



# **Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership**

## **Business Plan 2023 – 2025**

*Approved by MSCP Executive: 2 March 2023*

*Next review: March 2025*

## **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'.

It is the vision of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) 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. This commitment is highlighted in the [MSCP Partnership Agreement](#).

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, sets 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 2023-25**

The MSCP Business Plan 2023-25 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 and retaining awareness of the ongoing impacts of wider pressures on families, including the cost-of-living crisis and following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Therefore, for 2023-25, we have introduced and agreed a set of cross-cutting themes, alongside our refreshed priority areas for our partnership.

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.

Each MSCP Sub-Group will be expected to develop and deliver an annual work plan. Three thematic groups will cover Priorities 1-5. The Quality Assurance and Policy and Training Sub-Groups also have annual work plans. All five groups will be expected to reflect on the cross-cutting themes and incorporate relevant activity into their work plans.

**Priority 1: Early Help**

**Priority 2: Mental health and wellbeing**

**Priority 3: Contextual safeguarding**

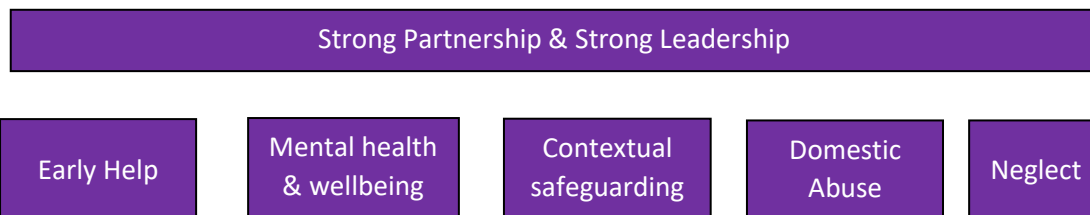
**Priority 4: Domestic Abuse**

**Priority 5: Neglect**

**Priority 6: Strong Leadership & Strong Partnership**

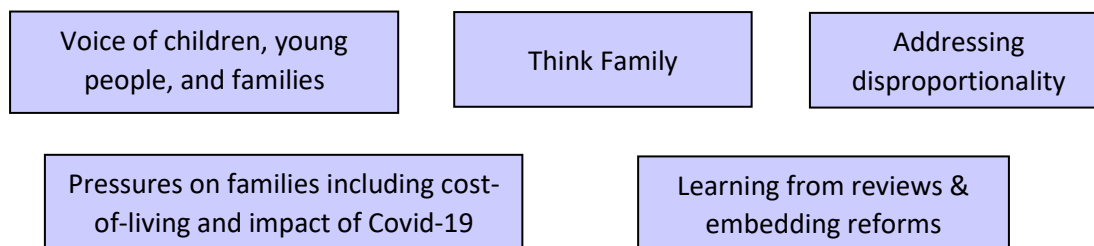
## OUR PRIORITIES

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## OUR CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

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### 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 key activities***

In Merton, the Executive Group (made up of the three statutory partners) meets monthly and takes a lead on coordinating the work of the Partnership, prioritising actions and ensuring coverage of statutory functions.

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 develops an annual 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 Young Scrutineer works 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.

Some of the MSCP achievements from the 2021-23 period are outlined below:

- Developed workplans and oversaw delivery of key activity within these, for example implementation of MACE arrangements, the launch of the ICON programme across Merton, development of a Neglect toolkit, launch of our partnership Early Help strategy
- Recruited a Young Scrutineer, who worked with our Independent Scrutineer to scrutinise the partnership including thematic scrutiny on sexual harassment in schools and adultification of children and young people
- Refreshed our partnership agreement
- Developed performance dashboards for MSCP Sub-Groups
- Implemented a robust audit programme
- Strengthened our communications, including introducing a news bulletin and refreshing the MSCP website

Key activities in relation to Priority 6 (Strong Leadership and Strong partnership) for 2023-25 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 with focus on the MSCP agreed priorities
- Maintain an updated 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.
- Oversee the delivery of the MSCP Independent Scrutiny plan
- To maintain effective communication and awareness raising about safeguarding to individuals, organisations and communities, including through the MSCP news bulletin, website and full partnership forum.
- Maintain assurance that the roll out of the new 'Liberty Protection Safeguards' outlined in the Mental Capacity Act (Amendment) 2019 is supported by clear guidance and is understood by all relevant agencies and practitioners.
- Maintain oversight of Merton response to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)

### **MSCP Sub-Groups**

A revised sub-group structure has been agreed from April 2023 onwards, to allow the partnership to discharge statutory duties effectively as well as provide strong oversight of MSCP business plan priorities and cross-cutting themes. The responsibility for delivering the partnership’s agreed action plan rests with the sub-groups. A full partnership meeting is held three times 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-Groups – revised from April 2023**

<b>Sub-Group</b>	<b>Remit</b>
<b>Quality Assurance &amp; Practice Review (QAPR)</b>	Quality assurance & audit programme Learning from reviews and scrutiny
<b>Policy &amp; Training (P&amp;T)</b>	MSCP training programme MSCP policies
<b>Prevention &amp; Early Intervention (PEI)</b>	Priority 1 - Early help Priority 2 - Mental health & wellbeing
<b>Promote &amp; Protect Young People (PPYP)</b>	Priority 3 - Contextual safeguarding
<b>Effective Safeguarding &amp; Support (ESS)</b>	Priority 4 - Domestic abuse Priority 5 - Neglect

All Sub-Group workplans will follow the below structure to ensure activity relating to the cross-cutting themes is reflected, alongside activity related to the specific priorities of the sub-group.

<b>MSCP Sub-Group Workplan</b>					
<b>Impact – what will success look like?</b>	<b>Action – what we will do to achieve this</b>	<b>Cross-Cutting Themes</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>BRAG Rating &amp; Update</b>