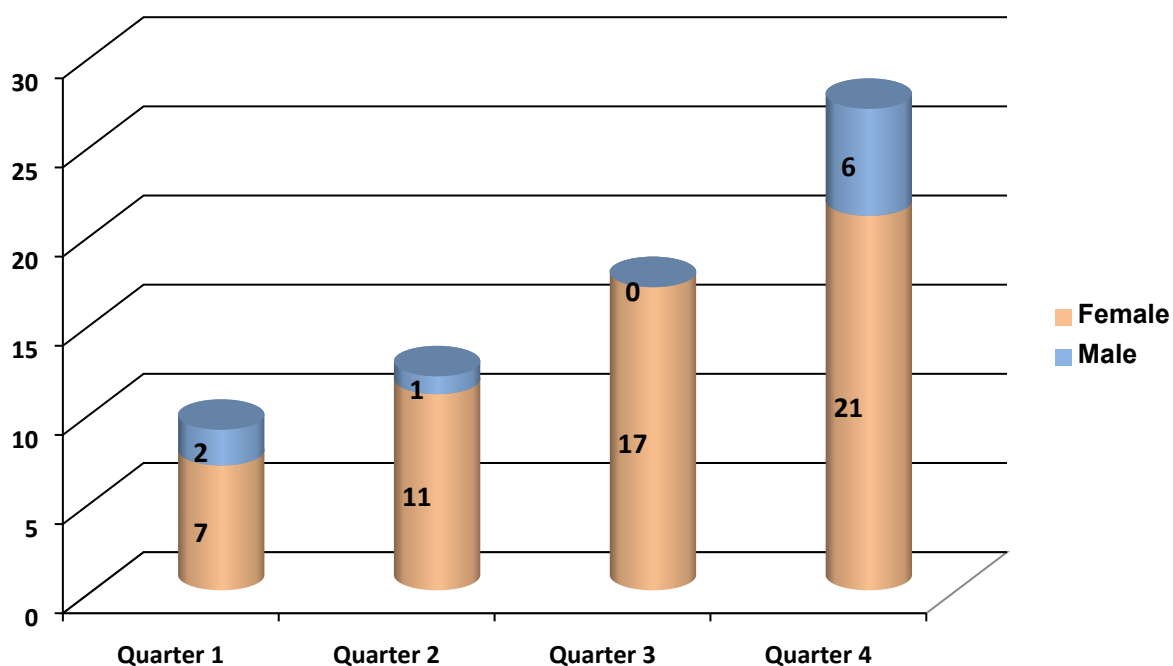
Chart A



There has been a steady rise in the number of individuals identified as both missing and at risk of CSE. In quarter 1 there were **9** individuals identified (7 female, 2 male) this has risen to **27** individuals in (21 female, 6 male) in quarter 4. It is believed that this steep rise was a direct result of the introduction of the CSE team and its location alongside the Runaways team as it enabled this information to be shared in a timely manner.

Chart B

CSE Individuals Missing 2015/2016



31% of missing episodes for female individuals have been CSE related and 5% have been boys. It should be noted that in some cases the missing episode predates concerns for CSE being formally identified and others are post assessment and identification. The low level of males identified maybe as a result of lack of identification rather than the level of potential risk. If we consider the number of episodes as opposed to individuals, evidence indicates that 55% of female missing episodes are CSE related and 22% are male.

Table R

CSE/Missing Individual Identified Risk Levels - Gender – 31 March 2016

	Total	Male	Female
Low	27	5	22
Medium	7	1	6
High	14	1	13

Of the **48** children that make up the CSE Missing cohort **7** are male and **41** are female with **27** being identified as low risk, **7** medium risk and **14** high risk. The low number of male victims indicates there is a need to raise awareness of, and capacity to recognise, male victims.

Missing and Looked After Children (LAC)

In 2015/16 there were **77** young people (27%) missing from care which amounted to **309** of all missing episodes (44%). There were **14** young people responsible for **18** episodes of missing who were placed in Dudley from other areas.

These figures demonstrate that a disproportionate amount of missing episodes is attributable to children with a LAC status from Dudley.

In particular in the last quarter of 2015/16, **32** (44%) young people were responsible for **95** episodes (30%). Action has now been taken to address this situation and the number of missing episodes attributable to these individuals has dropped significantly.

New policies and procedures for missing children and young people were introduced in 2015. This gave clear guidance to all partners including the Police, Social Care and the Runaways Team, of the steps to take in relation to managing missing episodes. Working arrangements are much improved however further analysis needs to be undertaken to identify effectiveness in reducing missing episodes.

LAC placed out of the Borough

When the Runaways Team is notified that an accommodated child from Dudley who is placed out of borough is missing they will carry out a return interview within a 30 mile radius of Dudley. Where the distance is beyond 30 miles the team will notify the missing service in the host area and request that they complete the visit within 72 hours and report back to them. The Runaways Team will also undertake return home interviews for young people placed in borough who are accommodated by another local authority and provide a report to the host authority.

LAC, Missing and Child Sexual Exploitation

Charts C and **D** below, show that **20** individuals with LAC status who were known to CSE team went missing. Additional data held informs us that these children went missing on **131** occasions. This is at a higher proportion when compared to those children who were not accommodated by the local authority as **28** such individuals went missing on **89** occasions. This is in line with research nationally as these three key vulnerabilities have a close correlation.

These 20 individuals represent 7% of the total missing cohort who are responsible for almost 20% of the total missing episodes.

Chart C

CSE Identified - LAC & Non LAC Individuals

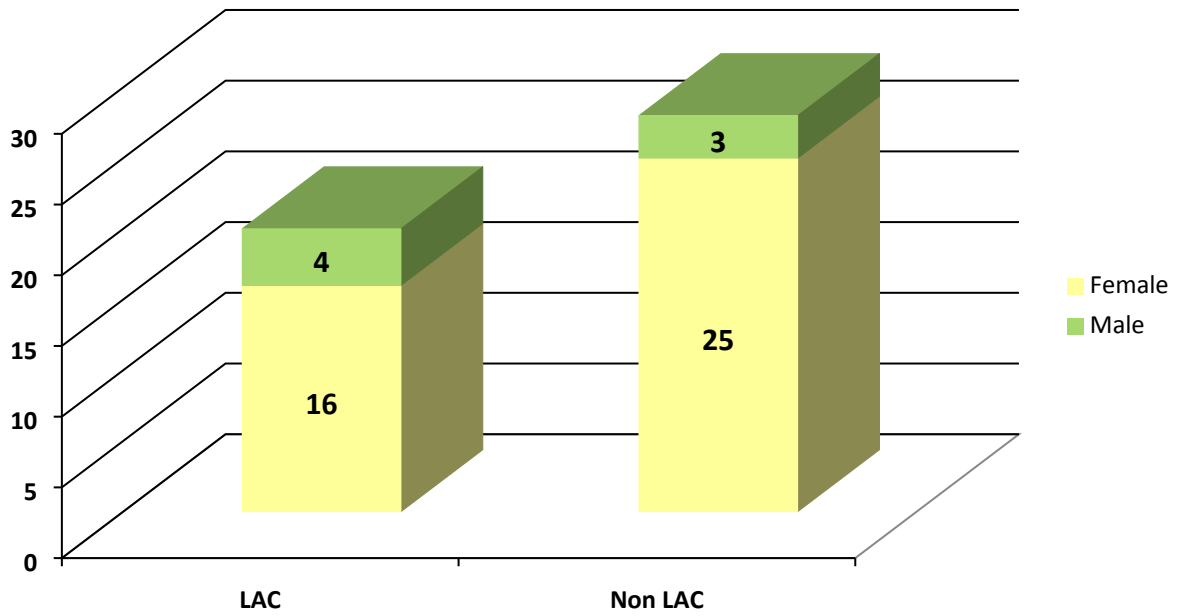
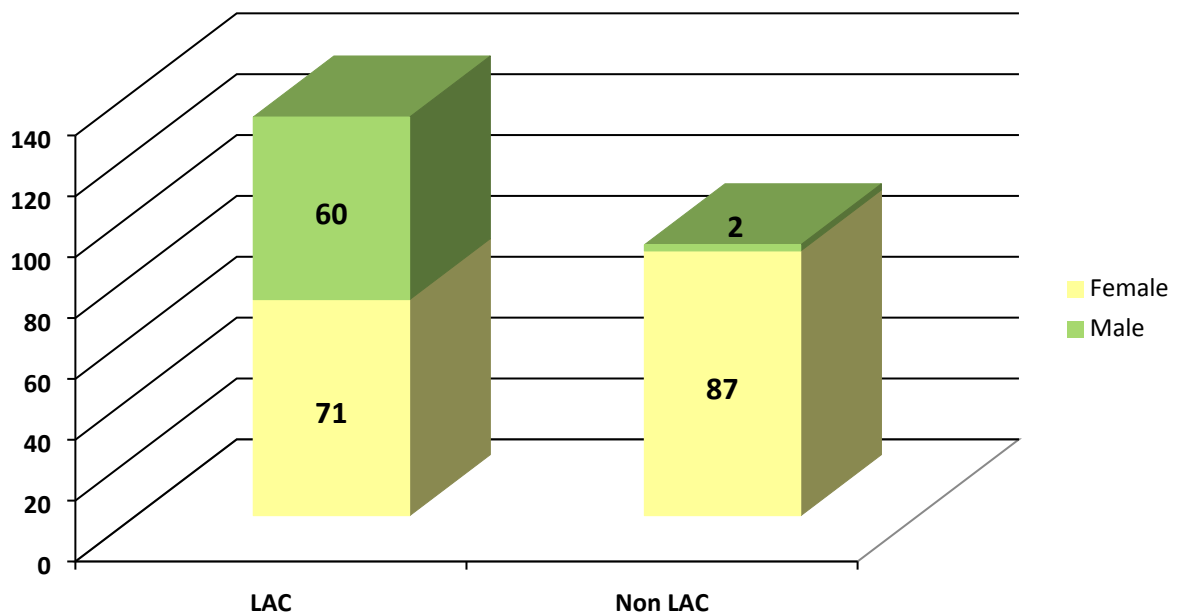


Chart D

CSE Identified - LAC & Non LAC Episodes



Elective Home Education (EHE)

The responsibility for a child's education rests with their parents. The legal position is that in England, education is compulsory, but schooling is not. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 provides that:

'The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable (a) to their age, ability and aptitude and (b) to any special educational needs they may have, either by attendance at school or otherwise.'

The local authority has a statutory duty under Section 436A of The Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to identify children who are not receiving a suitable education. It has no statutory duties in relation to monitoring the quality of home education on a routine basis. However, under Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996, local authorities shall intervene if it appears that parents are not providing a suitable education. This is the role of the Local Authority's Elective Home Education Consultant who will offer every parent the opportunity to provide information about their EHE either via telephone conversation, a meeting at home/alternative venue or in writing. Parents are not obliged to respond but many parents choose to do so. The education is assumed suitable unless concerns have been identified by/reported to the EHE Consultant who will then investigate by making informal enquiries. If the education is unsuitable, the parent(s)' cooperation will be sought to return their child to school or other appropriate educational provision. If they refuse, the case will be escalated and the School Attendance Order process will commence.

Local authorities should review all of their policies and procedures and practices in relation to EHE on a regular basis to see if improvements can be made to further develop relationships and meet the needs of children and parents.

The local authority trend has shown an increase in numbers from 2008 through to the end of 2015 (see [Table S](#) below) which reflects the national trend. However, figures in March 2016 have identified **186** children in Dudley who are known to be home educated. This decline can be attributed to a review of the education plans for children who are electively home educated and their return to education, training or employment as appropriate and therefore no longer deemed to be elective home educated.

Table S

Academic Year - 1st Sep to 31st Aug	Total Number of Elected Home Education children
2008/2009	156
2009/2010	175
2010/2011	187
2011/2012	197
2012/2013	196
2013/2014	236
2014/2015	260
2015/2016	186

The recent Ofsted inspection stated (para 54) that:

“The local authority has processes in place for identifying and tracking children and young people missing education and EHE and maintains up-to-date records. Effective action is in place to locate children and young people who have not taken up their school places or who are no longer accessing education.”

The DSCB will receive a report regarding safeguarding and children who are electively home educated in 2016/17.

Private Fostering

A child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) who is cared for and provided with accommodation by someone other than a parent, person with parental responsibility or a close relative for 28 days or more is privately fostered.

In 2015/16 there have been **10** private fostering assessments completed with the **24** children known to be supervised under private fostering regulations. Children who are privately fostered receive an initial visit within the first seven days of the notification being received into children social care. A monitoring visit then takes place every six weeks for the first year and in subsequent years this moves to a twelve weekly interval.

The Private Fostering Annual Report 2015/16 is scheduled to be presented to the board in October 2016. This report is to include an analyse of the procedures and arrangements for managing Privately fostered children as well as the performance data regarding the numbers, age, gender and ethnicity of children subject to private fostering arrangements. It will also include an analysis of progress against areas identified for improvement in the previous report from 2014/15.

Local Authority Designated Officer

All LSCBs have responsibility for ensuring that there are effective procedures in place for investigating allegations against people who work with children. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) should be informed of all such allegations and provide advice and guidance to ensure individual cases are resolved as quickly as possible.

The LADO is the Head of the Safeguarding and Reviewing Services, and the day to day responsibilities are delegated to a senior officer. These arrangements are compliant with the revised LADO guidance issued in Working Together 2015 and further supported by the publication of a local revised LADO operational guidance. A full analysis of how allegations against staff have been managed in the Borough of Dudley during 2015/16 can be read in the LADO Annual Report 2015/16 which will in due course be considered by DSCB.

There has been a continued increase in contacts to the LADO in Dudley although proportionately fewer of these resulted in Position of Trust (POT) meetings. The use of the LADO for advice and guidance is now effective, and this is reflective of what is happening with our regional neighbours. The referral pathway has been revised in 2015 and is clearly established with the LADO having oversight of all referrals including those from Education thus offering a more consistent threshold.

The LADO has provided updated training and has so far delivered briefings to professionals in a number of sectors as well as continuing individual site visits across sectors to forge better working relationships and help develop good safeguarding practice. It is also intended that some of the briefings will be delivered from community based venues.

There continues to be positive links with the local West Midlands LADO network and clear partner arrangements for managing allegations across local borders. There are positive multi agency working relationships in respect of Managing Allegations process across Dudley and these will continue to be improved through time.

Number of Allegations

Table T below details the number of allegations referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer under the management of allegations procedures. The data shows that a significantly higher number of referrals (**111**) were made during the last two quarters of 2015/16 than in the whole of the previous year 2014/15 (**60**).

Table T

Date	2014/15	2015/16	2015/16
	Whole Year	Quarter 1-2	Quarter 3-4
Number of allegations referred	60	47	111

Outcomes of Allegations

Table U below details the outcomes of allegations investigated under the management of allegations procedures. The data shows that a higher percentage of referrals were considered by way of Positions of Trust Meetings in the first half of the reporting period, **42%** of which were unsubstantiated, whilst **29.8%** did not meet the threshold and should not have warranted a Positions of Trust meetings.

The data supports the proposition that the way in which the allegations had been managed did not offer consistent thresholds and required improvement.

Table U

Analysis of allegations that resulted in no further action being taken following the initial strategy meeting ²	2015/16 Q1-2 (Total 47)	2015/16 Q3-4 (Total 23)
Number	11	12
Percentage	23.4%	52%
Final Outcomes once investigation concluded		
Unsubstantiated	20 (42.6%)	5 (21.7%)
Substantiated	6 (12.8%)	10 (43.5%)
Unfounded	0	3 (13%)
Malicious	0	0
Ongoing police investigation	0	1 (4.3%)
No outcome recorded	7 (14.9%)	0
Referral did not meet the threshold for the Allegations processes	14 (29.8%)	0

² During Quarter 1-2 of 2015/16 only cases that were taken to Position of Trust meetings were recorded. However, an audit of these 47 cases was undertaken in February 2016 to establish the outcomes.

Reviewing the outcomes it is noted that from the figures below the process of concluding referrals has shown some improvements in the latter part of the year.

Table V

Timescales for the resolutions of referrals to the LADO	2015/16 Q1-2	2015/16 Q3-4
Within 1 Month	34%	90.9%
Within 3 Months	44.7%	3.6%
Within 12 months	14.9%	1.8%
More than 12 months	4.3%	0%

Table V above demonstrates that we are now closer to meeting the targets for concluding investigations with a positive increase from **34%** within the first month in quarter 1-2 to a **90.9%** outcome in the final six months of the reporting period.

It should be noted that some cases can take up to 12 months or more to resolve, if there are ongoing criminal proceedings. In most cases of this type, the LADO will work in partnership with the police and the employer to try and resolve the matter whilst ensuring that any criminal investigations are not compromised.

Table W

Action taken following referrals to LADO	2015/16 Q.3-4	
Special Leave	3	2.7%
Suspension	15	13.5%
Dismissal	5	4.5%
Police Investigation	12	10.8%
Joint S47 Investigation	12	10.8%
Single Agency S47 Investigation	19	17.2%
Disciplinary Procedures	24	21.6%
Pending Criminal Prosecution	3	2.7%
Convictions	0	0.0%
Referral to the Disclosure and Barring Services	2	1.8%
Referral to regulatory body	16	14.4%

The updated process and the revised methods of recording information (which previously did not include consultations and referrals) have helped to improve the number of referred allegations, consultations and referrals so as to better track and monitor outcomes. This is particularly evidenced in quarter 3-4 where there is a **136%** rise in numbers of allegations, consultations and referrals against those recorded in quarter 1- 2.

Working together to keep children safe online

2015/16 has seen a year of consolidation for the e-safety sub group with its main achievements in a safeguarding session recording form created and uploaded to Safe and Sound website along with an Internet safety resource pack. Both these have been promoted in all primary and secondary schools so that young people and their parents/carers can use these to develop knowledge and understanding of key issues related to online safety including sexting, along with where to raise concerns as they arise.

Training and raising awareness sessions were undertaken throughout 2015/2016. Multi agency 'e-safety Level 2' training 'safeguarding children in a digital world' was delivered three times in order to cover additional topics including Cyber Self Harm, CSE, Prevent and Domestic Abuse. Bespoke training continues to be delivered on request to pupils, Staff, Governors and parents. Schools continue to sign up to the 360 E-safe award via Dudley Grid For Learning. Work has taken place to increase parents' attendance at sessions (e.g. identifying 'what works'.)The Annual Dudley debate took place Friday 12th Feb at Dudley Council House with approximately 100 young people in attendance.

Priorities going forward

- Overhaul of membership to reduce numbers and ensure correct bodies around the table, task and finish groups will include other key stakeholders rather than an expectation to attend each subgroup meeting
- To prioritise sexting; work with children and young people, parents, carers and professionals to raise awareness on this issue
- To continue children's involvement at the sub group as a standing agenda item

PREVENT

In order to safeguard our communities from engagement in or support for terrorism the council partners are working to comply with their obligation under the Counter Terrorism & Security Act 2015 to have "*due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism*". In order to meet the requirements of the duty partners are working together so that people at risk of radicalisation are appropriately safeguarded. As well as Local Authorities, the specified authorities to whom the prevent duty applies includes schools, higher and further education, other agencies

and organisations supporting children, and out-of-school settings supporting children.

PREVENT delivery priorities in 2015/16 have concentrated on the following:

- Raise awareness of PREVENT to ensure that vulnerable individuals are appropriately safeguarded
- Encourage and equip partners to appropriately refer and support individuals of concern into Channel panel. Channel seeks to deliver prompt and tailored work in its conduct of vulnerability assessments, information gathering and when required, delivering and organising support packages. Details of the type of support that could be provided can be found on page 17 of the Channel Duty guidance 2015³
- Support schools and other educational settings in fulfilling their statutory duties in respect of PREVENT
- Engage with businesses and community organisations to ensure that their resources are not used to promote extremism
- Engage with young people aged 16-25 who are vulnerable to extremism in order to provide safeguarding support

Principle activities were:

- Providing training and awareness of radicalisation processes to staff in schools and other settings where there are potentially vulnerable members of the public.
- Establish and promote robust referral processes and structures to ensure that those at risk are safeguarded.
- Provide advice and support to colleagues with concerns about particular individuals or situations.
- During 2015/16 the Home Office provided funding for the delivery of “supporting supplementary institutions “ and “British or Muslim?” projects in the borough.

Supporting supplementary institutions

HA9 Consultancy was commissioned to identify, map and engage supplementary institutions within the borough. Over 100 schools, 93 community centres and 11 places of worship were contacted, work was then done with 8 supplementary institutions including delivery of PREVENT training sessions and provision of bespoke governance and safeguarding advice. Discussions are underway with the Home Office to continue this project during 2016/17 to broaden the reach and depth of the work.

British or Muslim?

London Tigers delivered workshops debunking the argument of radicalisers that adherence to Islam and participation in a western democracy is incompatible. This was undertaken with 62 “at risk” Yemeni young men and young women.

[2.Channel Duty Guidance April 2015](#)

Effectiveness is monitored by Home Office administered 'before and after' surveys, and we await the Home Office report on attitudinal change.

What was the impact of this in safeguarding children?

- “Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent” training has been delivered to over 1,400 staff who work with communities and more than 2,200 staff in the borough’s schools.
- The supporting supplementary institutions project supported a wide range of community settings and organisations to ensure that young people receiving religious instruction are appropriately safeguarded
- Over 70% of the referrals received in Dudley in 2015/16 were of people aged 18 or under, none of these ended up as a subject of Channel panel, although a number of these are being appropriately safeguarded for other vulnerabilities or offered early intervention support services.

Safeguarding Referrals

Where there are concerns about the possibility of someone being radicalised staff are instructed to make a safeguarding referral at the earliest opportunity. Between July 2015 and March 2016 a total of **27** referrals were made through the PREVENT coordinator. In summary, the data suggests that:

- The wide range of referral sources evidences the reach and effectiveness of our training and awareness raising programme
- The age profile data reflects the national trend towards a younger age profile for vulnerable individuals
- World events appear to have a bearing on referral levels (the Paris attacks took place in November, apparently leading to a spike in referrals)

Channel Panel is an interagency safeguarding partnership that meets monthly to consider PREVENT referrals and offer safeguarding interventions to prevent people being radicalised. The purpose of the panel is an identification and intervention safeguarding multi agency process, providing support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism. The Panel’s purpose is to provide decision-making and support to all staff involved in delivering the work of the Panel, including referrals and interventions.

Strategic Priority 2

Children and young people have access to the right service in the right place at the right time

Early Help Services across Dudley

Early help services across Dudley are delivered by Children's Services and a range of partners, including schools, children centres and health colleagues as well as other local service providers, including the community and voluntary sector. The range of services available to children, young people and their families will continue to adapt and evolve based on the needs of the local population. The early help arrangements in Dudley are continuing to be put in place and are beginning to be embedded with Agencies.

The [Dudley Early Help Strategy](#) was approved in late 2015/16 by the Children and Young People Alliance Board with a focus on ensuring the right help is provided at the right time and in the right place.

The Early Help Partnership has recognised the need to change the way work is undertaken with families and has agreed to develop practice by working together with families to develop their capacity for change and taking a whole family strength based approach.

An [Early Help Assessment](#) was agreed in February 2016 which supports multi-agency practitioners in assessing the needs of children and setting out relevant service provision.

The [Dudley Thresholds Framework](#) document agreed in January 2016 offers guidance on accessing the right help and support services for children, young people and their families at the right time. It sets out the different thresholds of need and intervention from early help to statutory intervention. The publication of this document is a statutory requirement for LSCBs as set out in Working Together 2015. DSCB will continue throughout 2016/17 to deliver multi agency workshops to raise awareness and develop understanding of threshold application based on the child's assessed needs. Further work is required so that the DSCB can evaluate the partnership contribution to the Early Help strategy as well as the impact of this work.

Single Point of Access and Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Dudley Children Services launched a single point of access on 7 December 2015 for all contacts to be received at a central point. The team consists of two Team Managers and a team of social workers who respond to all contacts made. Early Help Services are co-located in the same building and receive cases where signposting is relevant. DSCB will continue to oversee the implementation of the

MASH ensuring that correct governance and accountability arrangements are in place.

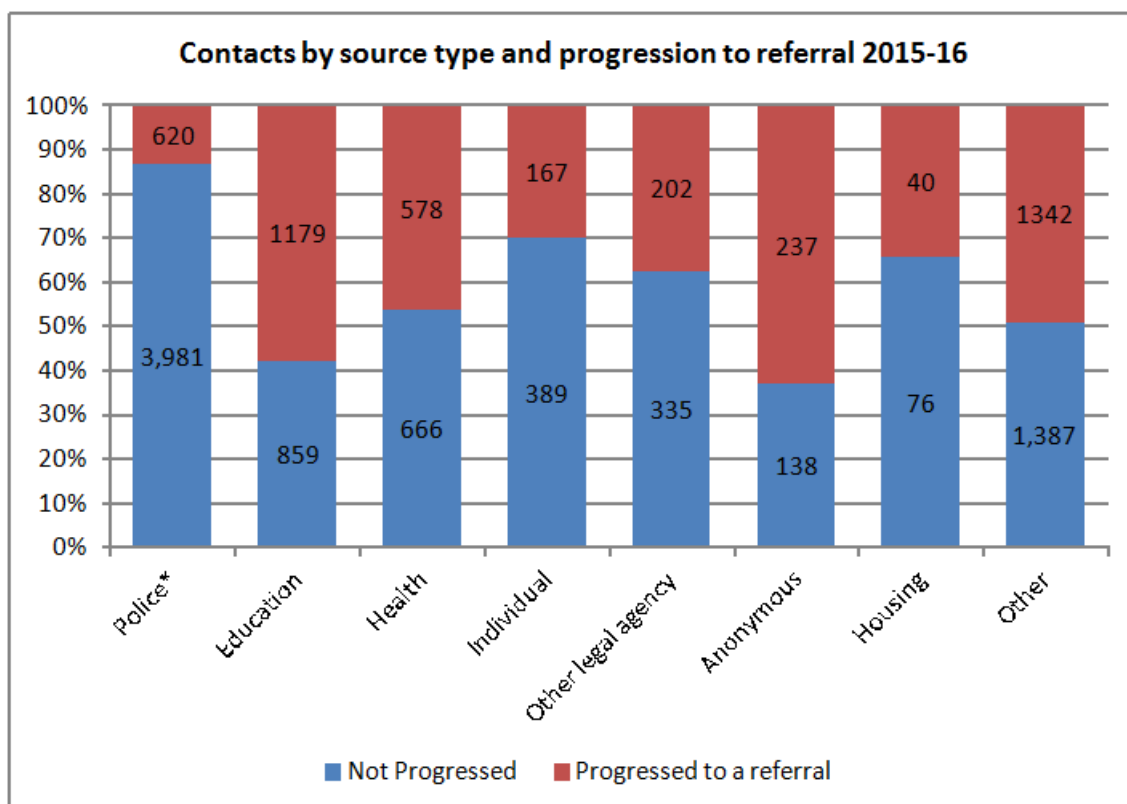
The MASH Strategic Board was held to account through the Board’s decision to have this sitting as a sub group within its structure that reported directly to the board. This objective was to achieve a MASH that brings key professionals together in one location to facilitate early, better quality information sharing, analysis and decision making. This will enable the ‘process’ of safeguarding vulnerable children and young people to operate more effectively.

Strategic Priority 3

Improve the effectiveness of partnership working and accountability to improve safeguarding outcomes for children young people and their families

Table X below shows the scope and breadth of partnership working and the conversation of contacts to referrals. This demonstrates that contacts from schools have a higher conversation from contact to referral in comparison to some agencies. This would suggest that schools, education, health and social care are developing their understanding of the thresholds for referral. However, awareness raising and testing of the threshold will continue into 2016/17.

Table X



Self Assessment

In September 2015 DSCB undertook a self assessment and improvement exercise. The highlights are set out below:

Areas for development

- DSCB does not have a robust process for reviewing and learning from serious case reviews which leads to improvement
- DSCB does not actively consult with children, young people and parents and carers in the development and review of its work in improving safeguarding arrangements for children
- DSCB cannot demonstrate improvements to the outcomes for children receiving child protection services
- DSCB cannot show how its own work and work with partnerships is improving safety for children
- DSCB Members agreed that a refreshed constitution document for Board is required to ensure clarity and consistency between board and the subgroups
- DSCB members accepted that they were not clear about the roles responsibilities and reporting arrangements of the Chair.

Supporting evidence from the self assessment indicated that

- DSCB has the ability and commitment to improve
- DSCB has a strong commitment to safeguarding
- DSCB recognised the need to restructure the business unit, streamline Board members and undertake planned audits

As a result of this review the DSCB agreed some improvement actions to deliver the areas of development outlined above. These included reviewing the board structure to include an Executive group, developing a partnership protocol, reviewing business support and the training provision. The initial review of the business unit and training commenced in April 2015 and the findings of this fed into further assessment and improvement activities undertaken in November 2015.

Local Government Association Peer Review

To continue on its improvement journey DSCB requested Local Government Association (LGA) to carry out a LSCB Diagnostic Review in November 2015.

The LGA Diagnostic was undertaken at the request of the DSCB Independent Chair, Roger Clayton and Children's Services. The diagnostic was not an inspection; rather it was a supportive but challenging 'critical friend' approach to assist the DSCB in celebrating its strengths and identifying its own areas for improvement.

The Diagnostic took place between the 17th and 19th of November 2015 and focused on four key themes:

- Board Effectiveness
- Quality Assurance & Performance Management

- Working Together Compliance
- Key Safeguarding Risk Areas

An Information Health Check was also completed as part of the diagnostic phase.

The LGA peer review team report commented that the board had embarked upon a considerable agenda in its efforts to be compliant and improve quality and that these efforts were hampered by a lack of business infrastructure and the misunderstanding by board members of their role, responsibilities and accountabilities. It was also noted that there were many talents within the Board that could be harnessed and matched to the commitment of its members.

It was noted that DSCB were compliant with Working Together 2015 in the following areas:

- The annual private fostering report and Local Authority Designated Officer's report have both been presented to the Board.
- There is an extensive CSE Strategy and action plan and the setting up a multi-agency CSE Team is near completion with only the CSE Manager post to be filled.
- A robust Serious Case Review decision making process is in place.
- The Child Death Review process is working well.

However, the Annual Report 2014/15 was not fully compliant as there was a lack of financial data in addition to a lack of evaluation of the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding children practice.

The historical lack of challenge at the Board was noted and the need to question whether partners agencies were doing what they said they would. This was noted to be improving and it was identified that this needed to continue. Many of the actions in the minutes of the sub groups showed consistent slippage without a final resolution. It was noted that the number and membership of subgroups, working groups and task and finish group was a huge resource commitment and these needed to be rationalised.

Many of the findings were able to be directly attributable to the DSCB structure, culture, capacity and capability of the board business unit. These include:

- Delivery of multi-agency training
- Effective quality assurance programmes
- Timeliness of board papers being distributed
- Quality of communication to partners, practitioners and the public
- Coordination of board business, the progression of day to day business and addressing what the report describes as a revolving door scenario
- Quality of minutes and other documentation

DSCB rapidly developed and began working to a comprehensive Improvement Plan. Whilst work progressed in some areas, there was unfortunately drift and delay in

implementing this plan and progress with key developments e.g. performance data, dissemination of learning and renewed training offer was slow.

Ofsted

In April 2016, Ofsted published their review of the effectiveness of LSCB which concluded similar findings to that of LGA peer review and cited the following:

“DSCB does not have arrangements in place to meet its statutory responsibilities. Performance management and Quality Assurance processes are not effective in identifying areas of the work that require significant improvement and the Board is not able to assure itself that partner agencies are fulfilling their statutory obligations”.

The Ofsted report recognised that an Improvement Plan was in place, however found that it was too soon to evidence the impact of this plan.

DSCB and DSAB Joint Board

DSCB and DSAB held a Joint Board in March 2016 in order to share cross cutting agendas, to develop awareness of critical issues and ensure developments were jointly owned.

The presentations for the session included key priorities for each Board, their respective Business plans and how objectives were being progressed. The themes discussed included performance data and how is it best measured, management of allegations from individuals working in positions of trust and modern slavery. Information was also shared regarding Domestic Abuse, MARAC, CSE and PREVENT.

The session was welcomed and significant debates took place between presentations to review how each significant aspect requires improved coordination from all Boards within Dudley. Coordination of activity is being progressed as part of the Improvement Plan for the Board which includes strengthening the arrangements between all Boards and the chairs of these Boards holding regular quarterly meetings to review priorities across Dudley for safeguarding children and adults.

Children and Young People’s Alliance

The newly established Early Help strategy is led by the Children and Young People’s Alliance and this is supported by Dudley Safeguarding Children Board through renewal of Thresholds of intervention. This has been a primary focus of the Alliance in 2015/16. Moving forward into 2016/17 DSCB will hold CYPA to account for the delivery of the Early Help strategy.

The Children and Young People’s Alliance have a vision on delivering ‘the Dudley Deal’ which includes changes in Council structures, improvement in early help provision and a key focus on delivering intervention through a multi agency approach

via MASH. The process of change was recognised as needing to go forward at a pace in order to address the need to keep children safe.

Subgroup Activity

Quality Assurance Sub Group

The following audits have been undertaken in 2015/16:

Section 11

The Section 11 Audit is the DSCB primary audit to examine the safeguarding arrangements within agencies and provides the Board with reassurance that agencies are doing what they can to ensure the safety and welfare of children and young people.

Section 11 (S11) of the Children Act 2004 places a statutory duty on key agencies and bodies to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. On a bi annual basis, the DSCB undertakes an audit of statutory, some commissioned and some voluntary sector organisations to establish reassurance that they are compliant with these expected safeguarding standards.

The section 11 audit process commenced early in 2015 and a total of **18** Section 11 Audits were completed from **20** statutory, voluntary and commissioned agencies that were expected to respond. It should also be acknowledged that some agencies were completing a Section 11 audit for the first time and that peer support can be offered to agencies who have found difficulties.

The compliance figures shown in **Table Y** below are being used to benchmark the current systems in place across Dudley agencies. This will enable the DSCB to identify standards which require attention and to support agencies to progress their safeguarding practices and services. Agencies were contacted when their score for a particular standard fell at or below 50% and an action plan was requested. The DSCB will continue to follow this up and request updates from the appropriate agencies in 2016/17 until compliance is achieved.

The information reported by partners identified that a number of action plans had not been developed to improve safeguarding standards within partner agencies. Action to address this has commenced although there is a recognition that this has not progressed in a timely manner to enable the Board to sufficiently understand and challenge the gaps.

All individual agencies have been tasked with developing an action plan to respond to any self-assessed areas requiring further attention. These will be subject to ongoing monitoring and further compliance work will be undertaken in 2016/17 to ensure that all partner agencies are monitoring the compliance in respect of safeguarding arrangements or confirm ongoing work against their section 11 action plan in their organisations. The outcomes from this work will be reported in 2016 to the DSCB. This work is included within the Improvement plan for the Board.

Table Y

Summary of section 11 standards - 75% compliance is regarded as being acceptable	
1. Senior management commitment to the importance of safeguarding children.	85% compliance (overall)
2. A clear statement of the agency's responsibilities towards children is available to staff.	80% compliance (overall)
3. A clear line of accountability within the organisation for work on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.	82% compliance (overall)
4. Service development takes account of the need to safeguard and promote welfare.	72% compliance (overall)
5. Service development is informed by the views of children and families.	69% compliance (overall)
6. Individual case decisions are informed by the views of children and families.	50% compliant (overall)
7. Effective interagency working enabling information sharing to service users.	69% compliance (overall)
8. Staff training on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children for all staff working with or in contact with children and families.	78% compliance (overall)
9 Safer recruitment.	77% compliance (overall)
10. Effective inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.	69% compliance (overall)
11. Effective inter-agency working and information sharing in order to ensure safeguarding and promoting children's welfare.	68% compliance (overall)

The full analysis of responses can be found at [Appendix H](#).

[Section 175 and section 157 audit⁴](#)

One of the functions of the LSCB is to monitor the effectiveness of arrangements in a locality to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. This includes monitoring compliance with Section 175 and 157 of the Education Act 2002.

The audit process included the use of an online toolkit and used question sets that had been agreed by three other regional local authorities: Sandwell, Walsall and

⁴ In order to fulfil their duty under Section 157 and 175 of the Education Act 2002, all educational settings to whom the duty applies, should have in place arrangements that reflect the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The section 157 and 175 audit is a self evaluation of how effective these arrangements are.

Birmingham. In order to ascertain whether all Schools and Colleges were compliant with Section 175, Dudley Safeguarding Children Board required them to complete the assessment tool. The start date for using the Section 175 toolkit was January 2015 following a workshop presented by Virtual College. This workshop was attended by Designated Safeguarding Leads and included a 'virtual walkthrough' of the process and identifying how to upload evidence to support statements and create action plans. The returns and any action plans were due to be provided by 31st March 2015.

On the 27th April 2015, a task and finish reference group met to review the toolkit and audit questions. This was attended by representative Heads and Deputy Heads and it was shared at this meeting that the toolkit was cumbersome, difficult to navigate around and specific questions were worded in such a way that it was difficult for scoring to take place objectively.

On 6th July 2015 the DSCB Independent Chair, wrote to all schools and colleges that had not completed the audit. On the 15th July 2015, **9** schools and colleges had not started the audit. There were **12** school and colleges that had scored below **85%**.

By the end of 2015/2016 out of **117** Dudley schools colleges and one independent school, **9** educational establishments had not started the S175 audit and **12** scored below the required **85%**.

Further work is planned to support schools who have not completed an audit and review the action plans for schools that have scored below **85%** through a challenge session in September 2016 to assure the Board, school governors and Dudley Council that robust safeguarding arrangements were in place.

Multi- Agency Audit in Respect of contacts to Children Social Care

The purpose of this audit was to consider a multi agency overview of the types of contacts being referred into Children's Social Care by partner agencies in preparation for Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) arrangements. It included colleagues representing Health, Police, Family Solutions, Education and Children's Social Care. The first audit sample of **102** was contacts taken from December 2014 to December 2015.

Table Z below outlines the number of contacts received during the period by agency and outlines whether the threshold for a referral to Children Social Care was met.

Table Z

Contacts December 2014 to December 2015

Agency	Total	Threshold met	Threshold not met
Police	34 (33.33%)	25	9
Education	20 (19.60%)	16	4
Other	19 (18.62%)	16	3
Health	16 (15.68%)	15	1
Children Social Care	7 (6.86%)	6	1
Parent/Relative	3 (2.94%)	3	0
Vol. Org.	3 (2.94 %)	3	0
Total	102	84 (83%)	18 (17%)

Key findings

From the above table it was identified that from the **102** contacts made **84** (83%) met the threshold for a contact into Children's Social Care and subsequent referral. It was noted that of the **102** contacts **18** (17%) did not meet the threshold. The analysis from those cases that did not meet the threshold, three contacts stepped down to universal provision and closed due to insufficient information available at the point of contact to make an informed decision. These contacts were made by professionals.

A further four contacts were received from education and health for information only and eleven contacts were stepped down for Level 2, early intervention support through the provision of CAF. This was deemed by the audit to be an appropriate step down arrangement for all these **18** children. However it must be noted going forward that the quality of information by partner agencies is critical when making contact to the front door. In Quarter 3 there were **3155** contacts made and if the same ratio is applied, this could mean approx **94** contacts made which do not have sufficient information to make an appropriate decision on levels of need for the child. This is a significant number of contacts that possibly would require social work or early help intervention.

Decisions made by Social Care to progress to level 4 where it is deemed that the child is in need of protection were less than the auditors expected it to be, i.e. **39** children were identified by managers at the point of referral as requiring a level 4 service however considered **62** children required a level 4 service. The audit found a disparity between agencies as to the appropriateness of sharing information and obtaining consent from parents outside of the Child Protection process. The audit findings indicate the need increase the understanding of partner agencies as to when they can inform parent(s) a referral is being made into Children's Social Care.

A disparity is clear at the lower level of need, whereby at contact receiving managers deemed 58 children to require a service at level 1/2 and auditors assessed that only 51 required intervention at this level with the remainder 27 needing intervention at level 3/4. This is significant and informs children's social care that a significant number of children were at risk of harm or likely to suffer harm were not assessed as requiring intervention from specialist services.

Through a variety of means including self-assessment, peer review and external inspection, DSCB recognises that significant improvement is required with performance and quality assurance activity in order that DSCB is fulfilling its statutory functions as set out in Working Together 2015. Identified gaps include:

- Use of multi agency performance data to regularly and effectively monitor front line practice
- Use of planned multi-agency audit to improve safeguarding practice
- Robust arrangements for undertaking multi agency audits
- Ensuring a robust learning framework is in place and operational to deliver against improvements
- Evidence of challenge including via s11 and s175/157 audits to improve the safeguarding system and practice

Serious Case Review Sub Group

Serious Case Reviews are undertaken to learn lessons and improve the way in which local professionals and organisations work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The DSCB must always undertake a Serious Case Review (SCR) when the following criteria are met under Regulation 5 (2) of the LSCB Regulations 2006:

- A. abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected;
- B. either (i) the child has died;
or (ii) the child has been seriously harmed and there is cause for concern as to the way in which the authority, their Board partners or other relevant persons have worked together to safeguard the child.

Where the SCR criteria are not met, the DSCB can also undertake learning reviews. Whatever the type of review, the principles are still the same with the aim being to share information, identify good practice and establish the key lessons that will help to improve safeguarding arrangements.

During 2015/16, the SCR Sub group met on twelve occasions with seven cases being formally considered for a SCR. The current Independent Chair identified that notifications to the National Panel and Ofsted have not been consistently made which means that there had been no external scrutiny of local decision making. All cases have now been referred to the National Panel and serious incident notifications made to OFSTED for their consideration.

A number of themes have emerged from the reviews undertaken. These include

- Chronic neglect and its recognition by practitioners.
- Evidence of “toxic Trio” and the ability of practitioners to recognise the impact on the children.
- Bruising in non-mobile children
- Lack of professional curiosity
- Disguised compliance by parents and practitioners across agencies not recognising this as a concern
- Limited evidence of the use of the escalation process when there is professional disagreement.
- Questionable thresholds and drift in cases
- Weak management oversight and supervision arrangements across partnerships
- Inconsistent application of safeguarding procedures to protect children from harm
- Assessments completed of variable quality with little evidence of impact upon the child of interventions provided.

The learning from five cases undertaken as learning reviews, below the threshold of an SCR, is yet to be disseminated. This is an urgent priority and being progressed in line with the learning from a thematic SCR involving two children and one other SCR. Both these are due for completion in September 2016.

The SCR sub group has undergone significant change over the last 9 months. The process for referrals has been tightened to ensure that it can be monitored and audited.

During the recent Ofsted inspection, it was recognised that *“recent progress is evident in other areas, including identification and learning processes for cases considered by the serious case review sub-group, but it is too soon for there to be evidence of practice improvement as a result”*.

The skill in undertaking reviews is to ensure that the recommendations are smart and focus on the issues that will reduce the likelihood of similar occurrence in the future. It is recognised that Board reviews will support the identification of critical learning for 2016/17; the sub group will look further refine arrangements for commissioning learning reviews.

Participation and Communication Sub Group

The DSCB Participation Sub group conducted a participation audit across the partnership in 2014. Responses received from six agencies were varied in quality and content highlighting gaps, inconsistency and no evidence to assure the Board that children and young people in Dudley were influencing their individual care plans, service improvement/ design or wider strategic decision making.

Attendance and commitment at the Participation sub group was poor so a decision was taken as a result of the inadequate response to the multi-agency participation

audits and subsequent LGA diagnostic to cease the participation sub group and work tasked by them would instead be undertaken by Dudley CVS staff on behalf of the DSCB, Dudley Children's Alliance and the Health and Wellbeing board in a bid to establish a wider co-ordinated approach to participation.

Since January 2016 a number of multi- agency workshops and task and finish groups have met to develop a borough wide model of participation and a proposal which translates the strategy into a co-produced model designed to achieve a collective vision of the Children's Alliance and Dudley Safeguarding Children Board:- *Dudley is a borough where children and young people's rights are realised, where their views shape decisions made about their lives and those of their families.*

The proposal will offer a range of recommendations that enable stakeholders to capture the voices of children and young people and use them to inform individual care planning, service improvement /design and widely strategic decision making. More recently discussions at the Special Education Need Reform Board and Children in Care Council development sessions have further influenced a final proposal that is on the Children's Alliance Board Agenda in June 2016.

DSCB have had a communication strategy in place from 2015, which has included dissemination of DSCB activity through the SafER Newsletter published on a quarterly basis and the setting up of safeguarding email alerts to ensure information and key developments are shared with partner agencies in a timely manner. Going forward the SafER Newsletter will include local and national learning from audits and Serious Case Reviews.

The website has required additional work over the year and will be a key priority moving forward to ensure a website that is current, updated regularly and offers easy tools to navigate around for information and referral process when needed.

Procedures

Safeguarding children's procedures have been maintained through 2015/16 by an independent provider. DSCB has in 2015/16 reviewed a number of procedures and compiled new procedures through the organisational changes that have taken place. This includes MASH procedures, CSE and Missing, Child Protection Conference procedures, review of the Unborn Baby Assessment procedures to name a few. The procedures were updated in November 2015 and included updates to the following chapters:

- Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers
- Agency Roles and Responsibilities
- Bullying
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Children Missing from Education
- E-Safety: Children Exposed to Abuse through the Internet and Other Technologies
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Information Sharing

- Serious Case Reviews
- Sexual Activity

A project proposal was successfully submitted to the DfE on behalf of the West Midlands Authorities Safeguarding Children Boards for funding to develop regional safeguarding procedures.

It is anticipated that regional procedures will deliver a number of significant advantages:

- a more consistent approach to multi-agency working around safeguarding;
- shorter and simpler procedures with a uniform set of definitions;
- similar pathways and processes to assess the risks to the child; and
- a greater consistency of response to referrals.

Workforce and Development Strategic Sub Group

The training opportunities offered by the DSCB are designed to meet the diverse needs of staff at different levels within the wide range of organisations that work with children, young people or adult family members. Supported by a Multi-Agency Training Strategy, DSCB training programme focuses on areas of practice prioritised by the Board with learning from local and national case reviews being integrated into the training material.

DSCB Multi Agency Training Programme Summary 2015/16

During 2016/16 the DSCB Multi Agency Training Programme delivered the following:

- **55** sessions over 53 days
- **15** different courses
- **12** briefing sessions (CSE & Safe Sleeping)
- **2,025** training places accessed

During 2015/2016 there was an **8%** drop in the number of places taken up which can be attributed in part to a decision taken at the DSCB November 2015 Board meeting to suspend Core Child Protection training for a three month period from January 2016 to March 2016.

The decision to support this plan was significant for the Board; however with the level of organisational change and challenge in safeguarding children of Dudley, the decision to suspend core child protection training was taken to ensure all new material was up to date and provided relevant information to all partner agencies which would support their learning, understanding and application of safeguarding children at risk of significant harm.

Training Evaluation Summary

To assess the impact of multi-agency training, at the point of delivery participants complete a pre course and after course evaluation as shown in [Table AA](#) below.

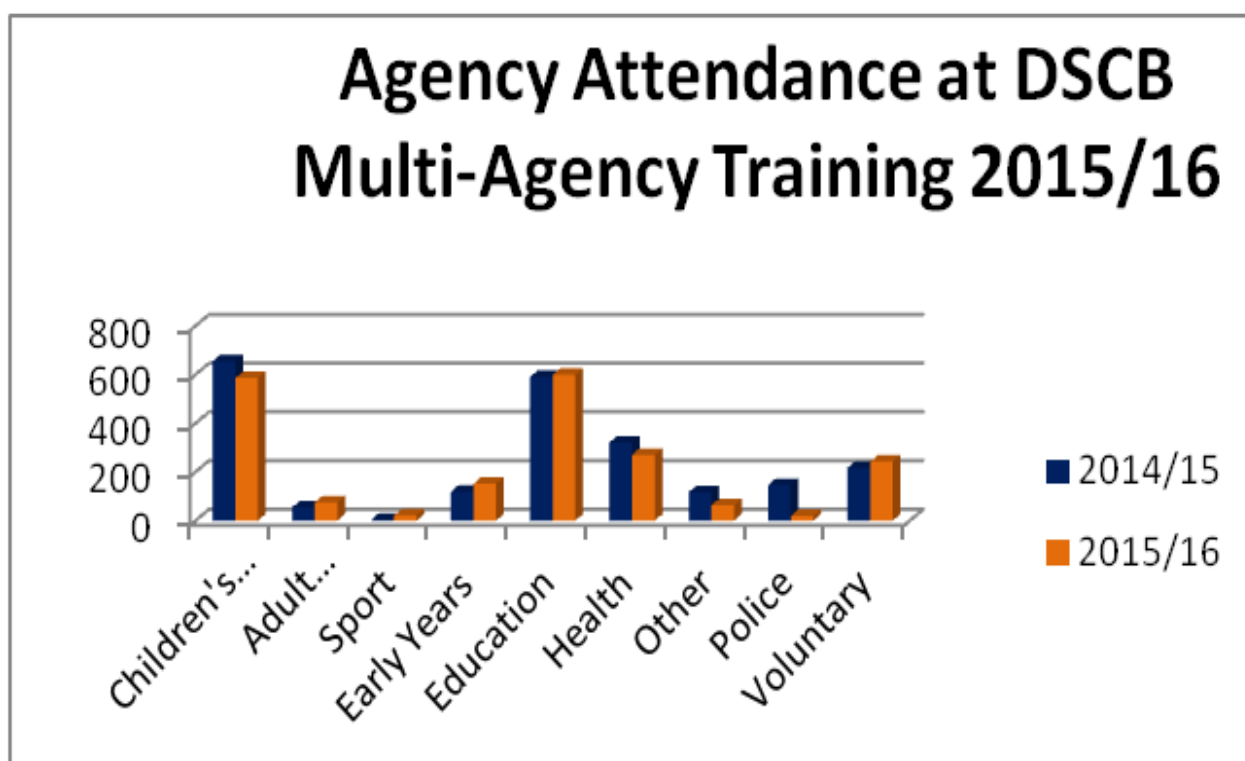
Table AA

Advanced Course - Working Together to Safeguarding Children	
Pre Course Knowledge	37% stated knowledge was good or excellent prior to training(8% made no comment)
Post Course Knowledge	88% stated knowledge was good or excellent following training (8% made no comment)

89% of course attendees for 2015/2016 stated their expectation of the training was met.

[Chart E](#) below shows the attendance at DSCB Multi-agency Training by agency.

Chart E



Post Course Evaluations

As part of a more focussed approach to assessing the impact of training, the DSCB also introduced a schedule of proportionate post course evaluations to further test the impact and influence on outcomes for children and young people. These evaluations took place three and six months after the training had been received, with participants being asked to provide narrative evidence to support their response.

Participant Feedback

“I am able to assess each new situation using the skills and knowledge I have developed from the training to try and ensure that I identify young people who may be at risk.” – Learning Disability Nurse (*Child Sexual Exploitation*)

“I understand the need to accurately record what I am involved in and ensure that I do not delay in reporting my concerns.” – Education Investigation Officer (*Emotional Abuse & Neglect*)

“I feel that every day I use what I have learnt whilst engaging with young people and their families. I am always aware of safeguarding and feel more confident to see the signs and refer appropriately.” – Connexions worker

“I feel that I have a better and more robust knowledge of child protection, used every day in all aspects of work, looking after young people, preparing files, recording and observations.” – Residential Child Care Worker

“The training helped me understand the impact on the witnesses and made me more aware of my responsibilities as the pastoral and safeguarding lead in school.” – Primary School DSL (*Domestic Abuse Training*)

The evaluation and post learning process is also be developed to include evaluation of the impact on outcomes and this will support the wider regional work taking place around the Black Country training offer and links in with others areas of work (i.e. online booking system and E-learning training) during 2016/17. This will also include training delivery based on the Black Country Partnership Training Consortium, Training Needs Analysis undertaken in November 2015.

Black Country Training Consortium

In 2015/16, DSCB became a partner in the Black Country training consortium Project which was funded by a Department of Education innovation fund. The aim of this project was to develop integrated learning and development arrangements across the 4 Black Country LSCBs and those who have contributed to the workshops held to date have in principle been supportive of such a development. In particular, it is recognised that a range of options are needed to share learning and good practice with the front line workforce and to ensure efficiencies across the Boards. A pool of

partnership trainers have been identified across the 4 local authorities to deliver a variety of safeguarding training programmes.

Dudley Safeguarding Children Board is leading on the following courses:

- Working Together core programme
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Safeguarding children and young people in the digital world
- Safeguarding children and young people related to sexual abuse
- Child development

These programmes are being developed and delivery will commence in June 2016. In return DSCB staff will have access to a range of topic based training courses that will be led by the three other Black Country LSCBs.

Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

Regulation 6 of the Local Safeguarding Children Board Regulations 2006 places a statutory duty on LSCB's in relation to the deaths of any children normally resident in their area and guidance is provided in Chapter 5 of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015. This function became a statutory requirement from 1st April 2008.

The Child Death Overview Panel meets every six weeks and all child deaths are reviewed and it is responsible for collecting and analysing information about the death of every child under 18 years in Dudley with a view to:

- Identifying any matters of concern affecting the safety & welfare of children in the area
- Identifying any wider public health or safety concerns arising from a particular death or pattern of deaths the area
- Identifying any case that should be considered as a Serious Case Review

It also has the job of monitoring the process of conducting a rapid response by a group of key professionals to enquire into and evaluate each unexpected death of a child.

Unexpected Deaths – Rapid Response Procedure

An unexpected death is defined as the death of an infant or child which was not anticipated as a significant possibility i.e. 24 hours before the death or where there was a similarly unexpected collapse leading to or precipitating the events which led to the death.

Whenever an unexpected death of a child occurs, a multi-agency response is initiated including a lead Consultant Paediatrician, a West Midlands Police Senior Investigating Officer, Emergency Department staff, ambulance staff, GPs, social care, health visitors and the Coroner to enquire into the circumstances of the death

and to determine who will support the family and ensure there are no safeguarding concerns for other children in the family.

A decision will be made as to which professional will take the lead. This would be the police where there are apparent suspicious circumstances or other external factors. The lead Paediatrician would usually take the lead where there are apparent health or medical factors which have resulted in the death of the child.

Sixteen child deaths were reviewed by the CDOP between April 2015 and March 2016, three fewer than the previous year in which nineteen were reviewed. Three of the sixteen deaths reviewed were identified as unexpected (not expecting to die within the 24 hours preceding the death).

Of the three unexpected deaths two died as a result of Hypoxic Ischemic Encephalopathy, and the other as a result of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Only one of the deaths reviewed was identified as having modifiable factors. Safe sleeping practices being the modifiable factors identified.

As per **Chart F** below since 2009-2012 there has been a decrease in the number of unexpected deaths year on year. However, this is not considered statistically significant due to the low number of cases reviewed.

Chart F

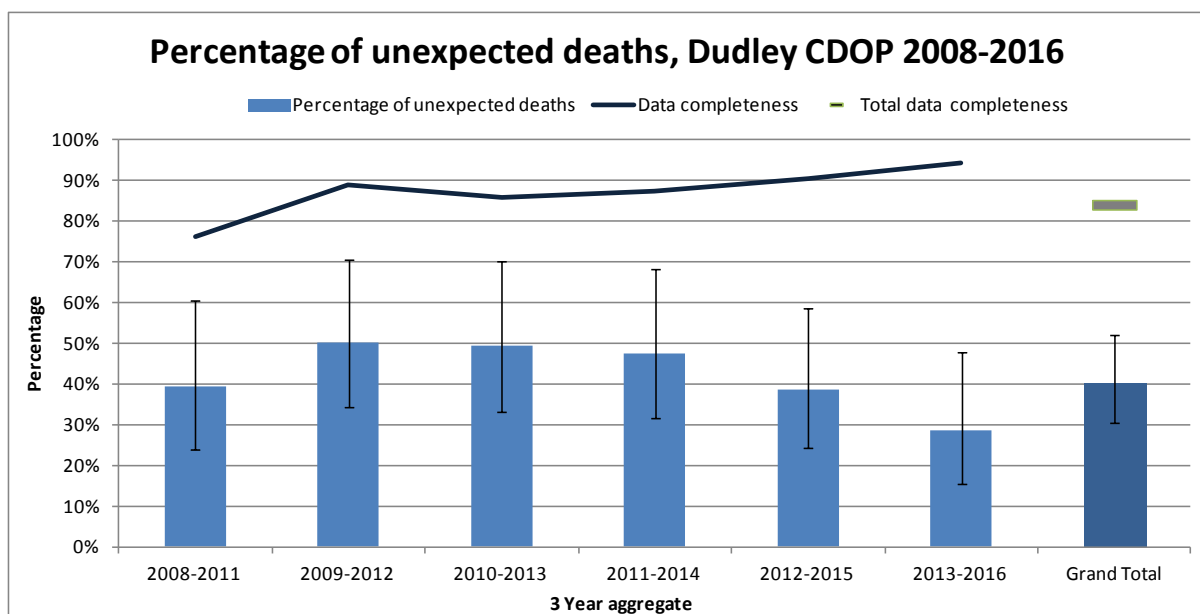


Table AB

Causes of death:cases reviewed in 2015/16

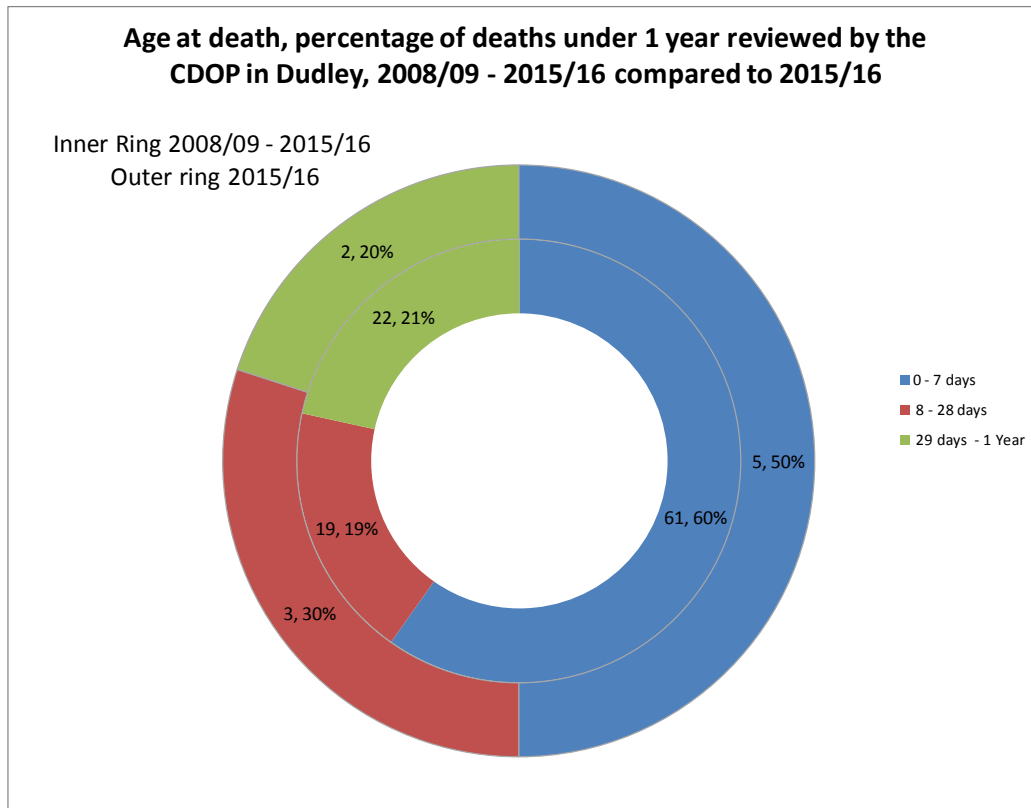
Causes of death	Number of child deaths with <u>modifiable factors</u> recorded under this category of deaths	Number of child deaths with <u>no modifiable factors</u> recorded under this category of deaths	Number of child deaths where there was <u>insufficient information</u> to assess if there were modifiable factors
Deliberately inflicted injury, abuse or neglect (category 1)	0	0	0
Suicide or deliberate self-inflicted harm (category 2)	0	0	0
Trauma and other external factors (category 3)	0	0	0
Malignancy (category 4)	0	1	0
Acute medical or surgical condition (category 5)	0	0	0
Chronic medical condition (category 6)	0	0	0
Chromosomal, genetic and congenital anomalies (category 7)	0	6	0
Perinatal/neonatal event (category 8)	0	5	0
Infection (category 9)	0	2	0
Sudden unexpected, unexplained death (category 10)	1	0	0
Unknown category	0	0	1
TOTAL	1	14	1

The number of child deaths with modifiable factors has decreased and is at the lowest recorded level since 2009/10. The number of deaths with modifiable causes is very low however, so the change from year to year is not statistically significant. The most common categories of death reviewed by the Dudley CDOP since 2010/11 are Chromosomal, genetic and congenital anomalies and Perinatal or neonatal event. Both of these categories remain the most common causes of death in 2015/16.

Chart G below shows that the majority deaths are in children aged under 1 are in the first 7 days of life. In 2015/16 there has been a slightly higher percentage of deaths

in the 8-28 day group however with the very small numbers involved variation like this is to be expected.

Chart G



In an attempt to improve the panel effectiveness and enhance its ability to hold the system into account and be able to make measurable impact on reducing children's death in the Borough, the panel have planned a team development day to take place in May 2016. The main objectives of the day will be to:

- Develop better understanding of roles and responsibilities of individual agencies and of collective responsibility as a panel
- Improve team resilience and ability to function in current financial challenges
- Improve team dynamic and professional relationships
- Better understanding of team objectives and processes needed in place to achieve them.
- Better understanding of the link between CDOP and SCR
- Explore personal challenges and emotional impact of undertaking reviews and develop emotional and personal resilience

The Ofsted Inspection which took place in January 2016 found that Child death review work in Dudley meets statutory requirements and analysis of the work has underpinned practice improvements and prevention work. In addition CDOP achievements for 2015/16 include:

- The development of Home warmth tool kit to enable frontline staff to recognise suboptimal home temperature and to be able to support families in accessing Home Warmth services
- The review of the child death notification process to ensure that it is done timely. This also included the review of the process of notifying primary care in case of child death abroad
- In executing its advocacy role, CDOP has influenced the development of water safety and button battery campaigns
- To support schools and other educational establishments to deal with challenges of death of a child, it has developed a practical guide for schools when dealing with deaths.
- To execute its quality assurance and accountability role, CDOP follows up recommendations such as the implementation of asthma policy in schools and safe sleep policy on regular basis and seeks information on how they have been followed up and influenced procedures and practice.

Vulnerable Children Strategic Group

In 2015/16 this sub group activity concentrated on CSE, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Neglect. CSE is well documented in this report and the Board has agreed the appointment of a full time permanent CSE and missing coordinator. This will be funded through partner agency contributions to ensure a multi agency focus on CSE and Missing.

A task and finish group led on devising a strategy for FGM. This was approved along with the action plan in January 2016 and DSCB will have oversight for its implementation pending discussions of as to which strategic partnership is best placed to have strategic responsibility for this area of work. The decision to develop Neglect strategy and action plan was borne out of data from different sources which included the Ofsted Report, Case review learning and the JSNA in terms of percentage of children living in poverty within Dudley.

A Neglect Task and Finish group has been established to develop a comprehensive Neglect Strategy across all agencies in the borough. This will include assessment tools to enable staff to recognise neglect and offer help at an earlier stage in order to ensure that the impact on children is recognised and their outcomes improved and to understand the child's lived experience and to improve outcomes for these children.

This Neglect Strategy is being developed and will be presented to DSCB in July 2016.

Conclusion

This annual report has provided an assessment of the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of Dudley's children. It has reinforced that multi-agency safeguarding activity is a weakness and requires significant improvement before it is fully effective. The DSCB has not worked well in fulfilling its statutory functions under the revised Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015). However, the Dudley Safeguarding Children Board now has a clear consensus on the strategic priorities for the coming year as articulated in the DSCB Business Plan 2016/17. Statutory and non-statutory members are working to ensure they consistently participate towards the same goals in partnership and within their individual agencies

In conclusion, as a Board we would like to see partners in universal agencies improve their engagement with the Early Help Assessment (formerly referred to as Common Assessment Framework - CAF) which would enable partner agencies to take greater ownership of, and be proactive in, providing services to help children at the earliest opportunity rather than these assessments being used as a request for a service from specialist social work provision. Furthermore, there is a need to increase the understanding and consistent application of thresholds for social care services across all agencies including within social care.

As detailed in the report, Dudley MBC Children's Services has an Improvement Plan which is overseen by an independently chaired Improvement Board and the implementation of this plan is critical to securing an effective safeguarding response for Dudley's most vulnerable children. Partner agencies play a pivotal role in the delivery of an effective safeguarding response including by making good quality referrals, their attendance and contribution at Child Protection Conferences and core groups as well as through the identification of vulnerable children; including privately fostered children.

As a Board we want to see individual agencies, especially, health, education and police undertake and improve their single agency internal safeguarding audits so that they can be scrutinised through the quality assurance framework and provide evidence of improved service provision to children and young people. We also need as a board to have a consistent data set to highlight areas of performance that require further scrutiny.

We would also want to see an increased overview of how the views and participation of children is sought within agencies and how their voice is used to evaluate, shape and influence service delivery as well as specifically the work of the Board.

In relation to Child Sexual Exploitation the Board would like see greater analysis of this issue and a greater use of intelligence so that agencies can deploy their resources effectively to prevent CSE and target offenders and to ensure a well-established partnership approach to this issue is developed in Dudley. In addition, there is a need to fully embed the regional framework so that children who are very exploited are effectively supported.

Our aim year on year is to make sure that children in Dudley are best protected from harm. This can only be achieved through ensuring the right systems are in place, that agencies work well together for each individual child and family and that we develop our learning and improvement culture through robust analysis of performance data and audit activity as well as review of individual cases.

We need to be constantly reflecting whether children in the area are safe and, if not, what more can be done to reduce incidents of child maltreatment and intervene when children are at risk of suffering significant harm. We will continue to raise awareness within our local community that safeguarding children is everybody's business.

Looking Forward

This final section of the DSCB Annual Report outlines priorities for DSCB for the next 12 months. The Board has agreed 3 priorities that are reflected in its Business plan 2016/17. These are:

Strategic Priority One - *Children and Young People are safe from harm in the home, outside the home and online*

Strategic Priority Two - *Children and Young People have access to the right service in the right place at the right time*

Strategic Priority Three - *Effective partnership working and accountability to improve safeguarding outcomes for children, young people and their families*

Engaging all partners agencies, children and carers and all frontline staff is imperative to understanding what the key gaps are in service provision and in addressing these gaps. For 2016/17 these include the following:

- Recognition and response to Neglect
- Understanding and application of Thresholds and Early Help offer
- Embedding CSE and Missing Pathways

In drafting these priorities a range of activity has been agreed against the Boards existing strategic priorities and the details are provided below:

Strategic Priority One - Children and Young People are safe from harm in the home, outside the home and online

What we will do:

- Devise a local CSE problem profile to inform strategy, commissioning and practice
- Deliver CSE and missing strategy and embed CSE and missing pathways
- Devise and implement a Multi-Agency Neglect Strategy
- Refresh and deliver the E Safety Action Plan
- Provide learning and development opportunities to enable the workforce to safeguard children and young people

Strategic Priority Two - Children and Young People have access to the right service in the right place at the right time

What we will do:

- Increase awareness and understanding of the revised Thresholds document
- Evaluate the application of locally agreed thresholds
- Implement a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
- Evaluate the accessibility and impact of the Early Help Offer

Strategic Priority Three - Effective partnership working and accountability to improve safeguarding outcomes for children, young people and their families

What we will do:

- Secure and use the Voice of Children, Young People, Parents/Carers and front line staff to inform our work; including evaluating the effectiveness of local service provision
- Develop supervision standards and support managers to provide reflective supervision/promote reflective practice
- Disseminate learning and evaluate its impact on practice
- Implement the DSCB Improvement Plan
- Adequately resource the DSCB to deliver its statutory functions

In addition to the above activity, DSCB will work to deliver its Improvement plan (which is attached as **Appendix K**) so that it is able to deliver its statutory functions and drive continuous improvement across the multi agency safeguarding support and protection in Dudley.

Glossary

Acronym	Meaning
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CAFCASS	Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CDOP	Child Death Overview Panel
DSAB	Dudley Safeguarding Adults Board
DSCB	Dudley Safeguarding Children Board
CPP	Child Protection Plan
CSC	Children's Social Care
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CYPA	Children and Young People's Alliance
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DfE	Department for Education
EHA	Early Help Assessment
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GP	General Practitioner
DCVS	Dudley Council for Voluntary Service
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked After Child / Children
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
MARAC	Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MASE	Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation
MASH	Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PPU	Public Protection Unit
SCR	Serious Case Review
SEN	Special Educational Needs

Appendices

- Appendix A: [LSCB membership as of 2015/16](#)
- Appendix B: [Functions of LSCB](#)
- Appendix C: [Dudley Inter-Strategic Board Protocol](#)
- Appendix D: [DSCB Business Plan 2016-17](#)
- Appendix E: [DSCB structure chart](#)
- Appendix F: [Board Attendance](#)
- Appendix G: [Financial Arrangements](#)
- Appendix H: [Responses to section 11 audit](#)
- Appendix I: [DSCB Thresholds Framework](#)
- Appendix J: [DSCB Improvement Plan - May 2016](#)



Dudley
Safeguarding
protecting children and young people