



Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership

Business Plan 2021 – 2023

July 2021

1. Introduction

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 places a duty on local safeguarding partners to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the area. This includes making 'arrangements for safeguarding partners to work together to identify and respond to the needs of children in the area'.

In Merton, the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) leads on delivering against this duty. All partners are committed to working together so that every child in Merton is safe, well and able to reach their full potential. The MSCP oversees the safeguarding children agenda, challenges the work of partner organisations, and commits to an approach that learns lessons, strives for good practice for children, young people and their families in Merton.

The MSCP Business Plan sets out the strategic commitment of the partnership in making its vision a reality and will form the basis of its work over the next two years. This Business Plan, in addition to the core functions, has set out a number of key priorities that have been defined locally.

The priorities will remain flexible for the duration of the Business Plan and be responsive to learning from case reviews and any other emerging issues. The detail will be set out in specific work plans of the sub groups and related task and finish groups.

2. Our Priorities 2021-23

The MSCP Business Plan 2021-23 is intentionally brief and focused on strategic priorities that form the basis of the work of the partnership over the year. The MSCP and partner agencies prioritise improvement in areas and on issues of greatest risk and concern to safeguarding as well as responding to emerging needs. This includes learning from local and national practice reviews. In particular the MSCP is aware of the impact Covid-19 is having on the delivery of front-line child safeguarding services. For some children and young people Covid-19 has increased their risk and vulnerability. We will ensure learning from case reviews will be reflected in Sub Group Work Plans and that the 'learning loop' from case and practice reviews will be quality assured through activities such as independent scrutiny and exploration of safeguarding issues in the Sub Groups.

For 2021-23 we will be ensuring that the impacts of Covid 19 are tracked and reflected in the actions on our priority areas. The priority areas are:

Priority 1: Early Help & Neglect

Priority 2: Contextual safeguarding

Priority 3: Domestic Abuse and Think Family

Priority 4: Strong Leadership & Strong Partnership

The Annual Sub Group Work plans 2020-21 highlight activity and actions in relation to Priorities 1-3 and the Quality Assurance and Policy and Training Sub Groups also have annual work plans (attached).

3. MSCP Governance

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires the three safeguarding partners (the Police, Health and the Local Authority) to have a shared and equal duty to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 has set out the arrangements for an independent scrutiny function, which should provide the critical challenge and appraisal of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

MSCP Executive and 2021/22 key activities

In Merton, the Executive Group (made up of the three statutory partners) meets bi-monthly and reviews the work plan as well as reviewing and addressing risks to the delivery. The Executive Group meetings are attended by sub-group chairs who are drawn from across all statutory partner agencies and update the Executive on delivery of the work plan.

The Executive Group is supported by an Independent Chair, an Independent Scrutineer and a Young Scrutineer. The Independent Chair holds all agencies to account for the 'duty to cooperate' to safeguarding children and for the delivery of the actions in the Business Plan. The Independent Scrutineer has responsibility to draw on evidence within and outside of the partnership to focus on the quality of services provided, the outcomes being achieved and how they can be improved holding those that are responsible to account. The MSCP has developed a specific Independent Scrutiny plan to link to our priorities and to ensure that learning from practice reviews is implemented and makes a difference to children's outcomes in the borough. The MSCP will also recruit a Young Scrutineer who will work closely with the Independent Scrutineer to ensure that the services provided and their impact are scrutinised from the perspective of young people in Merton.

The Executive Group leads the safeguarding agenda, challenges the safeguarding work of partner organisations, and commits to an approach that learns lessons, embeds good practice and is continually influenced by children, young people and their families. Key activities in relation to Priority 4 (Strong Leadership and Strong partnership) for 2021/22 are:

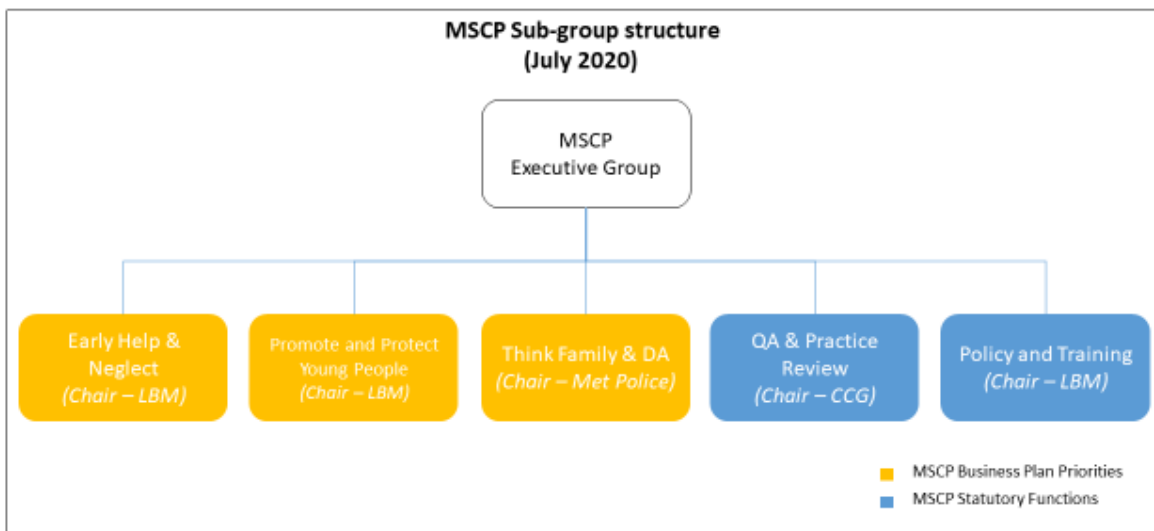
- The MSCP and partners to successfully deliver against the Business Plan and associated work plans set for the MSCP and its sub groups / working groups
- Review and refresh the partnership agreement
- MSCP Executive to routinely scrutinising the performance of the partnership on the following functions: performance management, audit, training and development, the coordination of how the voice of the child is listened to by agencies and the partnership. There is a particular focus on improving existing performance monitoring arrangements.
- Appoint a permanent Chair and Young Scrutineer
- Oversee the delivery of the MSCP Independent Scrutiny plan
- To improve communication and raise awareness about safeguarding to individuals, organisations and communities by introducing a regular newsletter and better utilising the website and associated communications media to ensure safeguarding messages are promoted.

- Oversee work to track emerging Covid-19 related need and responses and maintain assurance that the roll out of the new ‘Liberty Protection Safeguards’ outlined in the Mental Health Act 2019 is supported by clear guidance and is understood by all relevant agencies and practitioners.

MSCP Sub Groups

A revised sub-group structure was introduced in July 2020 to allow the partnership to discharge statutory duties effectively as well as provide strong oversight of business plan priorities. The responsibility for delivering the partnership’s agreed action plan rests with the sub-groups. A full partnership meeting is held twice a year. This provides an opportunity to bring together the wider partnership with a view to both provide updates against the work plan as well as discuss emerging trends and issues. It is an important forum to disseminate national learning and messages.

Table 1: MSCP Sub-group structure



July 2021