



Merton
Safeguarding
Children Partnership

Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Agreement



On behalf of the London Borough of Merton

On the behalf of the SW London Alliance of CCGs

On behalf of the South West London Basic Command Unit

Rachael Wardell,
Director of Children, Schools & Families

Susan Blow
Accountable Officer for SW London Alliance of CCGs

Sally Benatar
SW London BCU Commander
Metropolitan Police

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1. The Vision of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership

“Nothing is more important than children’s welfare.” (Working Together 2018, p. 6),

1.1 It is the vision of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership that all Statutory Partners and relevant agencies work together to ensure that *everyone does everything they can to ensure that all of Merton’s children are safe, supported and successful.*

1.2 Statutory Partners, Relevant Agencies and Co-opted Members are all clear that safeguarding children and promoting their welfare is everybody’s business. This is demonstrated by a robust and sustained commitment to children’s safeguarding at the highest levels in each agency.

1.3 Building on an established track record of an outstanding Local Safeguarding Children Board, our vision is that the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will be characterised as follows:

- Decisive strategic leadership provided by an independent person who will serve as the chair for the partnership
- The Partnership ensures that the needs of children and their families are at the very centre of its work. This means that the Partnership will be intentional about listening to the voices of children, young people and their families; and, where appropriate, allowing their needs and concerns to inform service design and delivery.
- A strong culture of accountability and challenge that results in increased understanding across the partnership and measurable improvements in the quality of practice. This will be assured by the commissioning of an independent scrutineer who will review the performance of the partnership and its impact.
- Statutory Partners Relevant Agencies and Co-opted members are all committed to the priority of safeguarding children and promoting their welfare, and this is evident in their contribution to the work of the partnership
- Effective and consistent engagement by senior strategic leaders, who are able to influence safeguarding in their individual agencies
- Collaborative and effective working relationships
- Strong evidence of effective collaboration of partners and relevant agencies at both strategic and operational levels
- Valued contributions and participation by voluntary sector and lay/co-opted members
- The work and priorities of the partnership are relevant and are informed by a detailed analysis of local need, to target and support the most vulnerable children.
- The delivery of tangible, positive outcomes for children and their families
- The learning and improvement framework is committed to continuous improvement in the quality of safeguarding practice

1.4 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership is a robust multi-agency partnership that enables all children and young people to be safe in their homes and communities, and to fulfil their potential. The Partnership coordinates the work of all agencies and ensures that this work is effective in achieving the best outcomes for Merton’s children and young people.

2. National Context

2.1 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 received royal assent on 27th April 2017. Section 16E of the Act requires each Local Authority Area to establish local arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children

(1) The safeguarding partners for a local authority area in England must make arrangements for—

- (a) the safeguarding partners, and
- (b) any relevant agencies that they consider appropriate, to work together in exercising their functions, so far as the functions are exercised for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area.

(2) The arrangements must include arrangements for the safeguarding partners to work together to identify and respond to the needs of children in the area.

(3) In this section—

“relevant agency”, in relation to a local authority area in England, means a person who—

- (a) is specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State, and
- (b) exercises functions in that area in relation to children; “safeguarding partner”, in relation to a local authority area in England, means—
 - (i) the local authority;
 - (ii) a clinical commissioning group for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area;
 - (iii) the chief officer of police for a police area any part of which falls within the local authority area.”

3. The Geographical Area of the partnership.

3.1 In accordance with Working Together 2018, chapter 3, paragraph 15, the geographical footprint for the partnership arrangements is based on local authority area, that is, the London Borough of Merton.¹

4. Local Context

4.1 Safeguarding children is a key strength in Merton. The 2017 Ofsted Inspection found the Board to be Outstanding with no recommendations for improvement. Specifically, inspectors found that

- There are strong governance arrangements underpinned by established partnerships with other strategic boards,
- The independent chair provides decisive strategic leadership and challenge to partners
- The board has been supported by a highly experienced and competent business unit which actively monitors the risk and challenge log and drives the business plan forward. The work of the board also benefits from excellent business administrators.
- There is a strong engagement across the partnership, including with schools, the voluntary sector, faith and wider community groups on safeguarding issues. Members are drawn from a wide range of partners who hold strategic safeguarding

¹ *Working Together 2018*, “The geographical footprint for the new arrangements is based on local authority areas.”, chapter 3, paragraph 15, p. 75:

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roles in their agency, and are experienced and influential in their organisations. All partners make a proportionate financial contribution to MSCB.

- The understanding and application of thresholds by partners are reviewed regularly to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.
- The comprehensive range of high-quality, up-to-date policies and procedures are exemplary. These are regularly reviewed by the board and the business improvement group to ensure compliance and to ensure that policies are relevant.
- The board has strategic oversight of and policy development in critical areas of safeguarding practice including Prevent, FGM, CSC, harmful sexual behaviour, gangs and county lines, serious youth violence and contextual safeguarding².

4.2 In making the transition from a Local Safeguarding Children's Board to a Local Safeguarding Partnership, Merton is moving forward from a position of outstanding performance. The constitution of the new partnership, therefore, builds on the strength of our existing partnerships and our continued relentless focus on safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. The aim of this partnership agreement is to reflect the kind of partnership which was recognised in the 2017 Ofsted Inspection of the Board.³

4.3 In accordance with Working Together 2018, the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership recognises that "Schools, colleges and other educational providers have a pivotal role to play in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. Their co-operation and buy-in to the new arrangements will be vital for success."⁴ The Partnership therefore recognises the vital role of schools, colleges and other educational providers by including sector representatives as a primary Relevant Agency.

5. The Purpose, Principles and Priorities of the Partnership

A. Purposes

In accordance with section 14 of the Children Act 2004, the core purposes of the Partnership are:

- (a) to **coordinate** what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area; and
- (b) to **ensure the effectiveness** of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.

This includes

- Developing policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including
 - Taking action where there are concerns including thresholds
 - Recruitment and supervision
 - Investigation of allegations
 - Cooperation with neighbouring authorities
- Participating in the planning of services for children in the local authority area
- Communicating the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

² The London Borough of Merton Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, report published: 25 August 2017

³ *ibid*

⁴ *Working Together 2018*, chapter 3, paragraph 25, p 77

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- Procedures to ensure a coordinated response to unexpected child deaths (this will be led by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG))
- Collecting and analysing information about child deaths
- Monitoring the effectiveness of what is done to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Undertaking local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

In addition, the core purposes of Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership is to enable agencies to work together so that

- excellent practice in multi-agency safeguarding is the norm
- partners effectively hold each other to account
- to proactively identify and respond to new and emerging safeguarding issues
- whole system learning is promoted and embedded in frontline practice
- information is shared effectively
- Merton's children, families and communities are safe, supported and successful

B. Principles

The overarching principles which underpin the work of the partnership are as follows:

1. ***The voice of children and young people***: To communicate with and listen to children and young people and ensure that individual agencies and the Partnership all work to ensure that the voices of children and young people are considered. Where possible and appropriate, to involve young people in the work of the Partnership.
2. ***Think Family***: To ensure that all agencies 'think family' so that children and adults receive coordinated services that assess and address the needs of the whole family
3. ***Understanding our community***: To seek to understand and respect the local community and its diversity, and to share information and seek views, where possible.
4. ***Listening to and learning from practice***: The Partnership commits to consulting front-line practitioners and their line-managers in the work of the Partnership through providing information regularly and seeking feedback.
5. ***Enabling the highest standards of practice***: To promote up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding and high standards of practice in responding to the needs of children and young people in Merton; focusing on good and safe **outcomes**.
6. ***Leading continuous improvement***: To lead improvements in the quality of multi-agency safeguarding practice.

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7. **Effective coordination:** To co-ordinate and monitor the **effectiveness** of agency, multi-agency and the Partnership's own work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
8. **Early Intervention and prevention:** The Partnership is committed to effective early intervention; this means working together so that families review the help they need so that their problems and concerns are effectively addressed early in the life of the child and early in the development of issues so that these do not escalate. The Merton Child, Young Person and Family Well-being Model⁵ is the MSCP's Threshold document and outlines how we expect all agencies to respond to the needs of children, young people and their families across the continuum of need.
9. **Integrity in public life:** To work with the ethics, behaviour and values of public services (The Nolan Principles) <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/the-committee-on-standards-in-public-life>

C. Priorities

Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership works to ensure that local services work knowledgeably, effectively and together to safeguard children and young people and to support their parents⁶ or carers. The Partnership's priorities will be informed by detailed analysis of local need and will target the most vulnerable children and their families for support. The Partnership's priorities will be informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis, learning coming out of local and national Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, system-wide developments in safeguarding practice such as the Merton Social Work Practice Model.

The Partnership's priorities will be agreed at an annual Partnership Away Day. The agreed priorities will be outlined in a 24-month Business Plan (please find attached the MSCB's Business Plan as Appendix 1) and will be reviewed at each meeting of the Partnership.

6. Membership (see Appendix 2)

6.1 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will comprise the following Statutory Partners

- (a) the Local Authority (represented by the Director of Children Schools and Families, or their delegated representative)
- (b) a clinical commissioning group for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area (the CCG, the Accountable Officer or their delegated representative);
- (c) the chief officer of police for a police area any part of which falls within the local authority area. (The Chief Officer of the Basic Command Unit, BCU, or their delegated representative)

6.2 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership's other relevant agencies will include

⁵ See Appendix 10

⁶ A parent is a person with parental responsibility. "Parental responsibility means the legal rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority a parent has for a child and the child's property. A person who has parental responsibility for a child has the right to make decisions about their care and upbringing." Section 3(1) Children Act 1989

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(d) In accordance with *Working Together 2018*, the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership recognises the vital role of schools, colleges and other educational providers.⁷

(e) Housing – a representative Registered Social Landlords and Housing Associations and Merton Housing Needs

(f) Probation (including National Probation and CRC Probation)

(g) Department for Work and Pensions

(h) Voluntary Organisations represented by the MVSC or another relevant body

(i) Acute Trusts, Health Providers and Mental Health Trust

6.3 Members from Statutory Partners and relevant agencies must be sufficiently senior and delegated to speak with authority, to make decisions and commit resources on behalf of their agency. Each statutory partner should nominate a standing deputy to represent the Member in her/his absence.

6.4 Members from Relevant Agencies, who represent their sector rather than a single agency, e.g. Head Teachers and Voluntary Sector representatives, cannot speak on behalf of any other single agency apart from their own. They are expected to give a generic view for their sector. They are not expected to canvass the views of their sector. It is expected that they will link with their counterparts through relevant forums, etc. Also they are not expected to make commitments on the behalf of agencies/organisation within their sector, in terms of resources.

6.5 The Partnership will also include Co-opted members who have an interest in and a contribution to make in the safeguarding of children and promotion of their welfare.

6.6 For the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership to work effectively there must be commitment, consistency and continuity in membership. The role of each Member must be to contribute actively to the work of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership, provide constructive support and challenge, and act as a 'critical friend' to partner agencies in the monitoring of their safeguarding responsibilities.

6.7 Members will be expected to attend the meetings, they are required to respond to communications between meetings and to contribute to the on-going work of the Partnership.

6.8 Each Relevant Agency⁸ should nominate a standing deputy to represent the Member in her/his absence. The deputy will hold the same authority on their Agency's behalf. A deputy should be briefed in advance on the Agency's perspective concerning issues on the Agenda and should not overturn an agency view expressed by the substantive Member in a previous meeting, without confirmation from the substantive Member in writing that there has been such a change of agency perspective.

6.9 Members who represent a sector will be covered in their absence by other members from that sector and so do not require a deputy – e.g. head teachers, voluntary sector.

⁷ *Working Together 2018*, Chapter 3, paragraphs 25-27, p. 77

⁸ *Working Together 2018*, Chapter 3, paragraph 17 notes, "Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider is required to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children." Also, "When selected by the safeguarding partners to be part of the local safeguarding arrangements; relevant agencies must act in accordance with the arrangements. Safeguarding partners should make sure the relevant agencies are aware of the expectations placed on them by the new arrangements."

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6.10 Where a Member does not attend two consecutive meetings this absence will be reviewed with them on behalf of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership with their organisation, by the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Manager, on behalf of the partnership, and after this may be added to the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Risk Register.

6.11 Partners and Relevant Agencies are expected to ensure appropriate membership and commitment to the Sub Groups and ad hoc Task and Finish Groups, according to the membership agreed in their terms of reference. Co-opted Members may be asked to volunteer to contribute to the work of task and finish groups.

7. Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Structure and Governance

7.1 To meet these statutory requirements the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership has agreed the following structure and governance arrangements.

7.2 As part of the independent scrutiny of the Partnership, the Partnership will appoint an **Independent Person**. The Independent Person will be an individual with significant experience at a senior level in the strategic co-ordination of multi-agency services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

7.3 The Independent Person, who will serve as the Chair of the Partnership will be accountable to the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership and will work closely with Statutory Partners and with the Director of Children, Schools and Families, who continues to hold statutory responsibilities for the co-ordination of multi-agency working to support and safeguard children.

7.4 The role of the Independent Person will be to work closely with Statutory Partners and particularly with the Director of Children, Schools and Families who has statutory responsibilities under section 18 of the Children Act 2004. The Independent Person will serve as Chair at meetings of the Partnership and will provide independent challenge to Statutory Partners and Relevant Agencies.

7.5 The Independent Person will be appointed by the Statutory Partners. (The role of the Independent Person is outlined in appendix 5).

7.6 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will also appoint **Independent Scrutineer**. The Independent Scrutineer will be an individual with significant experience at a senior level in the strategic co-ordination of multi-agency services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

7.7 The role of the Independent Scrutineer is to provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in Merton. The Independent Scrutineer will hold the Partnership to account by considering how effectively the arrangements are working for children and to act as a critical friend to the partnership.

7.8 The Independent Scrutineer will be appointed by the Statutory Partners. (Please see appendix 6 for a detailed description of the role of the Independent Scrutineer)

7.9 This scrutiny will be in the form of an annual process which will include a review of the performance and impact of the Partnership. Performance will be measured against the Partnership's agreed performance standards and will be reported to a Panel of Statutory Safeguarding Partners, which will include the Chief Executive Officer of the Local Authority

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(or their delegated representative), the BCU Chief Officer for the area including Merton (or their delegated representative), and the Accountable Officer of Merton CCG (or their delegated representative). The scrutiny will include a review of the Partnership's Annual Report; performance against the Partnership's Business Plan and will include a review of how the Partnership ensures that:

- children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted
- partner organisations and agencies collaborate, share and co-own the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children
- organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively
- there is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats
- learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice
- information is shared effectively to facilitate more accurate and timely decision making for children and families

7.10 The **Independent Person** and the **Independent Scrutineer** cannot be the same person.

7.11 Business will be conducted through the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership ('The Partnership') which holds the statutory responsibilities and duties; the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will have ultimate accountability for ensuring that the objectives are achieved. Business will be conducted through Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership meetings, Sub Groups, correspondence and exchange of information between meetings.

7.12 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will prioritise and organise its work through the Annual Business Plan; and regular monitoring of the Plan and Risk and Challenge Registers.

7.13 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will deliver its functions through Sub-Groups. The key Sub-Groups will be the Quality Assurance Sub-Group, the Promote and Protect Young People Strategic Sub-Group, the Policy Sub-Group and the Learning and Development Sub-Group. The Partnership will, where appropriate, delegate some of its functions across a sub-regional geographical footprint (to be determined); in order to rationalise activities and to achieve economies of scale. It is likely that these will include its learning and development functions, and the development of common policies and procedures.

7.14 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will hold the overall responsibility for the overview of the quality of multi-agency safeguarding work and agency performance.

7.15 On behalf of the Partnership, an Executive Group, consisting of the Statutory Partners will co-ordinate the work of the Partnership, prioritise actions and ensure the coverage of statutory functions and the business plan by ensuring governance and connectivity across the Sub Groups and ad hoc task and finish groups.

7.16 The Executive Group will enable commissioning agencies to secure and plan delivery of the total work programme. It will contribute to Partnership and agency self-evaluation and

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to challenge and improvement priorities.

7.17 The Executive Group will drive the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership agenda, seek assurance that the Partnership's priorities are being delivered, provide guidance and leadership to Sub-Group Chairs.

7.18 **Sub Groups** and Short Term **Task and Finish Groups** will be tasked by the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership with agreed Terms of Reference and Work Plans and will be given delegated responsibility to act on the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership's behalf to progress the agreed Business objectives. There should be multi-agency leadership and chairing of such working groups. (See Appendix 3 – Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Structure). It is essential that members of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership demonstrate their commitment to the partnership by ensuring agency attendance to Sub-Groups and undertake specific tasks as agreed at meetings.

7.19 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will liaise with and receive relevant reports from other local **Strategic Partnerships**, such as the **Health and Well-Being Board**. At times it will be appropriate to agree joint work with such partnerships.

8 Accountabilities

8.1 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will work within and will comply with statutory guidance

8.2 The Statutory Partners are also responsible for appointing (or dismissing) an Independent Person to serve as the Chair of the Partnership. A Panel of the Statutory Partners, including the Chief Executive Officer of the Council, will meet with the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Chair at least twice per year to review the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership's work.

8.3 The Statutory Partners are responsible for appointing (or dismissing) the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Independent Scrutineer (see Appendix 4: on the role of the Independent Scrutineer), with advice of a panel of Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership members (including lay members).

8.4 The Independent Person will have executive authority to make decisions on behalf of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership between meetings, consulting Statutory Partners as appropriate. The Independent Person will report on any such decisions to the Partnership no later than the next meeting of the Partnership or in writing.

8.5 Statutory Partners must make arrangements to:

(a) identify serious child safeguarding cases which raise issues of importance in relation to the area and

(b) commission and oversee the review of those cases, where they consider it appropriate for a review to be undertaken

8.6 When a serious incident becomes known to safeguarding partners, they must consider whether the case meets the criteria for a local review in accordance with chapter 4 of Working Together 2018, (see also appendix 7: Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Serious incidents, Local and National Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews)

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8.7 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership is accountable to its members and to the local community for its work. This accountability will be demonstrated through the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual **Report**, through which the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will evaluate the effectiveness of its own work, as well as that of the local multi-agency partnership. The Annual Report will be shared the Health and Well-Being Board, in accordance with the governance arrangements of the Statutory Partners, Ofsted and the Department of Education. It will also be published on the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership website (see also section 9 under reporting).

8.8 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership is also accountable to the Children and Young People of Merton. We will work with the Children's Schools and Families Participation Manager and the Looked After Children and Permanency Manager to ensure meaningful participation, consultation and accountability with young people.

8.9 Statutory Partners and Relevant Agencies will be accountable to the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership by ensuring appropriate representation and attendance on the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership, the Executive Group or Sub Groups, as agreed.

8.10 All Relevant Agencies and Co-opted Members will respond to information requests from the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership in relation to data, commentary, evaluation, planning, performance and resources in order to assist the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership in the completion of its objectives. Such data will be governed by any requirements of the Data Protection Act. The Safeguarding Partnership can require a person or body to comply with a request for information under section 14A of the Children Act 2004 (Amended 2010) and Working Together 2018, Chapter 3, paragraphs 28-29.

8.11 Where Partners and Relevant Agencies are asked for information or consulted on Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership business or draft documents between meetings it is expected that agencies will make a definite response and not assume that no response means agreement. Where an agency does not respond to such a request, this will be raised at the following Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership meeting. The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership needs confirmation of agreement and sign up to the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Plan.

8.12 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will be quorate if two Statutory Partners are present. It is essential that Statutory Partners are represented at meetings of the Partnership. In the event that a Statutory Partner fails to ensure appropriate representation at a scheduled Partnership meeting, the Independent Person will write to the accountable officer of the relevant statutory partner to raise a concern regarding the lack of attendance.

8.12 The Executive Group will be quorate if all Statutory Partners (Local Authority, CCG and Police) are present.

8.13 The Independent Scrutineer, as part of their independent function, will have the responsibility to disclose wrong doing, maladministration or organisational dysfunction to the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (**Ofsted**) and the DfE, if it becomes clear that the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership is failing to fulfil its statutory responsibilities and normal processes of challenge and dispute resolution have become untenable.

9. Reporting

9.1 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will publish an annual report. The report will set out the work that partners have done as a result of the arrangements and how effective the arrangements have been in practice. It will also include actions relating to local child safeguarding practice reviews and what the safeguarding partners have done as a result. The annual report will also include a summary of the Partnership's self-evaluation and the key findings of the Independent Scrutineer's evaluation of the effectiveness of the Partnership.

9.2 In addition, the report will also include:

- evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies on outcomes for children and families
- a record of actions taken by the partners in the report's period (or planned to be taken) to implement the recommendations of any reviews
- ways in which the partners have sought and utilised feedback from children, young people and families to inform their work and influence service provision

9.3 The annual report will be signed off through the governance arrangements of the Statutory Partners. The approved annual report, including local challenges to safeguarding and any national implications arising from these; the report will then be sent to the Secretary of State for Education, the DfE and to Ofsted, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care within seven days of publication.

10. Business Planning and Meetings – Annual Cycle⁹

March	MSCP – Away Day to review year & agree revised Business Plan
April	Start of the Business Year <i>Sub-Group Meeting Cycle Begins</i>
May	Executive Group Meeting Section 11 process begins
June	Partnership Meeting (Main Board) Annual Independent Scrutiny Process (from June 2020) <i>Sub-Group Meeting Cycle Continues</i>
July	Executive Group Meeting
Sept	Partnership Meeting (Main Board), Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report approved <i>Sub-Group Meeting Cycle Continues</i>
Oct	Annual Agency Peer Reviews - QA & Challenge Meetings
Nov	Executive Meeting Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Budget review / forward planning of priorities for referral to other partnerships & agencies for next year's planning cycle
Jan (mid)	Partnership Meeting (Main Board)
Feb	Executive Group Meeting – to plan March Away Day

Meetings will be scheduled to avoid school holidays where possible and to prevent clashes with other Strategic Partnerships

⁹ The Annual Business Cycle is subject to change and amendment by the Statutory Safeguarding Partners.

11. Resources¹⁰

11.1 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will have a shared budget to further its objectives. Statutory Partners will agree contributions each autumn for the following business year. The Statutory Partners will agree the level of funding secured from each partner, which should be equitable and proportionate, and propose any contributions from Relevant Agency, to support the local arrangements.

11.2 The cost of any local child safeguarding practice review will be borne by additional subscription from the Statutory Partners who have been involved in the case (the Local Authority the Police BCU and the CCG as the lead service commissioners). Statutory Partners may propose contributions from Relevant Agencies and Co-opted members who have been involved in the case. The outline costs of the commissioning of the review, independent author/s, legal advice, media work will be estimated as part of the planning of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review and apportioned according to agency/sector involvement in the case. The cost of dissemination of lessons will be borne as part of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Training Budget.

11.3 Partner agencies will bear the costs of the attendance and contribution of their representatives and will ensure that sufficient time is given to Members to attend meetings and undertake the work of the Board.

11.4 Partner agencies will take responsibility for chairing the range of Sub Groups to ensure that there is leadership across several disciplines.

11.5 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will be supported by a Business and Administrative team designed in accordance with the needs of the partnership.

11.6 Merton Council will host the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Support Team and Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership meetings. Partners will be encouraged to host appropriate meetings or training, where possible and appropriate at no expense to the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Budget.

11.7 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will not routinely seek legal advice on all its work but only when it is needed.

12. Multi-Agency Safeguarding Training

12.1 Multi-agency training is important in supporting the collective understanding of local need. Practitioners working in both universal services and specialist services have a responsibility to identify the symptoms and triggers of abuse and neglect, to share that information and provide children with the help they need.

12.2 The Partnership recognises that to be effective, practitioners need to continue to develop their knowledge and skills and need be aware of the new and emerging threats, including online abuse, grooming, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, county lines and radicalisation. To enable this, Safeguarding Partners have a multi-agency Training Strategy and a Training Programme to ensure that the training needs of the children's workforce are

¹⁰ The published arrangements should set out clearly any contributions agreed with relevant agencies, including funding, accommodation, services and any resources connected with the arrangements. See Working Together 2018, chapter 3, paragraphs 36-37

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met and that the Partnership is able to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of any training it commissions.

12.3 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will commission multi-agency training that will be delivered through the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership training officer and commissioned trainers. This training will be monitored for impact. The Quality Assurance Sub-Group will undertake multi-agency and inter-agency audits and will receive information regarding single agency audit activity to ensure that the partnership has a clear view regarding the quality of practice across the children's safeguarding system. The Independent Scrutineer will have a role in scrutinising the effectiveness of training, including multi-agency training to safeguard children and promote their welfare (see appendix 6)

12.4 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership expects that all organisations or groups will:

- undertake a periodic analysis of the training and development needs of their staff or members
- provide new employees or members with induction training on their role and responsibilities in relation to the safeguarding of children and young people
- provide refresher training to keep people up-to-date.
- evaluate the impact of individual learning on their professional development and practice

13. Delegation of key responsibilities

13.1 To further its objectives, the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership and to ensure that its statutory responsibilities are discharged will delegate its functions and activities by theme, through its Business Plan and the Sub Group Annual Work Plans. However, the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership (Main Board) will remain accountable for the work undertaken even where it has been delegated.

13.2 The table in Appendix 7 shows the main areas of delegation/responsibility. This will be reviewed annually at the Business Planning Away Day in March.

14. Dispute Resolution

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14.1 Every effort will be made by Safeguarding Partners to resolve disputes locally. Disputes within the Partnership will normally be raised and resolved meetings of the Executive Group of the Partnership. The agreed dispute resolution process is as follows

Stage 1

Where there is a disagreement, the Statutory Partners will meet to fully explore the basis of the dispute and secure an agreement. If the matter is not resolved at this stage.

Stage 2

The Independent Person will serve as an arbitrator, to facilitate resolution. If the matter remains unresolved. It will progress to next stage

Stage 3

The Independent Person will make a determination on the issue.

Stage 4

In the event of a Statutory Partner not meeting its statutory obligations, the Children and Social Work Act 2017 allows the Secretary of State to take enforcement action against any agency which is not meeting its statutory obligations.



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Appendix 1: Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Plan 2019 – 2021

Progress of this Plan will be updated monthly & monitored at each MSCB Meeting

Presented to the Board May 2019

Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership

Introduction

Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) works to ensure that local services work knowledgeably, effectively and together to ensure the highest quality work to safeguard children and young people and support their parents. The MSCP Priorities are agreed by the Statutory Partners, Relevant Agencies and Co-opted members at the annual Partnership away day in March. These priorities are then developed into a 24 month Business Plan that is monitored by the Executive Group and presented to the wider MSCP at each meeting.

The Business Plan is aligned to the MSCP Multi-Agency Quality Assurance Framework and performance indicators to ensure that there is clear line of sight between the priorities of the Partnership and the work of each Sub-Group.

In developing its priorities and the Business Plan the MSCB seeks to demonstrate its commitment to continuous improvement by ensuring that these build on the work achieved in the previous bi-annual Business Plan (that is, 2017-2019). Therefore, our priority in relation to early help builds on the work done to review and refresh the Merton Child, Young Person and Family Well-Being Model, the Merton Social Work Practice Model and the work being done across Merton.

Our work on Think Family builds on the work to address poor parental mental health, parental substance misuse and the work in relation to parental disability. This work has led the Partnership to a renewed focus on domestic abuse and neglect as specific forms of harm that require a joined up Think Family approach.

Finally our work in relation to child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, county lines, gangs and serious youth violence has led to our focus on further developing our strategic response to contextual safeguarding.

MSCP Priorities

Priorities for 2019-2021 business year are outlined as follows:

1. Early Help

Early Help: is part of a whole system approach and is based on a clear understanding of local need. This will mean that children and their families will experience a high quality and coordinated service that meets their assessed needs. The Partnership's priority is to ensure that

Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership

there is clear coordination and quality assurance of early help; with effective integration between the front door with a shared focus on the journey and experience of the child and family.

2. Think family: Domestic Abuse and Neglect

'Think Family' represents our joined up approach to working with families, both children and adults, so that families' needs are assessed holistically and there is a coordinated response to assessed needs. Our work in relation to Think Family is focused on effectively responding the following two forms of harm:

- a) **Think Family Domestic Abuse:** our priority is to protect children who are at risk of domestic abuse by working effectively with families to create a safe parenting environment. The MSCP will monitor, coordinate and evaluate the work of partner agencies to help and protect children at risk of domestic abuse. This work includes effective coordination of the work with other multi-agency groups that have responsibility to responding to domestic abuse.
- b) **Think Family Neglect:** our priority is to help children who are at risk of experiencing neglect. The partnership will monitor, coordinate and evaluate the work of all agencies to ensure that children at risk of neglect receive help and protection.

3. Contextual Safeguarding

The Partnership will work with all agencies to ensure that there is a highly coordinated multi-agency and whole-council approach to a range of adolescent risks that occur in contexts beyond the family home (e.g. neighbourhood, schools, local shopping centres, youth venues etc.). These risks include child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, serious youth violence, peer on peer abuse, harmful sexual behaviour and other overlapping form of harm. The Partnership is aware of the risks of exploitation in their local area.

This Business Plan contains the MSCP priority actions. The on-going work of the MSCP and its Sub-Groups and Task Groups continues alongside it and will be incorporated into the Sub-Groups' annual work plans and reporting cycle to the MSCP.

New priorities may be added during the year, including any identified risks which will be monitored in the confidential risk log below.

The Plan will be updated and presented to each MSCP meeting by the Partnership Manager for monitoring and exception reporting

Golden Threads

1. The Voice and experience of children
2. Neglect and the Trigger Trio¹¹
3. The impact of poverty, disadvantage and adverse childhood experiences

¹¹ The trigger trio is domestic abuse, parental substance misuse and poor parental mental health

Appendix 2: Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Membership (including Statutory Partners, Relevant Agencies, Co-opted Members and Advisors)¹²

- SP Statutory Partner**
- RA Relevant Agency**
- C Co-opted/Community Members**
- A Advisors**
- B Board Support**
- SGC Sub-Group Chair**

Statutory Partners will nominate a standing deputy to represent their agency and take decisions on their Agency’s behalf

Relevant Agencies will nominate a standing deputy to represent their agency and take decisions on their Agency’s behalf.

Where a Sub Group Chair is appointed who is not a Board Member they will be co-opted to the Board.

Decisions of the partnership will be normally made through robust debate and consensus. On the rare occasions where a vote is taken, the votes will be taken from the three statutory.

Sub Group Chairs may be asked to attend the Executive if the business of their sub group is on the agenda.

Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership	
The Independent Person (Chair)	
Statutory Partners	
Agency	Representative
London Borough of Merton	The Chief Executive of the Local Authority, (or their nominated deputy)
NHS Merton CCG	Chief Officer, Merton Clinical Commissioning Group (or their nominated deputy)
Metropolitan Police Service Basic Command Unit	BCU Commander, (or their nominated deputy)

¹² See statutory guidance *Working Together 2018* Chapter 3 page 73 and pages 76-77

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Relevant Agencies	
Agency	Representative
Acute Trust/Health Provider	Director of Nursing, SW London & St George's Mental Health Trust
Acute Trust/Provider	Chief Nurse, St George's Healthcare NHS Trust
Acute Trust/Provider	Chief Nurse, Epsom & St. Helier NHS Trust
Acute Trust/Provider	Clinical Director SW London & St Georges CAMHS service
Community Health Service	Director of Nursing, Community Health Services
Housing	Registered Social Landlord Representative
London Borough of Merton (Housing)	Housing Needs Manager, Community & Housing
London Probation – Community Rehabilitation Company	Assistant Chief Officer The London Community Rehabilitation Company Limited (or their delegated representative)
Merton Education	Primary School Representative
Merton Education	Special School Representative
Merton Education	Secondary School Representative
Merton Education	Independent Sector School Representative
Merton Education	Further Education College Representative
National Probation Service	Regional Safeguarding Lead
NHS Merton CCG	Designated General Practitioner for Child Protection, Merton CCG
NHS Merton CCG	Designated Doctor for Child Protection, Merton CCG
NHS Merton CCG	Designated Nurse Safeguarding, Merton CCG

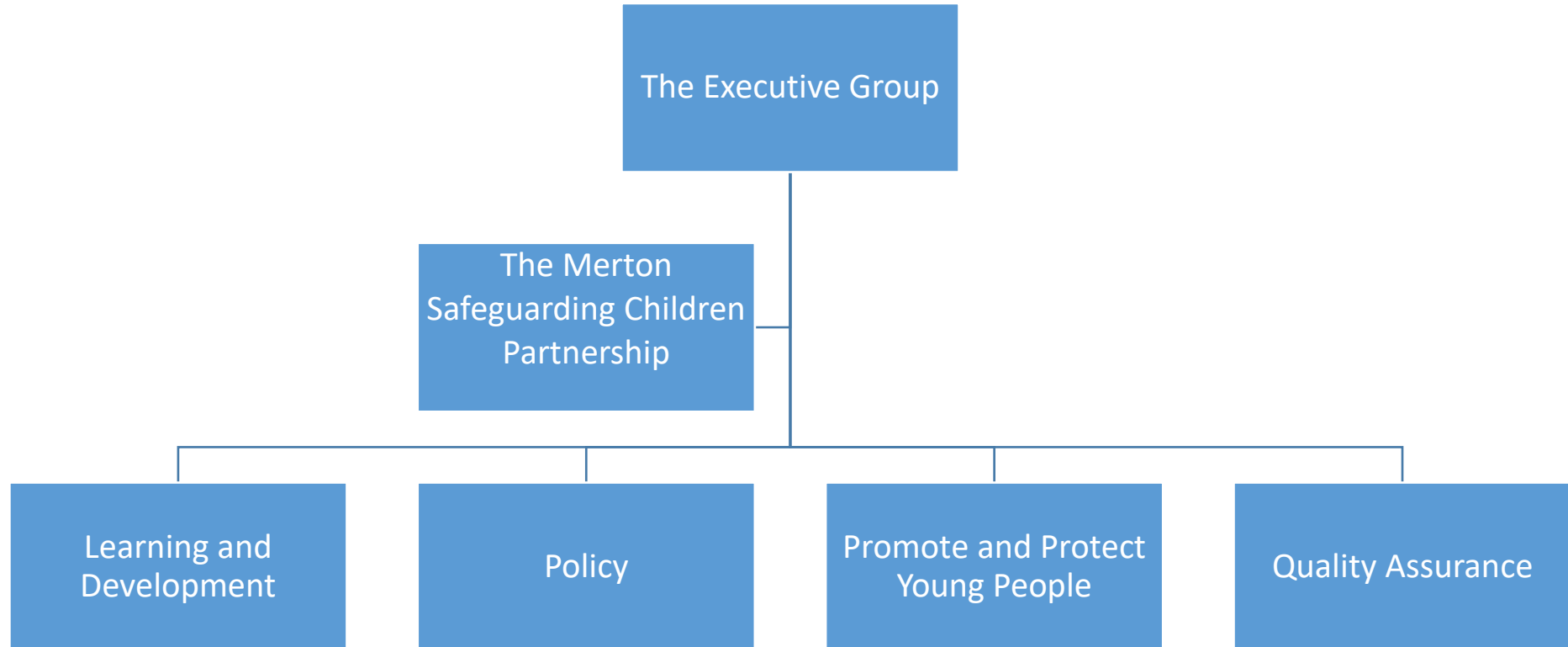
Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership

Co-opted Members	
Agency	Representative
London Borough of Merton	Lead Member Children's Services
London Borough of Merton	The Head of Community Safety
Community Representative	Lay Members (Two)
Department for Work and Pensions	Representative
London Borough of Merton	Director of Public Health
London Borough of Merton	Service Manager, Policy, Planning and Performance
London Borough of Merton (Adults)	Safeguarding Adults Manager, Community & Housing
London Borough of Merton	Assistant Director of CSC & YI, CSF
London Borough of Merton	Assistant Director of Education
NHS England (to be sent papers for information and consultation)	Head of Quality (South London) and Safeguarding (London)
BS, A	MSCP Policy and Development Manager
BS	MSCP Administrator/s

Statutory Partners will ensure that the voice and concerns of schools, colleges and other educational providers are taken into account, as appropriate, at Executive meetings of the Partnership.

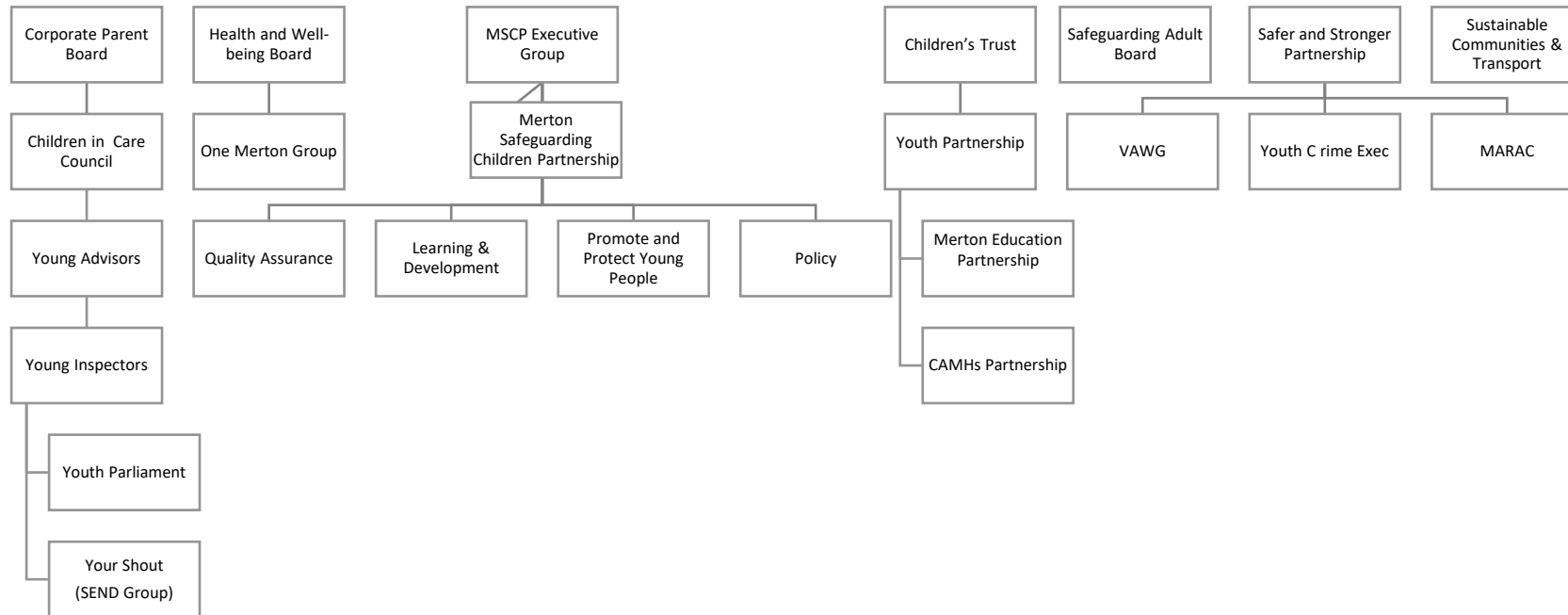
Executive Group Membership	
	The Independent Person (Attends as if required by Statutory Partners)
SP	The Accountable Officer of Merton Clinical Commissioning Group – (or their delegated representative)
SP	BCU, Commander Metropolitan Police (or their delegated representative)
SP	Chief Executive, London Borough of Merton (or their delegated representative)
SGC	Sub Group Chairs may be asked to attend the Executive Group if the business of their sub group is on the agenda.

Appendix 3: Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Structure



Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership

Appendix 4: Governance and Strategic Partnerships



Appendix 5: The Role of the Independent Person

Purpose of the Role

To have overall responsibility, as Independent Person for the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) for promoting the Partnership's ability to independently fulfil its statutory objectives of:

- Co-ordinating what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area; and
- Ensuring the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.

To provide independent leadership and strategic vision to the partnership

To chair meetings of the partnership and any extraordinary meetings as required

To ensure that the partnership has an independent, objective and authoritative voice and identity

To ensure that the partnership operates independently and any conflicts of interest are managed appropriately

To provide assurance that the partnership operates effectively with good collaboration between Statutory Partners and Relevant Agencies.

To facilitate the Dispute Resolution process.

Key Tasks & Responsibilities of the Independent Person:

The Independent Person's tasks and responsibilities in relation to the MSCP are to:

- To provide strategic leadership to all agencies to secure best practice with particular regard to child protection, safeguarding and best outcomes for vulnerable children and young people in Merton. This will ensure effective inter agency challenge and highest performance in the safeguarding of children and young people and promoting their welfare.
- Manage all aspects of MSCP meetings, including agenda setting, chairing of meetings, agreeing minutes and monitoring actions to be taken;
- In conjunction with relevant officers, ensure that key national, regional and local issues are brought to the attention of the MSCP;
- In conjunction with relevant statutory officers, to formulate needs-led objectives for the MSCP and ensure the MSCP achieves them;
- In conjunction with relevant statutory officers, ensure that the MSCP is meeting its core responsibilities;
- In conjunction with relevant statutory officers, ensure processes are in place to lead, monitor, review and evaluate all safeguarding practices within the geographical area of Merton;

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- Ensure procedures are in place to raise issues of poor performance with MSCP agencies and to ensure corrective, timely action is taken;
- Oversee and provide support in the production of the MSCP Business Plan and Annual Report;
- Oversee the delegation of MSCP business to the MSCP sub groups, ensure those groups operate effectively, reviewing them as necessary, and ensure systems are in place to report back to the MSCP;
- Ensure the MSCP Training programme is monitored, reviewed with Statutory Partners and relevant agencies as necessary and is responsive to training needs analysis;
- Determine the need for National or Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews with appropriate advice;
- To be accountable to the Independent Scrutineer for the performance of the Partnership in relation to safeguarding children and young people in Merton and promoting their welfare.
- Maintain regular liaison with the Local Authority (LA) Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services (DCS, or their delegated representative), Merton CCG Accountable Officer (or their delegated representative), the Commander of the Metropolitan Police Basic Command Unit for Merton (or their delegated representative) and the Council's Lead Member for Children's Services

Appendix 6: The Role of the Independent Scrutineer (Bexley Model¹³)

- Assess how well organisations come together to cooperate with one another to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to hold each other to account for effective safeguarding.
- Contribute to the content of the partnership's annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, their performance and the effectiveness of local services.
- Assess the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families including early help.
- Assess whether the 3 safeguarding partners are fulfilling their statutory obligations.
- Scrutinise any quality assurance activity (including multi-agency case file auditing and processes for identifying lessons to be learned).
- Scrutinise the effectiveness of training, including multiagency training, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Provide the 3 safeguarding partners with the necessary assurances regarding the robustness and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements for the borough.
- Work with the safeguarding partnership Operational team to plan their programme of activity.
- Provide a rigorous and transparent assessment of the extent to which appropriate and effective systems and processes are in place in all partner agencies so as to fulfil their statutory duties and ensure that children are protected and that appropriate safeguarding strategies are developed and embedded.
- Evaluate arrangements for the operation of the safeguarding partnership, including the purpose and functions of board meetings, and recommend and implement appropriate changes.
- Support the implementation of the findings and outcomes of any safeguarding reviews, providing professional input to the development of any changes to existing models of delivery.
- Confirm, or not, that effective performance management, audit and quality assurance mechanisms are in place within partner organisations which will support the 3 safeguarding partners to fulfil their statutory objectives, and which will enable the partnership to identify and measure its success and impact.
- Ensure that the 3 safeguarding partners provide independent, robust and effective challenge to partners.
- Ensure that the voices of children, young people and their families are appropriately represented and heard in the work of the partnership.
- Through personal example, open commitment and clear action, ensure diversity is positively valued, resulting in equal access and treatment in employment, service delivery and communications.
- Support the development of innovation in the system in respect of relationship based practice.

¹³ From *Bexley Safeguarding for Children and Young People Partnership Our New Arrangements* October 2018, pp. 35-36

Appendix 7: Delegation of key responsibilities

Responsibility / Action	Leadership	Comment
<p>To ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each body ...</p> <p>Assess whether LSCB partners are fulfilling their statutory duties as set out in Chapter 3 of Working Together 2018 (section 11 Children Act 2004)</p>	<p>Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Chair, Executive Group</p> <p>Quality Assurance Sub Group for the monitoring of agency and multi-agency service delivery</p> <p>Independent Scrutineer</p>	<p>Annual Agency QA & Peer Reviews (section 11)</p> <p>Multi-Agency Data Set</p> <p>Single Agency Audit and Multi-Agency Audit Programme</p>
<p>Developing policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area of the authority, including policies and procedures...</p>	<p>Task and Finish Groups which may be shared with neighbouring local authorities.</p>	<p>Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership subscribes to the London Child Protection Procedures (LCPP); it should be exceptional for the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership to have its own Policy or Protocols, except where it is necessary to localise the LCPP or that there is particular need</p> <p>Domestic abuse Parental Mental ill-health Drug and substance abuse</p>
<p>Strategy, Protocol and Action Plan for Child Sexual Exploitation</p>	<p>Promote and Protect Young People Strategy Sub Group</p>	<p>Young people identified as at risk of CSE will be monitored through the MARVE</p>
<p>Monitoring of children who are particularly vulnerable</p>	<p>Promote and Protect Young People Strategy Sub Group</p>	<p>Online Safety FGM County Lines Missing Children Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Trafficking Cultural abuse</p>

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		Radicalization/Terrorism
<p>Training</p> <p>Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of training, including multi-agency training</p> <p>Undertake training needs analyses and commission multi-agency training</p>	<p>Learning and Development Sub Group which may be shared with the Safeguarding Partnerships of one or more local authorities.</p>	<p>Training Strategy</p> <p>Annual Training Needs Analyses</p> <p>Commissioning the annual Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership multi-agency training programme</p>
<p>Allegations concerning persons who work with children</p>	<p>Children, Schools & Families – will provide the LADO</p>	<p>Quarterly data to QA Sub Group</p> <p>Annual LADO Report to Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership</p>
Responsibility / Action	Leadership	Comment
<p>Private fostering</p>	<p>Children, Schools & Families – will assess referrals from Partners</p>	<p>Annual Private Fostering Report to Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership</p>
<p>Communicating to persons and bodies in the area of the authority the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children</p>	<p>Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Chair</p> <p>Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Manager/Support Group</p> <p>Training and Development Sub Group</p>	<p>Governed by the agreed Communications Strategy which will be reviewed each year as part of the Annual Business Review</p>
<p>Local and national Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and other Learning Improvement Reviews</p>	<p>Statutory Partners with the Independent Scrutineer advised by Executive Group</p> <p>Quality Assurance Sub Group will be responsible for Actions arising from reviews</p>	<p>Designated Doctor, Designated Nurse and Principal Social Worker will have role in advising</p>
<p>Child Death Reviews</p>		<p>With Public Health and CCG</p>

Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership

	Child Death Overview Panel	
Learning and Improving System	Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership All Sub Groups and All Partners	Learning and Improvement System to be reviewed
Learning and Improving - monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of what is done by the authority and their Board partners individually and collectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and advising them on ways to improve	Quality Assurance Sub Group Learning and Development Sub Group will promote the lessons from CSPRs, audits and other learning processes.	The Quality Assurance Sub Group will commission multi-agency audits and monitor single agency audits Termly Practitioners Safeguarding Briefings on local and national learning Lessons posted to the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership website
Monitoring the effectiveness of Initial Child Protection Conferences ICPCs (WT 2018 Chapter 1 page 48)	Quality Assurance Sub Group	Each multi-agency audit will include at least one ICPC and once per year there will be an audit of ICPCs. Data on ICPCs will also be included in the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Data Set
Participating in the planning of services for children	Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive Group	The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will receive feedback from the Health and Well Being Board and expects to be consulted on any planning which includes the safeguarding of children or promotion of their welfare; e.g. Domestic Abuse Strategy
Responsibility / Action	Leadership	Comment
Annual Report	Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Chair and all agencies with support of the Sub Group Chairs and the Business Manager	Rigorous and transparent assessment of the effectiveness of local services To include any identified weaknesses and any lessons from reviews (WT 2018 Chapter 4)

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Participation and Consultation with young people	Business Manager with the LBM Participation Manager/s	Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership
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Appendix 8: Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Serious incidents, National Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Statutory Guidance for National and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews is contained in Chapter 4 of **Working Together 2018**. Child safeguarding practice reviews are regulated by **The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018**¹⁴

Section 16C (1) of the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) places a duty on local authorities to notify incidents to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. The act states

Where a local authority in England knows or suspects that a child has been abused or neglected, the local authority must notify the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel if –

- (a) the child dies or is seriously harmed in the local authority's area, or
- (b) while normally resident in the local authority's area, the child dies or is seriously harmed outside England.

Working Together 2018 further states

The local authority must notify any event that meets the above criteria to the Panel. They should do so within five working days of becoming aware that the incident has occurred. The local authority should also report the event to the safeguarding partners in their area (and in other areas if appropriate) **within five working days**.

The local authority must **also** notify the Secretary of State and Ofsted where a looked after child has died, whether or not abuse or neglect is known or suspected.

The duty to notify events to the Panel rests with the local authority. Others who have functions relating to children the notification to Ofsted page on Gov.uk should inform the safeguarding partners of any incident which they think should be considered for a child safeguarding practice review. Contact details and notification forms for local authorities to notify incidents to the Panel are available from <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-a-serious-child-safeguarding-incident>

Decisions on local and national reviews

Safeguarding partners must make arrangements to:

- identify serious child safeguarding cases which raise issues of importance in relation to the area **and**
- commission and oversee the review of those cases, where they consider it appropriate for a review to be undertaken

¹⁴The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2018/789/contents/made>

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When a serious incident becomes known to the safeguarding partners, they must consider whether the case meets the criteria for a local review.

Meeting the criteria does not mean that safeguarding partners must automatically carry out a local child safeguarding practice review. It is for them to determine whether a review is appropriate, taking into account that the overall purpose of a review is to identify improvements to practice. Issues might appear to be the same in some child safeguarding cases but reasons for actions and behaviours may be different and so there may be different learning to be gained from similar cases. Decisions on whether to undertake reviews should be made transparently and the rationale communicated appropriately, including to families.

Safeguarding partners must consider the criteria and guidance below when determining whether to carry out a local child safeguarding practice review.

The criteria which the local safeguarding partners must take into account include whether the case:

- highlights or may highlight improvements needed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including where those improvements have been previously identified
- highlights or may highlight recurrent themes in the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children
- highlights or may highlight concerns regarding two or more organisations or agencies working together effectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- is one which the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel have considered and concluded a local review may be more appropriate

Safeguarding partners should also have regard to the following circumstances:

- where the safeguarding partners have cause for concern about the actions of a single agency
- where there has been no agency involvement and this gives the safeguarding partners cause for concern
- where more than one local authority, police area or clinical commissioning group is involved, including in cases where families have moved around
- where the case may raise issues relating to safeguarding or promoting the welfare of children in institutional settings

Some cases may not meet the definition of a 'serious child safeguarding case', but nevertheless raise issues of importance to the local area. That might, for example, include where there has been good practice, poor practice or where there have been 'near miss' events. Safeguarding partners may choose to undertake a local child safeguarding practice review in these or other circumstances.

The Rapid Review (to be distinguished from CDOP or Health review processes)¹⁵

The safeguarding partners should promptly undertake a rapid review of the case, in line with any guidance published by the Panel. The aim of this rapid review is to enable safeguarding partners to:

- gather the facts about the case, as far as they can be readily established at the time
- discuss whether there is any immediate action needed to ensure children's safety and share any learning appropriately
- consider the potential for identifying improvements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- decide what steps they should take next, including whether or not to undertake a child safeguarding practice review

As soon as the rapid review is complete, the safeguarding partners should send a copy to the Panel. They should also share with the Panel their decision about whether a local child safeguarding practice review is appropriate, or whether they think the case may raise issues which are complex or of national importance such that a national review may be appropriate. They may also do this if, during the course of a local child safeguarding practice review, new information comes to light which suggests that a national review may be appropriate.

As soon as they have determined that a local review will be carried out, they should inform the Panel, Ofsted and DfE, including the name of any reviewer they have commissioned

Commissioning a reviewer or reviewers for a local child safeguarding practice review

The safeguarding partners are responsible for commissioning and supervising reviewers for local reviews.

In all cases they should consider whether the reviewer has the following:

- professional knowledge, understanding and practice relevant to local child safeguarding practice reviews, including the ability to engage both with practitioners and children and families
- knowledge and understanding of research relevant to children's safeguarding issues
- ability to recognise the complex circumstances in which practitioners work together to safeguard children
- ability to understand practice from the viewpoint of the individuals, organisations or agencies involved at the time rather than using hindsight
- ability to communicate findings effectively
- whether the reviewer has any real or perceived conflict of interest

Methodology

The safeguarding partners should agree with the reviewer(s) the method by which the review should be conducted, taking into account this guidance and the principles of the systems methodology recommended by the Munro review, a way of looking at and analysing frontline

¹⁵ Working Together 2018, chapter 4, paragraphs 20-21, pp.86-87

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practice as well as organisational structures and learning. The methodology should be able to reach recommendations that will improve outcomes for children. All reviews should reflect the child's perspective and the family context. . The methodology should provide a way of looking at and analysing frontline practice as well as organisational structures and learning. All reviews should reflect the child's perspective and family context.

The review should be proportionate to the circumstances of the case, focus on potential learning, and establish and explain the reasons why the events occurred as they did.

As part of their duty to ensure that the review is of satisfactory quality, the safeguarding partners should seek to ensure that:

- practitioners are fully involved in reviews and invited to contribute their perspectives without fear of being blamed for actions they took in good faith
- families, including surviving children, are invited to contribute to reviews. This is important for ensuring that the child is at the centre of the process. They should understand how they are going to be involved and their expectations should be managed appropriately and sensitively

The safeguarding partners must supervise the review to ensure that the reviewer is making satisfactory progress and that the review is of satisfactory quality. The safeguarding partners may request information from the reviewer during the review to enable them to assess progress and quality; any such requests must be made in writing. The President of the Family Division's guidance covering the role of the judiciary in SCRs should also be noted in the context of child safeguarding practice reviews.¹⁶

The main methodologies promoted by the DfE are described in Appendix 4.

Information Sharing for Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

The local safeguarding partnership has the statutory authority to require an agency or person to provide information.¹⁷ Agencies supplying reports to the CSPR or Learning and Improvement Review Process should ensure that information (chronologies, commentary and analysis) are signed off at an appropriately senior level.

The Final Report and Publication

Safeguarding partners must ensure that the final report includes:

- a summary of any recommended improvements to be made by persons in the area to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- an analysis of any systemic or underlying reasons why actions were taken or not in respect of matters covered by the report

¹⁶ President's guidance: Judicial Cooperation with Serious Case Reviews
<https://www.judiciary.uk/publications/presidents-guidance-judicial-cooperation-with-serious-case-reviews/>

¹⁷ See Working Together 2018, chapter 3, paragraphs 28 and 29

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Any recommendations should be clear on what is required of relevant agencies and others collectively and individually, and by when, and focussed on improving outcomes for children.

Reviews are about promoting and sharing information about improvements, both within the area and potentially beyond, so safeguarding partners must publish the report, unless they consider it inappropriate to do so. In such a circumstance, they must publish any information about the improvements that should be made following the review that they consider it appropriate to publish. The name of the reviewer(s) should be included. Published reports or information must be publicly available for at least one year.

Terms of reference / scope – including the period of the case history that the review will cover up to the critical incident – bearing in mind proportionality and the need to influence current practice; and any specific questions that the review should be asked to address.

Involvement of other local safeguarding partnerships, joint-commissioning, which safeguarding partnership will take the lead – involvement of agencies outside the safeguarding partnerships area and how lessons will be shared with relevant commissioners and safeguarding partnerships for such agencies.

Budget

In commissioning a CSPR or a Multi-Agency Learning and Improvement Review the partnership will consider the implications for the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership joint budget and whether it will be necessary to seek additional subscriptions from Commissioning Agencies on a pro-rata basis to meet the cost of engaging independent reviewer/s, legal advice (if needed), facilitating the review and meetings and communications advice.

Partner Agencies required to provide reports or information to the Review Process or invited to provide a representative for a CSPR Panel will meet their own costs for this.

Formulating, Agreeing and Monitoring Actions

The safeguarding partners should take account of the findings from their own local reviews and from all national reviews, with a view to considering how identified improvements should be implemented locally, including the way in which organisations and agencies work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The safeguarding partners should highlight findings from reviews with relevant parties locally and should regularly audit progress on the implementation of recommended improvements. Improvement should be sustained through regular monitoring and follow up of actions so that the findings from these reviews make a real impact on improving outcomes for children.

Actions should be planned and carried out confidentially where it is not possible to 'publish' a review pending a trial, inquest or any other enquiry.

The Quality Assurance Sub-Group will monitor the implementation of recommendations emerging from local and national CSPRs and other reviews.

Media Response

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Where a critical incident or trial is likely to attract media attention the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership multi-agency Media response will be planned by the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Statutory Partners and Relevant Agencies and with the advice of the Merton Council Communications Department or other similar communications experts. No agency should respond to media requests without the agreement of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Chair, the Director of Children, Schools and Families and the Merton Council Communications Team.

It would be exceptional to respond to the Media before the outcome of a trial or inquest.

The need to co-ordinate a response will be agreed in accordance with requests and in planning the publication of any local or national Child Safeguarding Practice Review.

Appendix 9: DfE Recognised Child Safeguarding Practice Review Methodologies

1. Learning Together ('The SCIE Model') – a flexible systems model for all learning and improvement activities

History of Learning Together

- Designed in collaboration with Professor Eileen Munro in 2008-2010
- Tested and refined in collaboration with the sector including the North West, West Midlands and South West regional improvement and efficiency partnerships and London Safeguarding Children Board
- Used since in over 50 case reviews
- DfE grant supported establishment of pool of accredited reviewers 2011-2013
- Ministerial dispensation to Devon, Lancashire and Coventry LSCBs to use Learning Together in SCRs
- A sliding scale of applications being developed and tested
- New pilots underway, in Scotland, Germany and the Netherlands and in adult safeguarding

A systems approach for a high risk sector

SCIE's Learning Together model is a tried and tested systems approach for improving child safety and welfare. In both these respects it is unique.

A systems approach is the established methodology for improving safety in fields marked by 'low probability, high impact' incidents and accidents e.g. aviation, nuclear power as well as health. SCIE has adapted the systems approach specifically for the field of multi-agency safeguarding and child protection.

With extensive testing and refinement it is the model of choice for a growing network of Safeguarding Boards, across both adult services and the children's sector, as well as in Europe.

More than a just a method SCIE Learning Together offers:

- a core set of principles and analytic tools to unify all learning and improvement activities including audits, case reviews and child safeguarding practice reviews (CSPRs)
- a range of possible applications including 'reflective audits'; 'focused' and 'speed' versions
- opportunities to build internal capacity by having staff trained and accredited in the approach
- access to a pool of independent reviewers who are trained and accredited in the model
- availability of methodological supervision to assure rigour and reliability of analyses and foster expertise over time
- access to an archive of systemic findings produced through Learning Together audits, case reviews and SCRs

Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership

- membership to a methodological network providing forums for critical reflection and on-going development of the model and its application

Working Together; Learning Together

Local safeguarding partnerships have been required to maintain a local learning and improvement framework that supports the regular conduct of reviews and audits beyond those meeting the statutory CSPR criteria. "Learning Together" is based on methodological principles that are not negotiable but is otherwise flexible in how it can be applied. So it lends itself to underpinning a wide range of learning activities..

Principles for learning and improvement

There are five principles according to which CSPRs and other case reviews should be conducted:

1. Recognising the complex circumstances in which professionals work
2. Seeking to understand the underlying reasons why people acted as they did
3. Seeking to avoid hindsight bias
4. Being transparent about research methods
5. Making use of research as well as case evidence to inform findings

These echo the essential ingredients that Professor Munro explained must be present in an investigation, for it to justify the name a 'systems approach.' They are central to the core of Learning Together, which we refer to as the 'methodological heart'.

Use in Child safeguarding Practice Reviews

The new requirement to involve staff in CSPRs can raise challenges when there are criminal proceedings and staff are witnesses. This is particularly so for models, like Learning Together, which involve bringing the multi-agency staff group together as standard. Devon LSCB's experience demonstrates this is possible nonetheless. However, decisions about necessary adaptations will need to be made on a case by case basis.

<http://www.scie.org.uk/children/learningtogether/index.asp>

2. Child Practice Reviews ('The Welsh Assembly Model')

Child Practice reviews replace the Serious Case Review system in Wales and came into effect on 1st January 2013. They are underpinned by a clear set of principles and bring together agencies, staff and families in a collective endeavour to reflect and learn from what has happened in order to improve practice for the future. The focus is on accountability and not culpability. It is about learning and not about blame.

If a situation meets the criteria for a review then a Review Panel is established to both guide and steer the process but also to be integral to the learning. The tasks of the Review Panel are to:

- Agree the time frame of the review.
- Request agency timelines of significant events/contacts.
- Commission a Reviewer or Reviewers.
- Merge the timelines.
- Identify and prepare participants for the learning event.
- Ensure the family are engaged in the process

At the heart of the review is the learning event, facilitated by the reviewer(s), which brings together the practitioners who were involved in the situation to reflect on what happened and to identify learning for future practice

After the event, a short, anonymised report is prepared, together with an outline action plan and these are presented to the LSCB for discussion and approval. There is also feedback to the family of the findings.

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dhss/publications/121221guidanceen.pdf>

3. Root Cause Analysis (this methodology is used by Health agencies for serious incident investigations as set out in the NHS England Serious Incident Framework)

RCA was developed following a series of catastrophic problems in the 1960s NASA space programme. It has been applied in a variety of industrial contexts since, ranging from nuclear, rail and shipping, to healthcare, pharmaceutical manufacturing and social care.

RCA offers the opportunity to 'open a window on the system' and promotes:

- Systematic methodology
- Full systems review
- Systemic solutions development

It uses questioning approaches to uncover ever-deeper explanations for causes or contributors of adverse events, errors or problems.

RCA techniques are wide ranging, the most well-known of which is probably the 'Fishbone diagram'. The NHS has honed these techniques and promotes those that have proved most useable and effective.

There is no implication that a single 'root cause' will be enough, often many causes are identified all requiring remedial action. The big challenge for reviewers applying RCA is to stay focused on the systematic process and know how to identify systemic issues which are controllable, manageable or adjustable. So, for example 'not enough staff', 'staff sickness' or 'made a mistake' may all be true, but they are problems or conditions rather than 'root causes'. As such they require further analysis to determine why they were able to impact the system without intervention and, therefore, shed light on most effective measures to address these causes or underlying factors to improve the system.

RCA focuses the reviewer's attention on organisational or systems explanations of the actions of professionals delivering direct services to children. RCA is viewed as a tool of continuous improvement. It can be used as a 'whole review' approach or as a 'set of techniques' within other CSPR methodologies. It provides simple, well-structured tools to identify exactly 'what?' happened before leading the reviewer to research 'why?'

It breaks down the incident (serious injury or death) into the 'what?' (a chronology of events), and subjects each unwanted action or omission to examination. So, reviewers can get from 'SW unfamiliar with procedure' to 'SW trained but not supervised' to 'supervisor distracted by other priorities' and finally to 'organisational priorities not clearly stated at strategic level'. In this way the actions of frontline professionals are explained in the context of overarching systemic problems.

<http://www.nrls.npsa.nhs.uk/resources/?EntryId45=59901>

4. Significant incident learning process (SILP)

Leicestershire & Rutland LSCB pioneered a method of reviewing significant cases by formulating SILP with an independent company. The drivers were (and still are) :

- A reaction against the bureaucracy, expense and cosmetics of Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) which distract energies from the family, the staff and the learning
- A reaction in favour of the engagement of those frontline staff and first line managers involved in the case in owning their action learning

Practitioners are invariably left isolated both during and after the SCR process. The key and unique principles of SILP are that alongside members of LSCB SCR Panels and agency Safeguarding Leads, frontline practitioners and first line managers will:

- have access to all the agency reports prepared for the review, setting the SILP process apart from the conventional serious case review
- fully participate in analysis and debates of all the material, including early drafts of the Overview Report. Learning is no longer confined to the panel.

Analysis, reflection and learning on a multi-agency basis are greatly enhanced by the practitioners involved in the case at the time being able and willing to share:

- their view of what was going on in and around the case
- their understanding of their role and the part they were playing
- their thinking and their context at the time
- their perspective on what aspects of the whole system influenced them
- the theories and practices they were using

As encouraged by Munro* the answers to these questions produce both the "Why" analysis and also explain the impact of organisations and systems on the events under review. Moreover, the dangers of hindsight bias are greatly reduced by this approach.

A streamlined process with slimmed down written material means the learning emerges far quicker i.e. as soon as participants read all the reports.

How the SILP Methodology Fits With Working Together

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 suggests reviews could be conducted of cases which do not meet the criteria for a serious case review. SILP is a model for these reviews which some Boards (partnerships) are choosing to incorporate into their framework for learning and improvement under the guidance.

How SILP Methodology Might Be Used When Conducting a Child Safeguarding Practice Review

- a. In addition to operating SILP as a standalone process, SILP principles can be embedded in cases designated as CSPR. Thus we now also deliver the hybrid model, i.e. incorporating SILP into a CSPR.
- b. The Learning Event and Recall Session are complementary to and enhance the role of the panel, with learning front loaded in this process.

5. Appreciative Inquiry ('AI')

AI methodology: AI involves the *'art and practice of asking unconditional questions that strengthen a system's or person's capacity to heighten its positive potential'*. Rooted in action research and organisational development, Appreciative Inquiry [AI] is a strengths-based, collaborative approach for creating learning change. AI seeks to discover and connect to those things that give life to people, organisations and human systems at a time when they are most engaged, effective and healthy. 30 years of research and practice show that conversation about strengths and successes creates change and innovation as *'human systems move in the direction of what we most persistently, actively and authentically ask questions about'*. AI provides us with the ultimate tools for genuine real time learning, change and improvement.

How does the AI methodology fit with statutory guidance on learning and improvement?

CSPR's conducted with an appreciative eye create a safe, respectful and comfortable environment in which people look together at the interventions that have successfully safeguarded a child; and share honestly about the things they got wrong and how that felt and feels. They get to look at where, how and why events took place and use their collective hindsight wisdom to design practice improvements. 'Reactive learning', that takes place in response to circumstances we had no hand in creating or control over, is a limited type of learning. Conversely, deeper levels of learning, where *'thinking and doing'* become integrated, take place when people work together as a whole system to agree what needs to be achieved, understand one another's perspectives, make well informed and shared decisions at each step of their shared journey. In an AI CSPR, we ask questions like: *'If we created the circumstances in which this child became unsafe, what shall we do to create something different?'*

“Few people get up in the morning thinking: *I really want to make a lot of mistakes today*. Rather people wonder, *what do I need to do around here to succeed?*”

How the AI methodology might be used when conducting a Serious Case Review:

AI provides a rigorous, inclusive and collaborative inquiry process, involving the whole system in deep learning and simultaneous change design; within a framework that is customised to suit each unique and individual child, family and local circumstance. Key aspects include:

- Everyone, including children, young people and their families, inquires together with a motivated eye.
- All contributions are heard and valued; people are respected.
- Mistakes, both individual and systemic, are accepted, understood and used as opportunities for learning and change.
- Change begins from the outset of the inquiry, healing is enabled and shared learning renews and improves practice immediately.

Appendix 10: The Merton Child, Young Person and Family Well-Being Model

