

Report subject	<b>Children's Safeguarding Partnership Review</b>
Meeting date	17 July 2024
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	A review of the Pan-Dorset arrangements for the delivery of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership has been considered by the statutory partners: Dorset Police, NHS Dorset and both local authorities (LAs) involved in the Pan-Dorset arrangements, BCP Children's Services and Dorset Children's Services. The review recommends that the partnership arrangements be delivered separately for each LA. This report will therefore set out the recommendation made by the partners who have been given the delegated authority to conduct the statutory duties for their organisation.
Recommendations	<p><b>It is RECOMMENDED that:</b></p> <p><b>a) To agree separation of the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children arrangements and create a Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership and a BCP Safeguarding Children's Partnership in order to meet the needs of two separate Local Authorities and enable the effectiveness of the partnership arrangements moving forward.</b></p>
Reason for recommendations	One of the fundamental reasons behind this proposal is the difference between the two local authorities within the existing partnership. The authorities operate differently, and their approaches to safeguarding and working practices often diverge. The recent changes outlined in the Working Together Guidance 2023 pose an additional challenge for our current Pan-Dorset arrangement. With the removal of the Independent Chair role, implementing the necessary changes becomes considerably more complex under a Pan-Dorset arrangement. By transitioning to a Dorset Safeguarding Partnership and a separate BCP Safeguarding Partnership, both authorities can adapt their structures and procedures seamlessly to align with the revised

	guidelines. This will enable them to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities independently and effectively across the region, with each Director of Children's Services maintaining individual responsibility and being supported by scrutineers.
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Richard Burton, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People
Corporate Director	Cathi Hadley, Corporate Director for Children's Services
Report Authors	Lisa Reid, Corporate Director, Quality Assurance and Safeguarding, Dorset Council  In collaboration with: Tammy Lawrence, Head of Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships, BCP Council
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

## Background

1. Considering the distinct operational approaches of the two local authorities within the Pan-Dorset structure, a review of the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership's delivery arrangements was undertaken, and agreement reached that the two local authorities in the partnership operate differently. Attempts have been made over the years to maintain the current arrangements at a strategic and governance level, however, it is acknowledged this is becoming increasingly challenging.
2. Attempts have been made to try and maintain the current arrangements and avoid duplication for the partners; for example, the partnership has introduced certain flexibilities over the past two years, adjusting partnership priorities and facilitating place-based subgroups. However, the differing future needs of the two local authorities within the existing partnership requires an alternative approach going forward allowing strategies to be more individual to the two local authorities. This will strengthen the safeguarding arrangements for our children and young people in BCP by focusing on the priorities and areas of need that are specific and unique to them.
3. Additionally, Dorset Children's Services designation as a Pathfinder for the government under the "Stable Homes Built on Love" initiative has further emphasised the need for partners to deliver services in a distinct manner within each authority going forward. For BCP Council we have a strong focus on improvement and have regulated priorities we must achieve. Therefore, after careful consideration, a separation of the partnership has been mutually agreed by the Executive Group and supported by the Chair and Business Manager as the best option to achieve better outcomes for our children and young people.

4. By establishing individual safeguarding partnerships, we can customise our strategies and operations to suit the unique needs and circumstances of each authority. Consequently, this will lead to improved safeguarding outcomes for children and their families within our respective areas. It is crucial to note that the proposed separation does not indicate complete isolation. Collaboration among the safeguarding partners can continue, albeit in a modified format.
5. The current Safeguarding Partners can continue to convene informally as a Pan-Dorset group where required to review shared learning, to address any shared priorities and meet the statutory duties placed upon them as the Designated Safeguarding Leads. This approach ensures that our efforts remain unified and consistent where necessary while minimising any potential strategic impact resulting from the separation.
6. Both local authorities have an existing governance structure where the partnership is already embedded; this minimises the impact on the partners with no additional meetings being suggested.
7. Furthermore, a requirement of the Children's Safeguarding Partnership as part of the new Working Together 2023 legislation changes, is that Education will now be included as the fourth partner, although not statutory. BCP Council have already been planning for these changes to be implemented and again a separation allows both councils to focus on their respective areas and determine how best to ensure the right representation of schools and early years provision in their own governance arrangements for the partnership. There has been a collaborative workshop held with education partners commissioned by BCP and facilitated by the DfE, that has begun to look at how we best serve the needs of our local children and families.
8. Finally, it is helpful to note that the Dorset Integrate Care Board (ICB) has already developed place-based arrangements and will therefore allow the two new safeguarding arrangements to feed into the proposed changes seamlessly.

### **Proposed Business team functions**

9. There will be some arrangements that will continue to be Pan-Dorset whilst others will be allocated to the new Partnerships as follows:
  - 9.1 **Pan Dorset website.** This will remain in place, but the landing page will have two distinct areas to direct professionals and families to the relevant authority for work that is place based. This will be supported by the creation of a Dorset Council partnership logo and a separate BCP partnership logo.
  - 9.2 **Pan- Dorset Tri X.** This is where policy and procedures are recorded and will remain Pan-Dorset as these reflect legislation, statutory guidance and best practice. The site allows for individual practices to be recorded when required and again the new partnership logos will help differentiate when required.
  - 9.3 **Pan-Dorset Training.** This is hosted by Dorset and is working well across the partnership, training hundreds of partners each month; therefore, this will continue as is and any bespoke training for each LA can be factored accordingly. The team is completely self-funded through income generation.
  - 9.4 **Child Death Overview Panel.** This is a tri authority arrangement that includes Somerset and will remain in place.

- 9.5 **Partnership Data.** This will need to be separated to allow clear distinction between the two areas. This will further support the Partnership to respond to individual area needs.
- 9.6 **Partnership Annual Report.** This will no longer be a Pan-Dorset report and the two partnerships will have their own annual reports enabling clear focus on the arrangements for Dorset children and families as will BCP.
- 9.7 **Annual conference.** These will be separate to be aligned with the area priorities, learning and focused activities. This will allow for increased attendance as a pan-Dorset model restricted the number of delegates that could attend.

## **Options Appraisal**

- 10. To agree separation of the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children arrangements and create a Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership and a BCP Safeguarding Children's Partnership in order to meet the needs of two separate Local Authorities and enable the effectiveness of the partnership arrangements moving forward.
- 11. Whilst there has been some overlap in the priorities of the Pan-Dorset partnership, BCP has some of its own unique areas in relation to safeguarding children that the partnership has needed to focus on. Separation of the partnership will allow BCP to solely focus on the areas that are most pertinent to its children and young people and ensure that it better serves its community.

## **Summary of financial implications**

- 12. The Safeguarding Partners have agreed that they are committed to maintaining the current financial contributions and neither LA is requesting any additional funding to deliver two separate partnerships. As a result, it is agreed that the contributions will be split 50-50 to allow the Children's Safeguarding Partnership to be delivered separately. There will be some minor rebalancing of funds between the two authorities where Pan-Dorset functions are delivered within Dorset Council, and this has been agreed by the executive partners. As a result, both LAs are in agreement that they can deliver the Children's Safeguarding Partnership business within the allocated funds.
- 13. The PDSCP contributions for 2023/24 were as follows:
  - BCP Council - £75,785
  - Dorset Police - £75,785
  - Dorset Council - £75,785
  - Dorset Police - £75,785
  - Total - £303,140

## **Summary of legal implications**

- 14. The arrangements must be compliant with Working Together 2023. The Delegated arrangements will be delivered through the two Local authorities current governance arrangements which is the BCP Partnership Board to deliver the functions set out in the revised Working Together 2023 – see pages 26-30 for more detail).

15. There is much clearer strategic leadership and accountability set against each of the Lead Safeguarding Partner's (LSPs) who are defined in the WTG 2023 as Chief Executives of Local Authorities, Chief Executives of the ICBs, and Chief Officers of police forces and the partnership may wish to consider that the Exec group in its new working arrangements meet as a Pan-Dorset arrangement for both the LSPs. This will allow compliance of the new WTG 2023 arrangements, for the LSPs to have assurance that their local arrangements are keeping children safe and to deliver the joint functions.

#### **Summary of human resources implications**

16. Roles will be reviewed to enable a BCP focussed approach. HR processes will be followed accordingly should the recommendation for the creation of separate Dorset and BCP partnerships be approved.

#### **Summary of sustainability impact**

17. None noted.

#### **Summary of public health implications**

18. None noted.

#### **Summary of equality implications**

19. An EIA is currently being reviewed and will be available for final release.

#### **Summary of risk assessment**

20. This proposal has been developed in response to the identified risks and concerns in relation to the current arrangement. The recommendation for councillors to endorse the separation is intended to support the implementation of Working Together 2023 and ensure that the safeguarding arrangement meet the need of the BCP area. No specific risks have been identified as arising from this recommendation.

#### **Background papers**

[Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children-2023-statutory-guidance)–([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk))

#### **Appendices**

There are no appendices to this report.