

# Learning from Early Help Audit

February 2020



## Purpose

- The audit was undertaken for the Warrington Safeguarding Partnership to gain assurance that agencies are working together, providing early intervention and prevention services, whilst identifying safeguarding concerns appropriately to step cases up as required.
- The audit process was also an opportunity for the WSP to hear directly from practitioners about good practice, challenges they face and their views on how multi-agency practice can be further developed.

## What worked well?

- Cases audited evidenced tenacious and passionate practitioners, across a range of agencies. Some demonstrated commitment to families and went above and beyond to support and advocate for their families.
- Good direct working with children including the use of tools, especially in cases where there was disengagement.

## What are we concerned about?

- Information sharing and requests for information at an early help level.
- Early Help practitioners are holding complex cases which may benefit from social care input.
- Misunderstanding of the escalation policy and professionals understanding of challenging others.
- Children and their needs getting lost when there are complex adults present.
- Families who do not engage are too easily closed.

## Recommendations

- Escalation Policy to be better understood and used across the partnership. Practitioners need to have confidence to use escalation and professional challenge at all levels of multi-agency work.
- Practitioners Forum needs to have an expanded number of active participants. This will allow for improved understanding of practitioners roles and allow for practitioners to effectively challenge practice and gaps in services.
- WSP needs to be assured that families are safely closed to services in relation to the needs of the family and not the needs of the service.
- Practitioners have access to opportunities for reflection to improve joint learning.
- WSP needs further assurance that children and young people are central to their plans and that practitioners are considering the lived experience and the voice of the child within their work. This is particularly the case for families where there are parents/ adults involved who have complex needs.
- Practitioners to explore the use of consultancy with other professionals when child/ family not meeting threshold or waiting to access a service.

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## Further information

The Threshold of Need and Response document has been designed to ensure that children's needs are responded to at an appropriate level and in a timely way. This guidance should be seen as overarching guidance for the children and young people's workforce in Warrington and be used as a guide for all agencies, professionals and volunteers to consider how to best meet the additional needs and vulnerabilities of individual children and the actions required to meet those needs.

Link: [https://www.warrington.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/threshold\\_of\\_need\\_guide\\_2017.pdf](https://www.warrington.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/threshold_of_need_guide_2017.pdf)

The current Professional Challenge and Escalation Policy can be found in the [pan-Cheshire Policies and Procedures library](#).

Further information about Early Help Services can be accessed at the [Warrington Borough Council website](#).

