



# **Harrow Safeguarding Children Board**

## **Annual Report**

**2023 - 2024**

## Contents – Annual Report 2023-24 – Harrow Safeguarding Children Board

Foreword.....	4
1. Harrow Children & Young People at a Glance – 31 March 2024.....	5
2. Key Multi-Agency Safeguarding Events & Activity 2023-24 .....	6
2.1 Harrow Strategic Safeguarding Partnership – Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements – 2019 - 2023 .....	6
2.2 Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) – March 2023.....	7
2.3 Local Government Association Review – September 2023.....	10
2.4 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.....	11
3. Strategic Priorities 2023-24 .....	14
3.1 Mental Health.....	14
3.2 Contextual Safeguarding .....	15
3.3 Domestic Abuse.....	17
4 Emerging Strategic Priority – Early Help .....	19
4.1 Early Help Model .....	19
5. NWL Initiatives .....	20
5.1 The Child Sexual Abuse Hub for Children .....	20
5.2 ICON in Harrow.....	20
6. HSCB Subgroup Activity .....	21
6.1 Harrow Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (HSSP) .....	21
6.2 Harrow Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB).....	21
6.3 Case Review Subgroup .....	21
6.4 Impact & Future Case Review Subgroup Activity .....	22

6.5	Learning & Development Subgroup .....	22
6.6	Impact & Future Learning & Development Subgroup Activity.....	22
6.7	QA & Performance/Multi-Agency Auditing Subgroup .....	23
6.8	Impact & Future Case Review Subgroup Activity .....	23
7.	Training, Learning & Development & Safeguarding Community Outreach .....	23
7.1	HSCB Learning & Development Offer 2023-24.....	23
7.2	Voluntary Action Harrow – Commissioned Outreach & Training Support Offer – 2023-24 .....	24
7.3	Metropolitan Police Service – NW-BCU Professional Development Days (PDDs) .....	24
8.	Child Protection Conferencing, Children in Care, Participation & Voice of the Child .....	25
8.1	Child Protection Conferencing.....	25
9.	Consultation & Participation Activity in 2023-24.....	26
9.1	Harrow Council Participation Service .....	26
9.3	Young Harrow Foundation .....	26
9.4	Voluntary Action Harrow (VAH) .....	27
10	Future Strategic Activity – Participation with Children & Young People.....	27
11.	Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) responses to Allegations Against Persons in Positions of Trust.....	28
12.	Scrutiny Analysis & 2024/25 Forward Planning – Harrow Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) .....	28
13	Appendices.....	30
13.1	Appendix 1 – HSCB Independent Scrutineer Report – 2023-24.....	30
13.2	Appendix 2 - HSCB Budget & Expenditure – 2023/2024 .....	42
13.3	Appendix 3 – HSCB Learning & Development Offer 2023-24 – Attendance & Bookings.....	43

## Foreword

Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in Harrow have undergone substantial change in 2023-24.

The Harrow Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (HSSP) is a multi-agency group of senior leaders which at the beginning of the year, provided strategic oversight of the safeguarding arrangements for adults and children implemented within the Harrow Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) and Harrow Safeguarding Adults Board (HSAB). However, in September 2023, following a Joint Targeted Area Inspection<sup>1</sup> into Harrow's provision of early help services for children and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), a review was commissioned through the Local Government Association (LGA), leading to a separation of the strategic oversight of safeguarding children from adults.

Following this review, we dissolved the HSSP in the autumn of 2023 and enabled the HSCB and HSAB to act as independent multi-agency boards. We separated out the subgroups that had jointly supported the work of our multi-agency children and adults boards so that the HSCB (and HSAB) now have their own dedicated subgroups. We believe these changes are for the benefit of the children and young people of Harrow - this separation of the two safeguarding functions means there is a clear, distinct focus on multi-agency support for children and families on one hand and for adults on the other. However, the two boards have remained closely aligned and continue to work in accordance with the 'Think Family' approach which had been promoted under the former Harrow Strategic Safeguarding Partnership.

**Working Together to Safeguard Children (WT)** is the statutory guidance which local partners comply with when performing their safeguarding functions. This guidance was updated in December 2023 and required us to make further changes to the way we structured our arrangements – these need to be in place by December 2024. The key elements of these changes are outlined within this report, including our interim multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

Looking forward to 2024/25, ambitious plans are being developed to ensure effective multi-agency safeguarding for children and families. We continue to focus on developing an effective Early Help offer that is supported by all the agencies that provide support to children and families. We want to ensure that what we do to safeguard children and adults who are victims of Domestic Abuse is effective. We are also ambitious in our aims to understand and prevent the harm that some children suffer outside of their families (known as Contextual Safeguarding) and develop new ways of keeping children safe who may be at risk of these types of harm. The HSCB will continue to support strategic activity in the North West London (NWL) region to develop a specialist Child Sexual Abuse Hub and will undertake a range of consultation across the education, voluntary and community and direct participation sectors to ensure the voices of children and young people and leaders in education and the voluntary and community sector are captured in our strategic decision-making.”

**- Alex Dewsnap, Chairperson, Harrow Safeguarding Children Partnership – 30.09.2024**

## 1. Harrow Children & Young People at a Glance – 31 March 2024

Children & Young People in Harrow		Safeguarding Children & Young People in Harrow	
Total Harrow Residents (ONS Mid 2023 Estimate)	263,448	Contacts received by Harrow MASH	12,413
Children & Young People (under 18yrs) in Harrow	59,703 (23% total population)	Child & Family Assessments completed	2772
Total State School Pupils in Harrow (4-19 yrs – as of January 2024)	38,055	Early Help Assessments completed	1702
% Harrow children belonging to an ethnic group other than White British	90.9%	Initial Child Protection Conferences held	418
Languages spoken in Harrow schools	170+	Children subject to a Child Protection Plan on 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024:	290
% children and young people living in families that are income-deprived	12.3% (6,500 children)	Children and young people in Care of Harrow Council on 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024	176
% children and young people eligible for free school meals	18%	% Children in Care of Harrow Council (for more than 2.5 years) that have stayed in the same care arrangements for 2+ years	85%
Care Leavers aged 18-24years	209	% Children in Care of Harrow Council that live within 20 miles of their home address	87.5%
Education & Health Care Plans maintained in Harrow (0-25yrs) on 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024	2,370	% of Harrow Care Leavers that Harrow Council remains in contact with as of 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024	97%

## 2. Key Multi-Agency Safeguarding Events & Activity 2023-24

### 2.1 Harrow Strategic Safeguarding Partnership – Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements – 2019- 2023

In 2017 changes to the Children Act 2004 established three statutory safeguarding partners: The Local Authority, The Police, and The Integrated Care Board (ICB)<sup>1</sup> who have particular responsibility for ensuring that safeguarding arrangements in the local area are effective. This is a shared and equal duty. Other agencies, referred to as Relevant Agencies, need to cooperate with these local arrangements as required by statutory partners.

2.1.1 Harrow partners met this requirement by constituting a strategic safeguarding partnership executive (HSSP) of the three statutory partners and augmented it with three education representatives. This executive group oversaw both the Harrow Safeguarding Adult Board and the Harrow Safeguarding Children Board, both of which retained the same format which existed prior to the 2017 changes. The organogram opposite illustrates the local structure at the beginning of this reporting year.

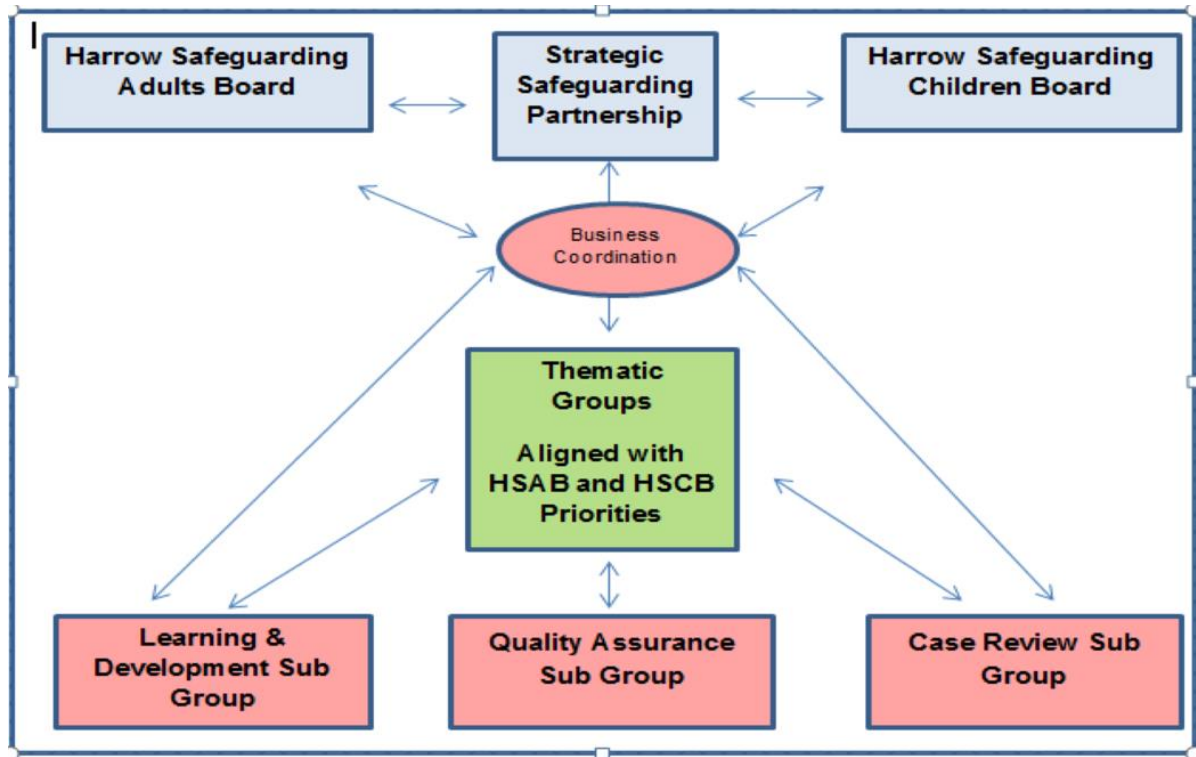


Figure 1 – Harrow Strategic Safeguarding Partnership Structure – October 2023

<sup>1</sup> Initially the local Clinical Commissioning Group

## 2.2 Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) – March 2023

### 2.2.1 JTAI Findings

Between 26 to 31 March 2023, inspectors from OFSTED, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) completed a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) in Harrow. The JTAI sought to examine multi-agency responses to children and families who need help in Harrow.

The [JTAI Report](#) released in May 2023 outlined key findings in a range of multi-agency practice and oversight areas where improvement was required:

- Harrow Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (HSSP) did not have effective oversight of the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) or early help in Harrow, highlighting the need for a lead professional to co-ordinate the early help offer to avoid single-agency support for children and families;
- Need to co-locate agency partners within Harrow MASH to ensure timely, multi-agency decisions to safeguard and support children and families;
- Need for increased police and health resources to support work in the MASH and need to ensure children were seen in a range of venues, including their homes;
- Need for increased multi-agency information-sharing and support for children and families requiring early support;
- Need to ensure that the range of multi-agency partnership groups overseeing these service areas for children provided challenge and impact and that safeguarding partners are appropriately involved in service planning.

The JTAI Report also identified a range of strengths within Harrow multi-agency safeguarding including:

- A broad and varied range of early help support available in Harrow that is utilised by children and families;
- Strong contributions to early support for children from schools, demonstrating well-planned work to identify and meet children's needs;
- Evidence of strong professional curiosity in children's health records, demonstrating where health practitioners are thinking beyond presenting issues for a child and undertaking holistic assessments of children's needs;
- Comprehensive checks from police staff from a variety of sources to ensure informed risk analysis decisions and support the right intervention for a child or family.

The JTAI Report highlighted a range of additional areas of operational strength and improvement in MASH, Early Help, multi-agency working and other safeguarding areas, following on from these main findings above.

### 2.2.2 JTAI Response – May 2023 – March 2024

In response to the JTAI Report, The HSSP oversaw a series of changes to the way Harrow provided Early Help, which addressed six key issues. This was overseen by the former JTAI Steering Group in developing and delivering:

- **Developed a Child-Centred Early Help Model** – comprising a “Team Around the Family” approach, the new role of multi-agency Lead Professional and changes to the way we share information. This incorporated re-implementation of Early Help Meetings, refreshing ICT recording systems for Early Help Meetings and Early Help Plans to support effective sharing with families and professionals. Enhanced access to patient and GP records were enabled across a range of health services alongside a refreshed multi-agency information-sharing protocol devised by the Harrow Borough-Based Partnership. This work was refreshed and supported by a Vision Day within the Early Help Service in July 2024 to support re-focusing around key practice fundamentals including timely allocation of families to practitioners for Early Help, Early Help Assessment timescales, emphasis on effective home visiting and clear identification of the Lead Professional for each family.
- **Improved MASH Resources & Location** – resolving site security issues and increasing resources supplied to MASH by the Police and NWL ICB.
- **Reviewed Risk & Need Thresholds** – comprising a refreshed threshold agreement and a new way of conducting strategy meetings. Where agencies have different views on whether threshold has been met, we have developed a clearer escalation process to resolve these differences. Ensuring all Contacts reviewed in a timely manner by a MASH manager and effective information-sharing and recording with education and from Daily MASH Meetings. Updated processes to support children or young people who are missing via the Emergency Duty Team alongside effective sharing information sharing and safeguarding responses through re-affirmation of Missing Strategy meeting processes and sharing of Return Home Interview information with MPS. Further enhanced links have been implemented within Children’s Social Care through a face-to-face handover between the Emergency Duty Team and MASH at the conclusion of each out of hours shift, alongside weekly reflective discussions between the MASH and Family Resource Team Manager to consider threshold decisions and identify any systemic learning.
- **Enhanced the HSSP’s Governance & Scrutiny Function** – Following a Local Government Association Review of our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, we have separated out the oversight of children and adults safeguarding enabling senior leaders to focus on child specific issues. Following on from the Early Help Change Delivery Plan to develop the new Early Help Model and JTAI Steering Group oversight, the Prevention & Early Help Board, reporting to the HSCP and Harrow Borough-Based Partnership, is overseeing implementation of the Early Help Model as outlined at section 2.2.3 below.
- **Multi-Agency Training** – Implementation of Early Help ‘Lead Professional’ training, supported multi-agency Early Help Development Days.
- **Multi Agency Auditing** – Re-commencement of regular multi-agency auditing through the MASH Operational Group and Strategic MASH & Early Help Forum and regular quality of referral feedback session to partner agencies. Re-commencement of HSCP Multi-Agency Auditing (including CSA Audit July 2023 and CSA Focused Re-Audit September/October 2024).



- **Integrated Family Hub Offer** – Family hubs complement our child-centred early help model and are resourced by the Harrow Borough-Based Partnership<sup>2</sup>. Listening to what children and families want from these hubs has helped us design a facility that is a truly co-produced with the end user in mind. Family Hub development will incorporate development of TAF and Family Front Door workstreams, alongside embedding information-sharing agreements and other implementation activity outlined at Section 4 below.

### 2.2.3 *Outcome – JTAI Inspection*

- 2.2.3.1 The Early Help Change & Delivery Plan was overseen in 2023-24 by a dedicated project leader who identified key development priorities and consulted widely with the community on what an effective Early Help offer comprised. The project worked closely with leaders of statutory and voluntary & community sector agencies to identify and refine a Team Around the Family Model. We delivered (and continue to deliver) Lead Professionals training across a large range of organisations.
- 2.2.3.2 Within the Family Hubs Network there is an approach to providing help that calls upon a wide range of early support resources. By the end of March 2024, early support model design was completed and planning commenced for implementation. A ‘soft launch’ was implemented within the Central Integrated Neighbourhood Team in April 2024 to test potential implementation of the Family Hub Model, with learning from that process currently being gathered within the Family Hub Network Implementation Group outlined below. Parallel with Family Hub development was the subsequent launch of OptiVita in July 2024, a new NHS England-funded Harrow programme, which focuses on improving life chances for parents, babies and children living in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Harrow.
- 2.2.3.3 Further details of the planned implementation activity of the Early Help Model in response to the JTAI Inspection from Harrow Safeguarding Children Board is found at Section 4 below.
- 2.2.3.4 Furthermore, the HSCP is implementing a dynamic approach to reviewing quality within MASH. As noted above, the MASH Operational Group (comprising of key multi-agency MASH professionals and leaders working directly within the MASH) has commenced a monthly auditing program to review quality of referrals, multi-agency thresholds, information-sharing quality and multi-agency responses to Contacts. The HSCP has also implemented the Strategic MASH & Early Help Forum (taking over from the JTAI Steering Group in March 2024) has undertaken a monthly program of multi-agency auditing of MASH Contacts for assurance, with learning from this process provided to the MASH Operational Board. These review structures ensure rigorous review of MASH Contacts whilst ensuring both operational and strategic oversight of responses to MASH Contacts. Emphasis going forward is focused on ‘Closing the Loop’ to ensure multi-agency auditing can be tracked back to impact for children and families.

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<sup>2</sup> A description of this multi- agency partnership can be accessed here <https://www.harrowbbp.nhs.uk>

## 2.3 Local Government Association Review – September 2023

### 2.3.1 LGA Review Findings

Following the JTAI findings the Local Government Association was commissioned to review the effectiveness of the HSSP's approach to the oversight of children and adult safeguarding in one strategic body.

Key positive findings from LGA Review were as follows:

- Proactive invitation to the LGA to review multi-agency safeguarding arrangements;
- Senior leadership and partner agency acknowledgement of JTAI findings and commitment to addressing challenges identified;
- Evidence of single-agency quality assurance and positive operational examples of multi-agency working;
- Positive demand for engagement from Schools and Designated Safeguarding Lead Networks and positive work with General Practitioners;

Key areas to consider identified by the LGA Review included:

- When agencies conducted their own quality assurance audits the results were not always shared with partners when they should have been.
- Examples of good practice were not often shared between agencies.
- Need to embed new multi-agency arrangements in light of upcoming Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 ;
- Ensuring effective oversight and scrutiny of all service areas across children's safeguarding in addition to MASH & Early Help;
- Ensuring adequate frequency of strategic meetings to support oversight of multi-agency children's safeguarding;
- Consideration of whether HSSP 's remit in covering both children and adults was too wide. Separating the functions would ensure focus
  - In relation to child safeguarding the provision of a clear response to the JTAI and delivery of the requirements of WT23,
  - in relation adult safeguarding the ability to prepare for new CQC inspection framework for local authorities.
- Future re-alignment while also building stronger connections to other key partnership boards (Safer Harrow, Health & Well-Being Board).
- Given WT23 proposals, children's multi-agency safeguarding arrangements could move to a smaller, strategic board with statutory partners and education leaders to oversee multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

### 2.3.2 LGA Review Outcome

These findings were considered by the HSSP in October 2023. The HSSP was dissolved with the Harrow Safeguarding Children Board and Harrow Safeguarding Adult Board both being supported with their own executive group and subgroups. This is considered in further depth in the Independent Scrutineer's report at **Appendix 1**.

## 2.4 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023<sup>3</sup>

### 2.4.1 Key Changes

Published in December 2023, the statutory guidance requires local partners by December 2024 to:

- Implement a new strategic oversight model comprising three Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) who are named as the Chief Constable of the local police, the Chief Executive of the Integrated Care Board and the Head of Paid Service or Chief Executive of the Local Authority, who must take direct ownership of multi-agency safeguarding and provide multi-agency strategic vision for local safeguarding activity;
- Appoint to support LSPs in their role Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) who are senior organisational leaders in the Local Authority, Police and Integrated Care Board. DSP's must have the ability to implement strategic decisions to enhance multi-agency safeguarding;
- Remove the role of Independent Chair for children's partnerships. This position was still in place in Harrow prior to release of this new statutory guidance as part of a dual Independent Chair/Scrutineer role.
- Consult with Relevant Agencies in developing their multi agency safeguarding arrangements.
- Ensure schools and education providers have a significant role in local safeguarding arrangements.

### 2.4.2 Consultation Activity & Outcome - Working Together 2023

We consulted with relevant agencies, including a multi-agency workshop in February 2024 regarding changes in WT23. Feedback included:

- **Chairing** – HSCB members felt the future DSP Group should have a rotating agency chairing structure – potentially on an annual basis;
- **Membership** – DSP Group should be agile in making decisions and could contain statutory agencies, subgroup chairs and education leaders;
- **Current HSCB Function** – the large HSCB meeting could provide consultation to support annual business planning , meeting twice a year;
- **Subgroups** – there was consensus that three subgroups should support the work of the Partnership – Quality Assurance, Case Review and Learning & Development Subgroups. These should have clear membership roles, meet quarterly and integrate voices of service users;
- **Lay Members** – should continue to be a part of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

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<sup>3</sup> WT23 Accessed at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/669e7501ab418ab055592a7b/Working\\_together\\_to\\_safeguard\\_children\\_2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/669e7501ab418ab055592a7b/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023.pdf)

- **Role of Education** – Need to consult with, gain confidence of and continue engagement with Designated Safeguarding Leads Network, Significant Incident Group, Head Teachers Forum and other education peak bodies in Harrow.

## 2.5 Interim Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

The Partnership is required to publish its working arrangements by December 2024. There was a lot of organisational change in the latter part of this year and there is still much to do. In the light of that the Partnership has decided to publish some interim arrangements, which will be in place until the final arrangements are published in or before December 2024. Although now separated structurally the approach to safeguarding both adults and children remains rooted in the 'Think Family' approach.

### 2.5.1 *Interim Structure*

The interim Working MASA structure is shown below at Figure 2.

- 2.5.1.1 This structure retains three subgroups outlined. Ownership of key multi-agency decision-making will reside with the DSP Group on behalf of and as directed by the LSP Group. The former HSCB will retain its status as a wider partnership group and will meet during the year to provide consultation on key emerging safeguarding issues, business planning and any other emerging safeguarding theme.
- 2.5.1.2 Through the Consultation & Outreach Hub (the Hub), we will undertake sector-wide consultation with schools, colleges and early years' providers to ensure we have meaningful education input into strategic decision-making. The Hub will work with Voluntary Action Harrow and use their expertise to expand our consultation with Harrow's many local community groups and make contact with sporting clubs and faith groups.
- 2.5.1.3 The Hub will also develop links with children and young people's consultation groups and peak bodies, such as the Children In Care Council, so that these voices contribute to how we take decisions and enhance the effectiveness of our arrangements.

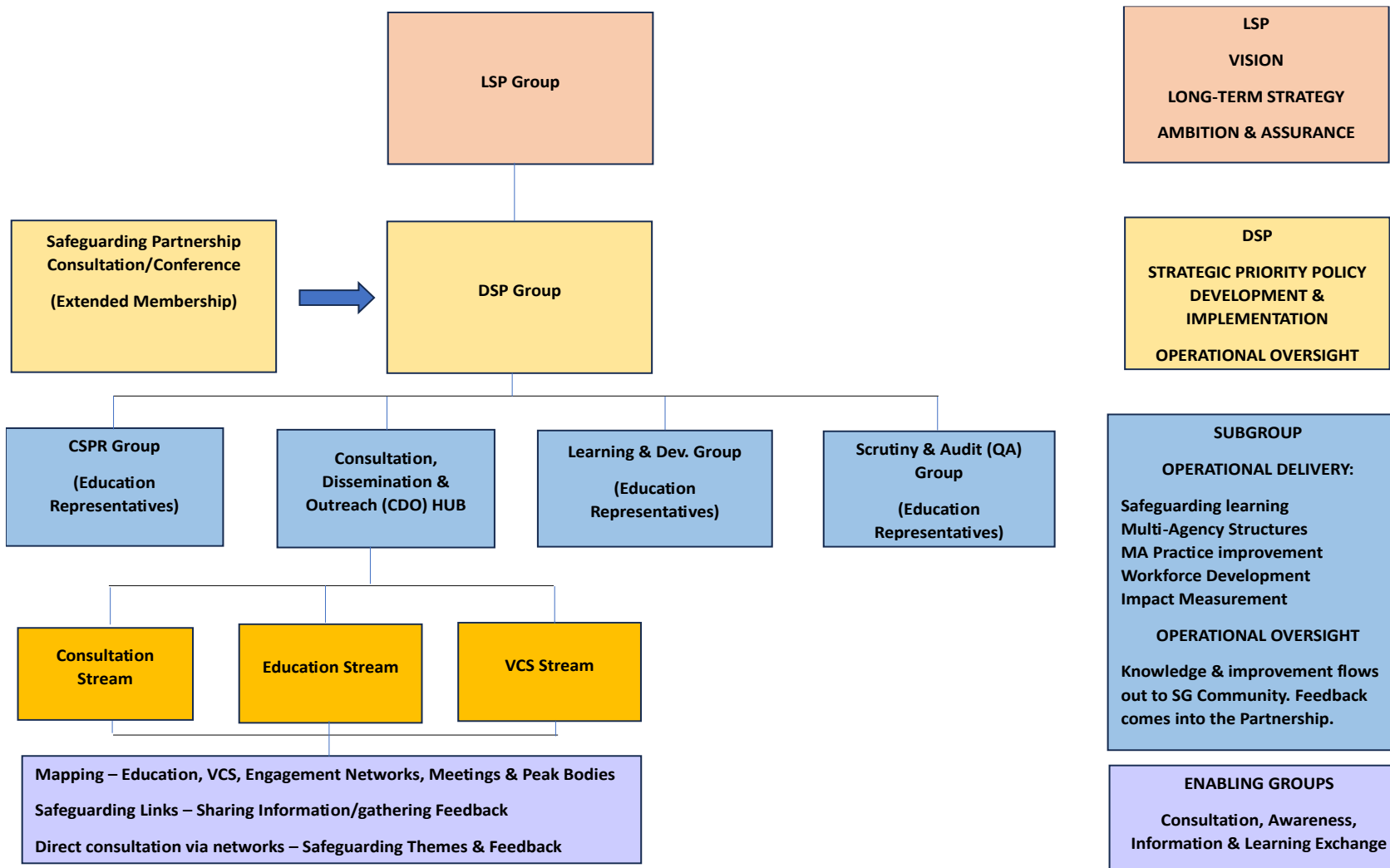


Figure 2 – Interim Safeguarding Children Partnership Structure

### 3. Strategic Priorities 2023-24

In 2019 Harrow's safeguarding partners adopted the Think Family approach to safeguarding and chose as priorities a number of issues which were relevant to both safeguarding disciplines.

#### 3.1 Mental Health

- 3.1.1 **Harrow Children's Social Care (CSC)** has undertaken a range of activity to support the positive mental health of children and young people. The Harrow Virtual School supports the mental health of Children In Care via the Schools Specialist Psychology Service, providing dedicated direct psychological support, consultancy and training to children and schools where Children In Care attend. The service supported more than 40 children in 2023-24.
- 3.1.2 CSC also provides broader mental health support to children and young people through joint commissioning arrangements with the **NHS North West London Integrated Care Board (NWL ICB)**. The **Harrow Horizons** service delivered by the Anna Freud Centre provides mental health support for children and young people from 5-25 years of age.
- 3.1.3 HSCB members supported the 'Right Care, Right Place' initiative. This is a Metropolitan Police (MPS) led initiative with the NWL ICB to ensure the right practitioner from the right agency responds to a request for assistance from someone with a mental health need. **Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)** feedback indicates this has been well-received across partner agencies, as this means anyone presenting with mental health challenges receives a tailored response from the professional best placed to meet their needs.
- 3.1.4 NWL ICB integrated two key courses into its training programme, '*The Mental Health Act for children and young people*' and '*Fatherhood and Men's Mental Health*'. NWL ICB's Level 3 Safeguarding Children package includes sections on how parental mental health affects children. This is available to a wide range of NWL health professionals including primary care staff.
- 3.1.5 **Central & North West London NHS Trust (CNWL)** following a review that they conducted into the death of a young mother with mental health issues has developed new peri-natal mental health pathways, working in partnership with Harrow's 0-19 service. Improved training, better information-sharing and a strong focus on pooling expertise in supporting new mothers with mental health concerns will ensure services for vulnerable children and their mothers are joined up at the earliest opportunity. CNWL will work with and train acute and inpatient settings and Home Treatment Teams to ensure a better understanding of the impact of parental mental health on parenting capacity and the wider family.

- 3.1.6 **Harrow Talking Therapies<sup>4</sup>** - a service for those with anxiety and depression - delivers early intervention services for families such as the Wellbeing for Mums' Group and are extending their service to work with children who are transitioning from children to adult services.
- 3.1.7 **London & North West University Healthcare NHS Trust (LNWH)** notes that of 2,014 referrals made to Children's Social Care in 2023-24 across the NWL region, 260 (12.9%) incorporated concerns about child mental health, whilst 297 (14.7%) incorporated concerns about adult mental health, meaning that over 25% of referrals contained a mental health component. A large proportion of these cases where safeguarding concerns were identified across the NWL region were then considered at Multi-Agency Psycho-Social Meetings, with agency members from other core safeguarding services such as Children's Social Care present to consider risk arising from mental health challenges.
- 3.1.8 **The National Probation Service (NPS)** commissions Catch 22 – a service for those open to Probation with emotional wellbeing issues, although there is no specific mental health provision for the general offender cohort except for those subject to Integrated Offender Management (IOM), who will be supported by Together, a service for those who have mental health and other needs. While there is a good strategic interface between Probation and Mental Health via multi-agency forums such as MAPPA<sup>5</sup>, additional work is required to ensure treatment and referral pathways available to operational staff in practice are fully understood regarding emotional well-being.
- 3.1.9 Impact & Future Strategic Activity – Mental Health
- 3.1.10 Whilst mental health is a significant issue for children and families, this strategic priority will be reviewed by the DSP Group. We will continue to provide support for mental health initiatives and will work in partnership with the HSAB and Safer Harrow to develop Right Care Right Place. We will support CNWL's provision of peri-natal mental health services and support NWL ICB and other agencies in providing multi-agency training regarding mental health.

## 3.2 Contextual Safeguarding

- 3.2.1 The established Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Panel coordinates the work that practitioners do to keep children safe from the risk of extra-familial harm. This involves cross border liaison, as well as supporting flexible inter-agency activity. Exploitation Risk Assessments (ERA) have been embedded into practice and are used whenever there is suspicion that a child is being criminally exploited. Harrow CSC has an aspiration to ensure

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<sup>4</sup> <https://talkingtherapies.cnwl.nhs.uk/harrow>

<sup>5</sup> Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements . These multi agency arrangements manage sex offenders and certain high risk violent and other offenders in the community.

ERAs are also completed for children at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation and will work through specialist Adolescent Safety Development Teams to deliver this and thus reduce Contextual Safeguarding risks.

- 3.2.2 MPS' Child Exploitation Team is a dedicated service based in Harrow with a remit to protect children from exploitation and disrupt perpetrators. In 2024-5, the Police intend to deploy more trained detectives in their Child Exploitation Team and ensure those detectives receive specialist Child Abuse Investigative training.
- 3.2.3 NWL ICB has delivered two multi-disciplinary training packages on the theme of extra familial harm; *'The Impact of substance misuse on young people and family'* and *Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation - The Perpetrator Perspective*. It has also incorporated modules on Contextual Safeguarding into its online Level 3 Safeguarding Children training package.
- 3.2.4 LNWH reported 17.9 % (362/2014) of referrals to Harrow MASH last year involved youth violence/assault; the largest single LNWH referral category.
- 3.2.5 The National Probation Service now offers 'Next Steps' to support young people making the transition from the Youth Justice Service to Probation. This program prepares young adults to work with the Probation Service and encourages them to set goals and visualise a prosocial future. Any sentence plan that may have been set by the Youth Justice Service continues uninterrupted. Some young people on Next Steps may have been drawn into criminal or sexual exploitation of others; this program will be considered within strategic planning regarding Contextual Safeguarding.
- 3.2.6 Impact and Future Strategic Activity – Contextual Safeguarding
- 3.2.7 Contextual Safeguarding is a longstanding priority for Harrow's partners. In 2020-21 we collaborated with the University of Bedfordshire to improve our understanding of this issue and improve our approach.
- 3.2.8 One of the Delegated Safeguarding Partners will lead a Steering Group to develop our approach to this strategic priority over 2024-27. The group will focus upon:
  - **Professional Practice** – We will review how our practice has changed following the work we did with the University of Bedfordshire and consider how we can further build on this.
  - **Problem Profile** – We will develop this through analysis of data held by relevant partners. This will enable hotspot identification and offer opportunities to protect children and disrupt perpetrators.
  - **Multi-Agency Structures** – We want to ensure that our Multi Agency Criminal Exploitation Panel Processes are effective and will review how we work as a partnership to understand risk and deal with threats to children.



- **Consultation** – Harrow’s strategic approach to Contextual Safeguarding risk will be informed by direct consultation with children and young people and parents of children and young people who are at risk or who have suffered child exploitation.

### 3.3 Domestic Abuse

3.3.1 Domestic Abuse is a factor present in a high number of Child Protection Plans and all of Harrow’s partners agencies have embedded processes to identify and respond to this safeguarding risk.

3.3.2 **Harrow Council Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) Service** notes that 2023-24, the main domestic abuse service in Harrow went through re-commissioning. Cranstoun was successful in its bid for the commission and will go live on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The service will include:

- Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) Service.
- Outreach support; providing support, advice and advocacy for survivors and their children.
- Victim/Survivor support programmes.
- Safe accommodation, refuge provision and floating support.
- Single point of contact support.

Other key initiatives that continue to support children and families at risk of or who have suffered Domestic Abuse in Harrow include:

- Introduction of a new Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme, which went live in May 2023.
- For the Culturally Integrated Family Approach (CIFA), RISE delivered an intersectional family and community approach to tackling domestic abuse (DA) in 10 London boroughs, focusing on integrated victim safety support, 1:1 perpetrator delivery, adult-to-parent familial DA intervention, LGBTQI+ delivery and outreach work. This program will provide a focused & coordinated family & community approach for marginalised groups to identify issues and need through a specialised suitability assessment and interventions.
- DRIVE is a Pan-London perpetrator programme, which went live in Harrow in November 2023. DRIVE works with high-harm domestic abuse perpetrators to reduce abuse and increase victim/survivor safety.
- In 2023-24, Harrow VAWG Service commissioned Voicebox to run VAWG assemblies and drama-based workshops in Harrow secondary schools. These addressed underlying causes that lead to VAWG, discuss healthy relationships, and tackle misogyny and unhealthy masculinity. Primarily aimed at students in years 9, 10 and 11, this early intervention and prevention project engaged 1615 secondary school students, in 9 schools in Harrow, through 74 assemblies and workshops.
- VAWG Safe Space locations were identified in the borough, where residents or visitors can use community locations as a temporary source of refuge or to receive information on support services available.

3.3.3 During this year, NWL ICB commissioned the IRIS programme<sup>6</sup> for General Practitioners to help them identify and better respond to domestic abuse.

3.3.4 Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL) has rolled out a range of initiatives to improve service in this area, including:

- DA Ambassador programme to improve confidence and professional practice among staff.
- DA conference - attended by 640 delegates.
- Weekly peri-natal forum where staff can bring forward a child/family for advice and support.
- Securing funding for an IDVA to be based in the Brent/Harrow Perinatal mental health service.
- Range of training sessions that explored domestic abuse in the context of children, perpetrators, carers , disability and gender identity.

3.3.5 Impact & Future Strategic Activity – Domestic Abuse

3.3.6 Harrow CSC intends to provide additional focus on Domestic Abuse by having a Practice Week in October 2024 concentrating on this safeguarding risk. A Children’s Social Care Conference focusing on domestic abuse safeguarding practice is planned and multi-agency auditing of MASH contacts will look at quality of early work in identifying and addressing risk in this area.

3.3.7 One of Delegated Safeguarding Partners will lead our approach to this in 2025 -7 as a priority group. The group will focus upon:

- **Professional Practice** – understanding current workforce development landscape and agency practice approaches to Domestic Abuse.
- **Problem Profile** – developing a thorough analysis of data held by relevant partners. This will offer opportunities to protect child and adult victims and disrupt perpetrators.
- **Multi-Agency Structures** – reviewing Harrow’s MARAC<sup>7</sup> and other multi-agency structures to ensure they are equipped to be effective;
- **Case Review Learning** – ensuring multi-agency responses to Domestic Abuse are informed by learning from local and national learning reviews.

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<sup>6</sup> The IRIS (Identification & Referral to Increase Safety) programme enhances General Practitioners’ knowledge and confidence in identifying and providing protective options for patients who disclose DA.

<sup>7</sup> A MARAC, is a multi agency risk assessment conference and is a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representatives of local police, probation, health, child protection, housing practitioners, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and other specialists

## 4 Emerging Strategic Priority – Early Help

### 4.1 Early Help Model

The Harrow Borough-Based Partnership and HSCP have led on developing an Early Help Model with four workstreams:

#### 4.1.1 Team Around the Family Framework (Lead Professional)

Harrow will implement a Team Around the Family (TAF) framework, where a Lead Professional will co-ordinate multi-agency support around a child and family. The Lead Professional can be a member of any statutory, provider or community organisation that is best placed to work with the family and co-ordinate the work of all professionals and services providing support.

#### 4.1.2 Family Front Door Approach

4.1.2.1 The **No Wrong Front Door** approach to delivering services ensures wherever contact is made with or by a family with early support needs, that contact is registered and a consistent response provided. This will require new digital solutions to support our response to early support requests within the overarching approach of ‘Right Support at the Right Time’ – a key focus of the draft Early Help Strategy. This approach is also interlinked with Harrow CSC’s Signs of Safety Practice Model.

#### 4.1.3 OptiVita Pilot Project

4.1.3.1 This NHS England-funded project has at its core the importance of the first 1000 days of life. It focuses on supporting parents, babies and children who are living in some of the most disadvantaged areas of the borough. It offers enhanced primary care and specialist support for children and families from the ante-natal period through to when children reach five years of age.

#### 4.1.4 Family Hubs Network

4.1.4.1 Family Hubs operate as part of an Integrated Neighbourhood Team (INT) model. Harrow will have three Integrated Neighbourhood Teams operating from a Family Hub, which will coordinate services available in children’s centres, in the wider community and through primary care. This will ensure referrals for early support via the Family Front Door will lead to an effective deployment of Team Around the Family.

#### 4.1.5 How this will be delivered

- 4.1.5.1 We will publish an Early Help Strategy by the end of 2024-25. The Prevention & Early Help Board will oversee its implementation. The Prevention & Early Help Board has commenced oversight of 3x dynamic Implementation Groups regarding the workstreams above, whilst the OptiVita workstream will report progress to Harrow Borough-Based Partnership and Prevention & Early Help Board directly via its own project governance.
- 4.1.5.2 These Implementation Groups contain key members of Early Support, Children’s Social Care, MPS, NWL ICB and key provider and voluntary and community sector agencies such as CNWL, LNWH, Young Harrow Foundation and Voluntary Action Harrow to support wider-ranging, effective implementation of the Family Hubs incorporating TAF and Harrow Family Front Door approaches alongside the OptiVita project. The Prevention & Early Help Board is overseen by 2x Senior Reporting Officers – the Director of Children’s Services and NWL ICB Director for Outer London Services. Additional strategic support will also be provided by the Managing Director of the Harrow Borough-Based Partnership to support implementation.

## 5. NWL Initiatives

Some specialist services to support children and families need to be delivered at scale and Harrow is involved in a range of activity at NWL<sup>8</sup> level.

### 5.1 The Child Sexual Abuse Hub for Children

- 5.1.1 This offers medical treatment, support and therapy for children who report non-recent sexual abuse. Harrow has been working with NWL partners to establish a service for the whole of NWL. This service is expected to launch later in 2024-25.

### 5.2 ICON in Harrow

- 5.2.1 NWL ICB commissioned ICON<sup>9</sup> last year across NWL. It is an evidence-based programme designed to provide information to parents and carers about infant crying, including how to cope and where to get support. In some cases of Abusive Head Trauma (sometimes referred to as Shaken Baby Syndrome), the baby crying has been a trigger for the parent or carer to have a momentary loss of control and cause the baby harm. ICON aims to prevent Abusive Head Trauma in babies by signposting parents / carers to where they can access support and help.

*The ICON message is:*

- *Infant crying is normal.*
- *Comfort methods can help.*
- *It is ok to walk away if the baby is safe and the crying is getting to you.*

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<sup>8</sup> NWL comprises the boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster.

<sup>9</sup> A programme to help parents with persistently crying babies - <https://iconcope.org>

- *Never ever shake a baby.*

## 6. HSCB Subgroup Activity

### 6.1 Harrow Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (HSSP)

The HSSP met in May, July, September and October 2023, providing strategic oversight and governance of the HSCB (and HSAB) with a focus on:

- Strategic oversight of the JTAI Response from May 2023 onward, as further addressed within the HSCB.
- Commissioning and response to the Local Government Review in September 2023.
- Strategic review of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in October 2023, leading to dissolution of the HSSP and establishment of the HSCP/HSAB as self-contained entities.

### 6.2 Harrow Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB)

The HSCB met on three occasions:

- **July 2023** – The HSCB considered and developed its JTAI Response, considered its consultation response to the upcoming WT 23 guidance and considered ‘The Case for Change’ briefing provided by the Harrow Borough-Based Partnership to review and re-align early support in Harrow.
- **November 2023** – The HSCB considered the outcomes of Rapid Reviews previously completed for Child S and Child T. The HSCB continued to oversee its JTAI Response, considered findings from the Local Government Association Review of the front door and considered findings from its multi-agency child sexual abuse audit. The HSCB reviewed a report on the NHS Patient Safety Incident Response Framework for internal learning review of clinical and safeguarding practice in response to previously-deemed serious incidents.
- **February 2024** – Devoted this session to reviewing and responding to the changes required in WT 23.

### 6.3 Case Review Subgroup

Until December 2023, the Case Review Group jointly covered case reviews and associated learning for both the HSCP and Harrow Safeguarding Adults Board. The group met on twelve occasions to deal with case referrals across child and adult safeguarding, seeing them through from notification to final report. In the past year the Group regarding children:

- Responded to two serious incident notifications;
- Completed a Rapid Review on Child T;

- Met several times to respond to an historical FGM case;
- Supported the launch of the ICON program in Harrow (which came about following a Rapid Review recommendation).

6.3.1 The HSCB did not complete a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) in 2023-24.

#### 6.4 Impact & Future Case Review Subgroup Activity

6.4.1 In 2024-25, the subgroup will continue to operate flexibly to meet the demands of serious incident notifications and any other review requirements. This subgroup is reviewing its serious incident notification processes and templates. It will ensure its recommendations are delivered with the assistance of the Scrutiny and Audit and Learning and Development Subgroups. Learning sessions presented by multi-agency practitioners are planned regarding Rapid Review over the past 2 years are planned for delivery in Q2 2024-25 to support dissemination of case review learning.

#### 6.5 Learning & Development Subgroup

The Learning & Development Subgroup met four times as a joint group prior to December 2023 covering children's and adults safeguarding. In January 2024 the group met for the first time focusing on children's safeguarding.

6.5.1 This subgroup delivered a wide and varied training programme as outlined at Section 7 below. The annual conference was cancelled due to budget constraints. The Learning & Development Subgroup has supported the work of London SCP Training Subgroup and has fed back training needs arising across London to shape the multi-agency training offer in Harrow. The HSCP Learning & Development Manager also takes an active role in developing pan-London training materials. The Learning & Development Subgroup also promotes this offer to the multi-agency partnership and has identified increased uptake from Harrow partners in attendance.

#### 6.6 Impact & Future Learning & Development Subgroup Activity

- 6.6.1 Planning is underway regarding the next HSCP/HSAB Annual Conference, anticipated to take place in Q4 2024-25. The topic will be Contextual (& Transitional) Safeguarding and will be conducted jointly with Harrow Safeguarding Adults Board as part of a Think Family approach to extra-familial harm.
- 6.6.2 The Learning & Development Subgroup is aware that its Learning & Development Strategy expires in 2025. Work has commenced on reflection and development of this strategy for upcoming years over the remainder of 2024-25.
- 6.6.3 The HSCP Business Unit seeks to enhance impact analysis activity with attendees after they have attended a multi-agency HSCP training course. Information from impact analysis over 2024-25 will support development of the next Learning & Development Strategy.

## 6.7 QA & Performance/Multi-Agency Auditing Subgroup

The former Quality Assurance & Performance Subgroup was re-cast as a Multi-Agency Auditing Subgroup in 2023-24. This group met and conducted a multi-agency audit in safeguarding Practice regarding Child Sexual Abuse that concluded in July 2023. Key learning themes included:

- Focus on a perpetrator-focused approach to investigation of Child Sexual Abuse;
- Ongoing assessment of parental protective capacity and support for non-abusing parents;
- Re-emphasis on joint safeguarding investigations whereby concurrent allegations of physical abuse are made;
- Provision of specialist psychological support for children and young people who have suffered Child Sexual Abuse.

## 6.8 Impact & Future Case Review Subgroup Activity

6.8.1 We have recently re-established a quality assurance subgroup which will be named the 'Scrutiny & Audit Subgroup' in 2024-25. Our previous decision to recast the QA group as a case audit group meant we did not have the insightful analysis of the wide range of data we need to ensure our performance is properly scrutinised.

6.8.2 This group will focus on multi-agency safeguarding business performance indicators and other data that relates to our strategic priorities. It will also lead on multi-agency auditing and will conduct 2-4 multi-agency audits a year.

# 7. Training, Learning & Development & Safeguarding Community Outreach

## 7.1 HSCB Learning & Development Offer 2023-24

7.1.1 The HSCB continued to provide an extensive, varied multi-agency learning and development offer in 2023-24. Highlights include:

- 25 distinct training events were conducted across a wide range of topics, from introductory and advanced overarching safeguarding courses, to specific practice areas such as Managing Allegations Against Staff and Volunteers (LADO), Abusive Head Trauma (ICON) and Hate Crime Awareness.
- E-Learning offers continued to be provided regarding Forced Marriage, PREVENT Duty and Modern Slavery.
- 520x individual delegates attended HSCB multi-agency training courses in 2023-24.
- 618x distinct training bookings were made, with a cancellation rate of 15.8% (98 bookings).

7.1.2 Key achievements for the HSCB Learning & Development Program in 2023-24 included:

- Responded to learning from previous Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and designed a bespoke course “Abusive Head Trauma”.
- Responded to the JTAI with launch of Lead Professional training and enhanced the advanced safeguarding children training to incorporate Early Help.
- Worked with the Harrow Social Care Academy to enable delegates to access CPD certificates for the Monday lunch time learning sessions and allow multi agency partners to access these sessions.

7.1.3 Training Impact Analysis activity undertaken by the HSCB identified the following:

- 88% of all respondents had good or high levels of knowledge regarding course learning objectives upon course completion.
- 46% felt confident in the course content area, only needing guidance in limited situations, whilst 33% of respondents felt able to provide support to peers in the subject area.

7.1.4 Additional detail regarding the HSCB Learning & Development Offer in 2023-24 can be found at Appendix 4 below.

7.1.5 The HSCB has continued to maintain strong links with the Harrow Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) Network in schools, utilising feedback from the DSL Network to inform workforce development needs.

## 7.2 Voluntary Action Harrow – Commissioned Outreach & Training Support Offer – 2023-24

7.2.1 The HSCB has commissioned Voluntary Action Harrow (VAH) to provide outreach and training support across the broad spectrum of voluntary and community agencies in Harrow. In addition to activity outlined above, VAH notes that between June 2022 and November 2023:

- 382 attendees from 128 organisations attended VAH training offers.
- 21 one-to-one support sessions were provided by VAH Outreach Team to voluntary and community organisation leaders.
- 164 attendees accessed in-house training sessions delivered by VAH Outreach Team to five separate voluntary and community organisations.

## 7.3 Metropolitan Police Service – NW-BCU Professional Development Days (PDDs)

7.3.1 The MPS has identified a key area of sharing learning and disseminating safeguarding practice messages through its NW-BCU Professional Development Days (PDDs). Harrow Safeguarding Children Partnership has the ability to present at PDDs to the entire complement of 1800x NW-BCU staff, making this a powerful learning opportunity. The upcoming set of NW-BCU PDD’s will be supported by representatives of Harrow Children’s Social Care in focusing on key multi-agency practice such as best practice for MPS referrals and notifications into Children’s Social Care and the Voice Of the Child – the PDD will examine experiences of young children in 4x different police interactions with a balance of positive and negative



experiences (including experiences of police intervention in a Domestic Abuse incident in a household, executing a search warrant and supporting a child who had suffered assault).

- 7.3.2 The HSCP will liaise with MPS NW-BCU and Harrow CSC in 2024-25 to further support multi-agency input NW-BCU PDDs to disseminate key safeguarding learning to police officers and staff. It is understood that in providing access to partner agencies to share safeguarding learning, NW-BCU has taken a unique approach across the entire MPS in building in a multi-agency approach to Professional Development Days. NW-BCU has shared this approach centrally with a view to this opportunity being afforded across all BCU's in the Metropolitan Police Service.

## 8. Child Protection Conferencing, Children in Care, Participation & Voice of the Child

### 8.1 Child Protection Conferencing

- 8.1.1 As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, there were 290 children who were the subject of a Child Protection Plan. This equates to approximately 50 children for every 10,000 children in Harrow. During the year, 315 children ceased to be the subject of a plan and 364 children became the subject of a plan. Timeliness for multi-agency reviews of Child Protection Plans (Child Protection Conferences) was 93% on time.
- 8.1.2 The largest single category for child protection plans was emotional abuse. An analysis of data revealed that domestic abuse within the household was a significant factor for these children.

### 8.2 Children In Care & Children Leaving Care- 2023-24

- 8.2.1 As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 there were 177 children looked after, this represents a decrease in numbers of children looked after since 2022/23 (185). During the year 102 children became looked after and 103 ceased to be looked after (either returning home, obtaining Care Leaver status or becoming adopted.)
- 8.2.2 Children Looked After Reviews took place within timescales in 90% of the reviews, with staff illness being the predominant reason for late reviews.
- 8.2.3 Abuse or neglect was the reason for children becoming looked after for 52% of children; with absent parenting 18% , family dysfunction 11%, and family in acute stress 10% being the other significant factors.

## 9. Consultation & Participation Activity in 2023-24

### 9.1 Harrow Council Participation Service

9.1.1 Harrow Council Participation Service organises a dedicated programme of events and activities for approximately 180 children in care (from 0-17) – as well as approximately 200 care-experienced young adults (from 18-25). For a number of reasons, this cohort of young people are unable to live with their families of origin, living instead in fostering placements and/or residential homes. These outings allow opportunities to meet other children, adolescents and young adults in care, to try new things, to get active and to increase their sense of self-esteem. Harrow Participation Service contributed to the development of the London Borough of Harrow Participation Strategy, authored the first-ever Participation Service annual report in 2023-2024 and is routinely represented at the Corporate Parenting Panel.

9.2 Harrow Council Participation Service also integrates care-experienced young people into London Borough of Harrow's business processes. Care leavers sit on interview panels, have a say in recruitment of staff, contribute to the Corporate Parenting Panel, liaise with senior leaders and influence organisational change through the Care-Experienced Council. Harrow Council Participation Service is developing a Council-wide Participation Strategy. Some key achievements of the Participation Service are:

- 40x care-experienced young people attended at least one event or outing hosted by the Participation Service.
- 10x teenagers attended the Participation Service's first-ever residential holiday for care-experienced young people.
- 'Create', London Borough of Harrow's first art exhibition to showcase work of care-experienced artists at Harrow Art Centre's white-cube gallery.
- 16x certificates were awarded in recognition of exemplary achievements at the Care-Experienced Celebration.
- Culturally-considered meals were hosted to celebrate Christmas and Eid al-Fitr – allowing care-experienced young people, who may be spending the holidays alone, to access a hot meal and a sense of community.

### 9.3 Young Harrow Foundation

9.3.1 Young Harrow Foundation has provided consistent support to the HSCB and the Harrow Borough-Based Partnership, including extensive consultation work in developing the Early Help Model described earlier. Young Harrow Foundation co-operated with a number of other local voluntary and community groups in leading a research project to gather feedback from young people on mental well-being which identified:

- School pressure and uncertainty about the future (work/careers) were the key worries.
- Most young people have family and friends they would turn to for support with mental health, whilst trusted youth workers/friendly faces are very important to others.

- Young people with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) felt their mental health was affected by their additional needs.
- Black/Asian or mixed heritage young people are less likely to access a GP or hospital for their mental health compared to peers of white heritage.

## 9.4 Voluntary Action Harrow (VAH)

9.4.1 Voluntary Action Harrow (VAH) has co-ordinated a number of voluntary and community events to consult with parents in supporting the development of the Early Help Model. It identified:

- Considerable community enthusiasm for the introduction of Family Hubs in Harrow.
- Importance of ensuring early support locations are -
  - easily accessible by transport
  - physically accessible
  - inclusive of children with additional needs
  - open when the community needs to use them.
- Parents want a non-judgemental environment within Family Hubs, with easily accessible information about the early support offer
- 46% of respondents had not heard of or used Children’s Centres, with consistent feedback that the early support offer across Harrow was felt to be disjointed or poorly understood.
- The benefit of establishing peer-to-peer networks alongside services.

9.4.2 Feedback from this survey called for a clear, accessible point of entry for early support. This in turn leads to integrated and seamless services with an emphasis on the strengths of families. This support needs to be built on nurturing relationships and help to build peer networks.

## 10 Future Strategic Activity – Participation with Children & Young People

10.1 In addition to continuing to build relationships and undertake consultation activity with Harrow Council Participation Service, Young Harrow Foundation and Voluntary Action Harrow, the HSCP will continue to develop contact with other groups that represent children and young people through the Consultation & Outreach Hub. Consultation with these networks will inform how the HSCP selects its strategic priorities in future. We want to explore how we can encourage children and young people to provide independent scrutiny of our work.

## 11. Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) responses to Allegations Against Persons in Positions of Trust

11.1 The number of Contacts with the Children Social Care LADO service doubled from 2022/23 to 176 and the number of referrals reaching the threshold for LADO involvement increased by 45% to 65 during the year. Additional LADO resource has now been added to manage this increase. The increase in contacts/consultations includes guidance on safer recruitment and support in managing staff conduct and behaviour where it might lead to safeguarding issues. This level of preventative work remains valued and well received by partners, particularly schools and early years settings. It is important to note that these do not meet the LADO threshold. 47 Strategy/Evaluation Meetings took place throughout the year, with 11 allegations found to be substantiated and 7 referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service were made. Physical abuse accounted for 50% of referrals with sexual abuse (20%) and emotional abuse (15%) being the next highest reasons.

## 12. Scrutiny Analysis & 2024/25 Forward Planning – Harrow Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP)

12.1 In planning for 2024-25, the HSCP has considered the recommendations of the Independent Scrutineer contained within the 2022-23 HSCB Annual Report:

- *The HSSP reviews its membership and its frequency of meeting so that it better reflects its strategic oversight function.*
- *The HSSP reviews the chairing arrangements of the subgroups to ensure that continuity is retained while sharing the responsibility fairly.*
- *The HSSP develops a forward work programme/ planner to enable the group to structure its work.*
- *The HSSP agrees a multi-agency budget, to support the Arrangements which is equitable and transparent.*

12.2 **Impact Assessment** – The HSSP addressed this by reconfiguring its structure as noted in Section 2.4 above. Interim Chairing arrangements will be finalised for all subgroups until the end of 2024, when new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements must be published. A multi-agency budget is being finalised that provides for significant expansion of the HSCP Business Unit to respond to increased multi-agency activity within the separate children’s and adults boards, whilst further liaison will occur with key agencies to address equitable funding arrangements. Development of a forward program continues, with a multi-agency auditing forward plan and draft multi-agency dataset now completed. **Summary: The HSSP has addressed these recommendations, whilst continuing to develop a forward work programme via subgroup activity and strategic priority action planning in 2024-25.**

- *The HSSP reviews the sec 11 and sec 42 audit process.*
- *The HSSP reviews arrangements for provision of named and designated safeguarding professionals and ensures that the required posts are filled.*
- *The HSSP reviews the contribution to the Arrangements made by sports and religious bodies locally and take appropriate steps to ensure that their involvement is proportionate to the part they play in local safeguarding.*

- 12.3 **Impact Assessment** – Consultation and development of HSCP s.11 and s.175/157 auditing tools for the HSCP to administer in 2024-25 is underway. The DSP Group will retain oversight of rollout of this safeguarding auditing process. Recruitment activity is underway to fill the post of Designated Doctor – Children Looked After. Safeguarding arrangements made by sports and religious bodies will be considered through the s.11 process and consultation and outreach undertaken with the support of Voluntary Action Harrow as noted in Section 7.2 above. **Summary: Further activity is required to address these recommendations, although ongoing work continues to implement s.11 and s.175/157 agency safeguarding auditing during 2024-25.**
- *The HSSP maps its relationship with other strategic multi agency boards and describes what information needs to flow between the various and the mechanism for achieving that.*
- 12.4 **Impact Assessment** – The interim Strategic Partnerships Manager appointed in March 2024 has identified this as a priority. Key personnel within Safer Harrow Community Safety Partnership and the HSCP business team have begun the process of developing jointly plans around Domestic Abuse and Contextual Safeguarding. Planning is underway to embed routine meetings between the Chairs of the HSCP, HSAB and Safer Harrow Community Safety Partnership to support enhanced cooperation. **Summary: This work has made significant progress.**
- *The HSSP reviews the frequency of its meeting schedule to ensure resilience and continuity in the Partnership.*
- 12.5 **Impact Assessment** – The Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) Group has committed to meeting on a monthly basis until December 2024. **Summary: This recommendation has been fully addressed.**
- 12.6 Independent Scrutiny recommendations for the 2023-24 year in Appendix 1 below will be evaluated for impact in HSCB Annual Report in 2024-25.

## 13 Appendices

### 13.1 Appendix 1 – HSCB Independent Scrutineer Report – 2023-24



## Harrow Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements

### Independent Scrutiny Report

2023 - 2024

#### 1 Context

- 1.1 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the statutory guidance to be followed by safeguarding partnerships , Working Together 2023 (WT23 )<sup>10</sup> require the three key Harrow Safeguarding Children partners - the North West Basic Command Unit of the Metropolitan Police , the North West London Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Harrow Council (the Safeguarding Partners) to ensure that their arrangements for safeguarding children are effective. The Safeguarding Partners are required to publish those arrangements

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<sup>10</sup> WT 23 replaced by WT 18 in January 2024. This report covers a period, 75% of which had WT 18 as its statutory guidance and 25 % had WT 23.

1.2 The current safeguarding arrangements, which currently relate to both children and adults , ***The Harrow Safeguarding Partnership Arrangements***<sup>11</sup> (the Arrangements) were originally published in June 2019<sup>12</sup> and were revised in February 2022. They will be further substantially revised by December 2024 following a decision of the Safeguarding Partners to separate the arrangements for children and adults.

1.3 Annually the Safeguarding Partners are required to report both on what they have achieved in relation to the Arrangements and how effective those arrangements have been<sup>13</sup>.

## 2. Independent Scrutiny

2.1 There is also a requirement to ensure that the Arrangements are subject to independent scrutiny <sup>14</sup>.

2.2 The Children Act does not describe how independent scrutiny should be delivered and the Safeguarding Partners can take whatever steps that they see fit . The way that the Safeguarding Partners in Harrow provide for this is described at section 13 ( page 20) of the Arrangements.

2.3 Independent scrutiny should provide assurance about the effectiveness of the Arrangements and should include scrutiny of how the Partners identify and review serious child safeguarding cases.

2.4 This is my fourth report as Harrow’s independent scrutineer and the last one which I report as the independent chair<sup>15</sup> to the Harrow Safeguarding Children Board, a function I have performed alongside my scrutineer role.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.harrowscb.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Harrow-Safeguarding-Children-Arrangements-Revised-Feb-2022-2-003.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> As required by the Children Act 2004 sec 16 G (2)

<sup>13</sup> Children Act 2004 sec 16 G (7)

<sup>14</sup> Children Act 2004 sec 16 G (3)

<sup>15</sup> Independent Chairs were introduced in 2010; Working Together 23 requires the replacement of Independent Chairs with a new chairing system agreed by the three Safeguarding Partners by December 2024.

2.5 Having an independent chair of the Safeguarding Children Board was one way in which the Safeguarding Partners introduced independent scrutiny into their arrangements. However, WT 23 requires the Safeguarding Partners by December 2024 to have assumed the chairing of local arrangements themselves.

### **3. The Six Steps for Independent Scrutiny<sup>16</sup>**

3.1 This independent scrutiny report reports on the extent to which ,

- The three core partner leads are actively involved in strategic planning and implementation
- The wider safeguarding partners (including relevant agencies) are actively involved in safeguarding children.
- Appropriate quality assurance procedures are in place for data collection, audit and information sharing
- There is a process for identifying and investigating learning from local and national case reviews
- There is an active programme of multi-agency safeguarding training.
- Children, young people, families and service users are aware of and involved with plans for safeguarding children.

### **4. The three core partner leads are actively involved in strategic planning and implementation.**

4.1 This year has posed a number of difficulties for the Safeguarding Partners, because the Local Authority has experienced high rates of staff turnover in senior positions. This has settled down with experienced senior staff now in place but for over half the year that was not the case.

4.2 Notwithstanding the difficulties brought about by high rates of senior staff churn, the three Safeguarding Partners have been energetic in the strategic planning for and the practical implementation of a new set of safeguarding arrangements for Harrow. The need for new arrangements has arisen because of three issues;

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<sup>16</sup> Taken from *Six Steps for Independent Scrutiny: Safeguarding Children arrangements*. Institute of Applied Social Research, University of Bedfordshire, Pearce, J (2019)



- i. In December 2023 the Department for Education (DfE) published a new version of their guidance for multi-agency partnerships (see footnote 1). This guidance requires local safeguarding partnerships to review their existing arrangements and make certain changes, all of which must be in place by December 2024.
  - a) The three safeguarding partners have provided senior staff to plan for the changes and to meet regularly as an executive group. Last year's independent scrutiny report commented on the excessive size of the strategic group and the relative infrequency ( 3 times a year) with which it met. The new executive group is smaller, more focused and is currently meeting monthly.
- ii. In May 2023 a joint targeted area inspection<sup>17</sup> (JTAI) of the Harrow multi-agency response to children and families who need help found that there was a need to improve the strategic partnership oversight of
  - Early Help Services and
  - The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)<sup>18</sup>
  - a) The findings of the JTAI inspection led the Safeguarding Partners to conclude that they needed more strategic input into the working of the Arrangements. This decision (to improve their strategic oversight of the Arrangements) then aligned with the requirement for change published later in WT 23.
  - b) The Safeguarding Partners have sought assurance from trusted experts by working with the Local Government Association and the DfE National Safeguarding Facilitator to ensure that the refreshed Arrangements will be effective.
- iii. In October 2023 the Safeguarding Partners decided to separate the adult and children safeguarding arrangements. These joint arrangements had been in place since 2019 , but it was decided that separation would allow for better oversight of and focus on those issues that were specific to each safeguarding discipline.

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<sup>17</sup> Accessed at <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50217932>

<sup>18</sup> MASH constitutes an Arrangement that allows organisations with responsibility for the safety of vulnerable people to work together. Organisations work alongside each other, share information and co-ordinate activities, often through co-locating staff from the local authority, health agencies and the police. Most safeguarding partner agencies support these arrangements so that risks to vulnerable children can be identified early. The MASH model was endorsed in the [Munro Review of Child Protection](#).

- 4.3 The Executive Group (described at 4.2.i.a) which replaced the Harrow Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (HSSP) is for the time being chaired by the Local Authority Chief Executive. Previously the HSSP was chaired on a rotational basis, between the Safeguarding Partners ) with the role until October 2023 being occupied by the Integrated Care Board<sup>19</sup>.
- 4.4 There is an understanding among the Safeguarding Partners that rotational chairing practically demonstrates that safeguarding is a shared endeavour. This creates a greater logistical burden for the Metropolitan Police, whose local senior staff have responsibility for three safeguarding partnerships<sup>20</sup> and the Integrated Care Board , whose senior staff have responsibility for eight<sup>21</sup>, than it does for the Local Authority.
- 4.5 Notwithstanding this logistical difficulty, the Metropolitan Police and the integrated Care Board contributed to the Executive Group and also send to the sub groups (4.6) regular attendees who participate fully in the work of those groups.
- 4.6 The Arrangements rely heavily on the work of three subgroups to deliver multi- agency oversight. These groups are
- Case Review
  - Learning and Development
  - Audit, Scrutiny and Quality Assurance

They operated across both adult and children safeguarding disciplines until the Autumn of 2023, when they separated. This separation will in due course enable greater focus on child specific and adult specific issues, but the increase in the number of the sub groups has not yet been supported with enough staff to make them effective. Plans are afoot for staff to be recruited to help with this, but this is still some way off.

- 4.7 The lack of business support for the Arrangements has been ameliorated to some extent by the sub group chairs taking on some of the administration. However, there is not yet a forward work plan for the sub groups to enable them to support the Arrangements. This is only likely to be deliverable when the business unit is staffed appropriately.

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<sup>19</sup> WT 23 requires the Safeguarding Partners to establish a Delegated Safeguarding Partners' (DSP) Group by December 2024. This will replace the Executive Group. This report, however, will continue to call this group the Executive Group, even though some of its recommendations may in due course be adopted by the DSP Group

<sup>20</sup> The Metropolitan Police NW Basic Command Unit is responsible for the policing of Barnet , Brent and Harrow Boroughs

<sup>21</sup> The NWL Integrated Care Board commissions services in the following boroughs; Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea and the City of Westminster.

4.8 Historically the funding for the support of the Arrangements by the three core partners has lacked equity and transparency. I have reported on this before as have many other London scrutineers. Harrow Council, like most London Councils incurs the lion's share of the financial burden of the Arrangements. This has been an unfair burden on the Local Council for several years and it remains the case still.

## 5. Recommendation

- The Executive Group speeds up the recruitment of the business unit staff required to manage the Arrangements
- The Executive Group develops a forward work programme/ planner for the subgroups to ensure that the Arrangements are supported effectively.
- The Executive Group revisits the funding arrangements and strike an agreement which is equitable and transparent.

## 6. The wider safeguarding partners (including relevant agencies) are actively involved in safeguarding children.

6.1 The Arrangements<sup>22</sup> describe a wide range of relevant and other agencies who contribute to the safeguarding function in Harrow.

6.2 Their attendance at the Harrow Safeguarding Children Board is generally good and many relevant agencies are involved in the sub groups. The work of all three sub groups is significantly enhanced by the expertise that they bring. A range of health colleagues from community and hospital trusts in particular make strong contributions to the Case Review and Quality Assurance Groups. One of the sub groups is chaired by a school colleague.

6.3 The involvement of schools and colleges in the work of the partnership is strong, and the designated safeguarding leads group for schools is a key network for informing, consulting and working with a key partner.

6.4 The serious incident group, which brings together schools, businesses, the Council, the Metropolitan Police and other relevant agencies to review incidents involving school age children is a strong expression of continued multi agency innovative working.

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<sup>22</sup> Appendix 1

- 6.5 The Arrangements describe a range of voluntary, sports and religious agencies<sup>23</sup> who as relevant agencies are important contributors to safeguarding. Through the work of Voluntary Action Harrow, the safeguarding partners have good contact with the local voluntary network. The HSCB is attended by a range of third sector bodies.
- 6.6 There is little engagement with the religious sector or sports associations/ bodies. As far back as 2006 the ONS described Harrow as the most religiously diverse borough in England and Wales<sup>24</sup>. I commented last year on how little connection , except through the excellent work done by VAH there seemed to be with religious organisations. Given the importance religion has to the lives of many Harrow residents , this remains an area worthy of development.
- 6.7 There are also opportunities to engage with sporting bodies that should be exploring.
- 6.8 Other local partnerships have developed a variety of ways of engaging both faith and sporting bodies and Harrow could learn from these examples.
- 6.9 The National Probation Service manage a lot of safeguarding risk and hold information that contributes to the partners understanding of child welfare. They have contributed to a range of adult safeguarding issues in Harrow , but less so formally in relation to child safeguarding sub groups. This is a source of expertise that the Partnership should find ways of tapping into.
- 6.10 One of the NHS relevant agencies contributes to the funding of the Arrangements, but the others do not. The Safeguarding Partners should explore with all the NHS relevant agencies a way of ensuring that their financial contribution is proportionate to their responsibilities and size in accordance with WT 23.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Appendix 1

<sup>24</sup> <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20070109002329/http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/eth1006.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> WT 23 ; Paras 98-100

## 7. Recommendation

- The Safeguarding Partners reviews the contribution to the Arrangements made by sports and religious bodies locally and take appropriate steps to ensure that their involvement is proportionate to the part they play in local safeguarding.
- The National Probation Service be encouraged to take a regular part in one or more of the subgroups.
- The Safeguarding Partners explore with all relevant agencies, but particularly the NHS Trusts their making a financial contribution to the Arrangements.

## 8 Appropriate quality assurance procedures are in place for data collection, audit and information sharing

- 8.1 I reported that last year there had been little by way of multi-agency case auditing. What had once been a strength of the partnership in previous years had within a short space of time become a weakness. During 2023-2024 the Partnership continued to struggle to develop an auditing programme that could provide reassurance that multi agency practice was sound.
- 8.2 A multi-agency audit of Child Sex Abuse cases did take place in June 2023. This led to some immediate remedial action in two cases. It also led the partnership to review the provision of follow up emotional support for children who had been sexually abused and a recommendation that the Police take a more perpetrator focused ( rather than victim focused ) approach to prosecution decisions.
- 8.3 A multi-agency programme of regular audits of MASH activity has now begun. Its first audit of six cases arranged March 2024 but completed May 2024 found some very good practice in four cases with some improvement required with the other two.
- 8.4 Multi agency auditing is time and resource intensive. The Arrangements do not currently have enough support to deliver an effective audit programme across the breadth of safeguarding activity although the MASH audits (8.3) are a good start. When the staff needed to support the Arrangements have been recruited an audit programme needs to be instigated by the Executive Group.
- 8.5 There is a lot of good multi agency data available about professional practice. The Harrow Council Business team provides good analysis of themes, trends and performance. It is also very responsive to the Safeguarding Partners requests for additional analysis and interpretation.
- 8.6 However, the information scrutinised by the Partners is not a wholly balanced data set. The multi-agency MASH data set does report on cross agency activity, but information on wider partner practice (apart from some Schools' data) is not scrutinised by the Safeguarding Partners.

- 8.7 It is always a challenge distilling down into a manageable report the data available to all agencies. The Safeguarding Partners should prioritise the development of a data set, accompanied by analysis that informs them of multi-agency practice. This is particularly relevant in relation to their multi agency objectives.
- 8.8 The JTAI found that although there were good examples of information well used and properly shared there were also weaknesses in this aspect of professional practice. Given the frequency with which the failure to share information arises in safeguarding reviews this is an issue that the Safeguarding Partners needs to keep under review.
- 8.9 This is another issue that will be more easily solved once the business unit is fully staffed.

## 9. Recommendation

- The Executive Team oversees the development of a comprehensive plan for multi-agency audits.
- The Executive Team commissions a multi-agency data set with accompanying analysis so they can track progress against their objectives.

## 10. There is a process for identifying and investigating learning from local and national case reviews

- 10.1 In the past year the Safeguarding Partners conducted two rapid reviews and a further lessons learning exercise. Both rapid reviews related to fractures suffered by immobile babies and the learning exercise involved the historic report of a small child being taken from the country for the purposes of female genital mutilation.
- 10.2 These reviews have led to:
- a plan for some follow up auditing of MASH cases that involve parents who refuse early help
  - the revision of the pan London CP procedures concerning police investigative thresholds in cases where children suffer a red mark following an assault
  - a review of the way information is shared between health visitors and school nurses
  - a review of decision making by paediatricians when asked to complete child protection medicals
  - some dedicated training for multi-agency staff on the use of the FGM Information Sharing system.

- 10.2 I currently chair the case review group and am pleased to have a knowledgeable and committed core team of attendees, from the statutory and relevant agencies. They are supplemented by other professionals depending on the nature of the case being reviewed.
- 10.3 The Partnership has an efficient way of ensuring that their case review statutory obligations are carried out, that reports reach the National Panel on time<sup>26</sup> and learning is distilled from each review, disseminated to the partnership and assessed as to how it has been embedded.
- 10.4 The JTAI also commented favourably on the implementation of learning from reviews and this continues to be a strong suit for the Safeguarding Partnership.
- 10.5 The Learning and Development Group rolled out a training programme on abusive head trauma in response to the findings of an earlier rapid review. The NWL ICB commissioned the ICON programme<sup>27</sup> as a result of the same rapid review.
- 10.6 last year 393 Rapid Reviews were completed in England<sup>28</sup> which is approximately 2.6 per local authority<sup>29</sup>. Given that Harrow has a smaller population than the average for a local authority it appears from this small data sample that Harrow is reviewing an appropriate number of cases. However, the Safeguarding Partners should remain vigilant and ensure that all appropriate cases are being referred for review. This was a recommendation in last year's scrutiny report. The referral of three cases suggests that this is on track.

## 11. Recommendation

- The Executive Team satisfies itself that partner agencies are referring for review all appropriate serious safeguarding cases by conducting a proportionate audit.

## 12. There is an active programme of multi-agency safeguarding training.

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<sup>26</sup> Safeguarding Children Partnerships must report serious safeguarding incidents to the Child safeguarding Practice Review panel ( the National Panel) within a series of statutory timescales.

<sup>27</sup> ICON is a programme designed to prevent head trauma in babies , by helping parents cope with babies who cry a lot or will not feed.

<sup>28</sup> Accessed at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65bce1df7042820013752116/Child\\_Safeguarding\\_Review\\_Panel\\_annual\\_report\\_2022\\_to\\_2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65bce1df7042820013752116/Child_Safeguarding_Review_Panel_annual_report_2022_to_2023.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> There are 151 local authorities with child safeguarding responsibilities in England.

- 12.1 The Partnership have offered 25 different multi agency courses and events in the past year. These ranged from all day courses to lunch and learn sessions. 520 delegates have attended. A large number (25) of different agencies have attended. Schools are particularly good attenders. The take up by third sector bodies, non-school educational providers and various council departments is also quite high.
- 12.2 Last year I reported that The Police and the Health Service (save for Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL)) were less frequent attenders. The same pattern has repeated itself this year, with the same agencies being much better represented than others. This is a common issue in many partnerships and The Safeguarding Partners need to ensure that the difference in attendance numbers across agencies is justifiable.
- 12.3 The courses that are offered (apart from the standard introductory and advanced safeguarding courses) arise from case reviews, local requests and national themes. A good example of a course arising from a review was the offering of a course on abusive head trauma, which was initiated following the completion of two rapid reviews, both of which dealt with this issue.
- 12.4 The Learning and Delivery group (L and D) runs surveys to assess the extent to which training changes the workforce's level of knowledge and the way they carry out their duties.
- 12.5 The JTAI identified little by way of multi-agency training for matters concerned with Early Support. L and D responded to this by specifically running courses on Early Support and Keeping Families Together and ensuring that Early support was woven into other courses in as much as the curriculum allowed it
- 13. Children, young people and families are aware of and involved with plans for safeguarding children.**
- 13.1 Harrow has a strong record (noted also by the JTAI) of consulting and communicating with service users, children and families.
- 13.2 The HAY<sup>30</sup> survey provides the Partners with a rich data set that helps them understand the need for services and the impact that those services are having.

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<sup>30</sup> **How Are You** is a survey of 6000 young people in Harrow conducted as a collaboration between the Young Harrow Foundation, CNWL and Public Health Harrow.



13.3 The Partnership has strong representation of the third sector in the guise of Voluntary Action Harrow. This means that the representative voice of the service user is heard by the Safeguarding Partners.

13.4 Another way in which families and service users could impact the quality and design of services would be to involve them in the audit process suggested at recommendation 9.

#### 14. Working with Other Boards

14.1 WT 23 says: *'To be effective, these arrangements should link to other strategic partnership work happening locally to support children and families. This will include other public boards including Health and Wellbeing Boards, Adult Safeguarding Boards, Channel Panels, Improvement Boards, Community Safety Partnerships, the Local Family Justice Board and MAPPAs.'*

14.2 There is a degree of join up in Harrow in relation to the interoperability of the various multi agency boards as described in WT 23. This is partly because many of the attendees of these various boards are the same individuals.

14.3 However, the JTAI identified a gap between what might be expected from a series of partnership boards attended by many of the same staff and the reality of how well the Safeguarding Partners are supplied with the information they need.

14.4 I reported last year that preventing this strategic gap is relatively easily achieved and mapping out how the Children's Partnership links with these other boards would reap strategic dividends.

#### 15. Recommendation.

- The Executive Team maps its relationship with other strategic multi agency boards and describes what information needs to flow between the various and the mechanism for achieving that.

#### 16. Conclusion

16.1 The Partnership is generally reflective and cooperative and it also demonstrates that it is capable of learning and improving. The leadership team is now settled, there is a plan for resetting the Arrangements by December 2024 in accordance with WT 23 and the Safeguarding Partners have shown energy and are providing strategic oversight of the required changes. Multi agency auditing has restarted , the Learning and Development offer is focused on local and national learning and the case reviews completed by the Partnership have been acted on and have led to some useful changes to London and local policy.



Chris Miller

Independent Chair of and Scrutineer to

Harrow Safeguarding Children Partnership

June 2024

### 13.2 Appendix 2- HSCB Budget & Expenditure – 2023/2024

<b>Harrow Safeguarding Children Board - Budget - 2023-24</b>	
<b>Budget Item:</b>	<b>Outturn</b>
Income - HSAB Adults Partners	£45,000
Income - HSCB Children's Partners	£36,653
Income - HSCB Children's Training Income	£7,645
Grant - Department for Education	£47,300
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£136,598</b>
Total Staffing	£175,995
Total Other Expenditure	£71,709
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£247,704</b>
Net Expenditure Funded by Harrow Council	£111,106

### 13.3 Appendix 3 – HSCB Learning & Development Offer 2023-24 – Attendance & Bookings

Agency/Organisation	Sum of Number of Delegates	Role	Count of Customer category
Education	278	Childminder	4
People Services	95	Day Nursery	77
CNWL	38	Foster carers	5
Schools	34	Further Education	15
Education Settings	19	Harrow Council Staff	84
Health	8	Independent Schools	19
Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust (RNOH)	7	Nursery Units of Independent Schools	9
Psychological Services	5	Playgroup or Pre-School	20
Early Support Team	5	Primary Academy / Free	57
Family Placement Services	4	Primary School	175
Adult social services	4	Pupil Referral Unit	3
Peoples Services	3	Safeguarding Multi-Agency Partners	89
Police	3	Safeguarding Organisations	6
Foster Care	3	Secondary Academy / Free	39
Early Support	3	Secondary School	2
London North West Hospitals NHS Trust (LNWH)	2	Special Academy	2
Youth Offending Team	1	Special School - Primary	5
SSAFA Armed Forces Charity	1	Special School - Secondary	7
Assessment centre	1	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>618</b>
CCG	1		

Education Psychology Service	1	
Sensory Team	1	
Metropolitan Police Service	1	
Adult Social Care	1	
Nursery	1	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>520</b>	