

Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership publication

SC Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review

Publication date: Tuesday 7th March 2023

Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership has today (Tuesday 7th March 2023) published a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) which was commissioned following the murder of a 17-year-old referred to as SC* in the report.

Lesley Hagger, Independent Chair of Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership (SCSP), said: "Our thoughts and condolences are with the family of the young man whose murder prompted this review.

"We looked closely at agencies' involvement at key points in SC's life and decided to commission a broader thematic review looking at disproportionality of some groups in relation to exploitation. It is vital we identify any areas for learning and improvement from sad cases like this.

"In particular, the review has explored how black children and young people are seen and perceived in the youth justice and safeguarding systems, especially regarding exploitation and gang activity.

"The review has also explored links between exploitation and children who are excluded from school, missing from education and/or have special educational needs and disabilities. The outcome of this review will support us to strengthen our interventions and processes to protect and support young people.

"Looking at both national research and local information available, this review has provided seven recommendations which the SCSP and partner organisations have accepted and are implementing to help improve life chances for young people such as SC.

"The overall findings of our review do not differ to what is known nationally. There are specific points of learning around the level of ethnicity data we need to capture in our systems. Work is ongoing across agencies to ensure we have the data we need to understand the patterns and needs of all children and young people, and to better target our support and resources.

"The report shows there are a number of positive initiatives in place – in particular highlighting the work of the Sandwell Horizons Team with young people and families around cultural identity and raising awareness of exploitation. This is work we will build upon.

"Disproportionality is a national issue and tackling this will remain a key priority for partners at a Sandwell level – it is included in the Youth Justice Partnership Board Strategic Plan. Disproportionality is not something we are prepared to accept and, here in Sandwell, we are committed to making sure we have the information and strategies in place to address this issue.

"We have also written to Ofsted and the Government to share the findings. Our findings endorse other reviews and support the need for Government-led regulation and standardisation of processes and resources to help reduce inequalities and disproportionality in systems, structures and organisations.

“I would like to thank all professionals who have taken part in this review to help partners continue improving the services and support they provide to children and families.”

Other key actions on recommendations:

- Sandwell Council’s Education Directorate is developing an Exclusions Awareness Learning package for partner agencies – the number of school exclusions is falling in Sandwell and this package will help further.
- The Education Directorate has developed a local plan to tackle educational neglect.
- Sandwell’s Early Help Partnership will carry out a targeted piece of work with black families, practitioners and groups to understand barriers to engagement, to help generate an action plan to address these.
- The Youth Justice Partnership Board has a specific plan focused on disproportionality, with ongoing targeted multi-agency work to understand and address challenges.
- Direct work will be undertaken with young people to capture and explore their journey in alternative provision.
- Dip samples of school behaviour policies will check national guidance is being followed.
- West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership and local NHS teams have commissioned the St Giles charity to support young people admitted to A&E as a result of serious youth violence. The work aims to address underlying causes and prevent them returning to risky situations.

*The CSPR is anonymised in line with national guidance.

Contact:

To report a child at risk in Sandwell, call the Sandwell safeguarding team on 0121 569 3100 (this number is available outside normal office hours), call West Midlands Police on 101 (24-hour non-emergency number), or contact the NSPCC helpline 0808 800 5000 (free service, lines open 24 hours a day).

If a child is in immediate danger, contact the police by dialling 999.