



**Medway  
Safeguarding  
Children Partnership**  
Safeguarding Medway's  
children together

# **Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership**

Annual Report of 2023-24



**Kent  
Police**

*Medway*  
COUNCIL  
*Serving You*



<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Section One – Medway Children and Families</b>	4-5
<b>Section Two – The Partnership</b>	6-7
<b>Section Three – Scrutiny and Assurance</b>	8-11
<b>Section Four – Voice of Children and Families</b>	12
<b>Section Five – Achievements and Impact on Priorities</b>	13-18
<b>Section Six – Learning and Improvement</b>	19-25
<b>Section Seven - Resources</b>	26
<b>Appendices</b>	27

## Foreword

We are pleased to present the annual report of the Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) that provides an overview of the multi-agency safeguarding activity from April 2023 to March 2024.

The MSCP is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children in Medway. We want Medway to be a place where children are safe from harm in their homes, families and communities and we want to ensure the right service is delivered in the most effective way and to the highest standard.

Our priorities reflect the issues impacting children in Medway and this annual report provides an assessment of our work, its impact, and our focus for the coming year.

The work of the MSCP is underpinned by a commitment to promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement across organisations and the annual report provides an overview of our shared learning and improvement activities including multi-agency audits and learning reviews, their impact and priorities for the coming year.

The MSCP has a secure establishment in its local area and the annual report includes an overview of the changes that have taken place in 2023-2024 and the plans to establish the first secure school within the local area in 2024-2025.

The annual report acknowledges the changes set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children at the end of 2023 and the MSCP response particularly in relation to our governance structures. The MSCP also recognises there is further work in relation to these changes and other national reforms to strengthen the partnership and accountability over the coming year.



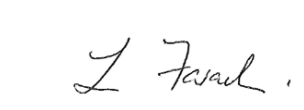
Richard Hicks  
Chief Executive  
Medway Council



Paul Bentley  
Chief Executive  
Kent and Medway ICB



Tim Smith  
Chief Constable  
Kent Police



Dr Lee-Anne Farach  
Director of People  
Medway Council



Paul Lumsdom  
Chief Nursing Officer  
NHS Kent and Medway



Simon Wilson  
ACC  
Kent Police

## Section One – About Medway Children and Families

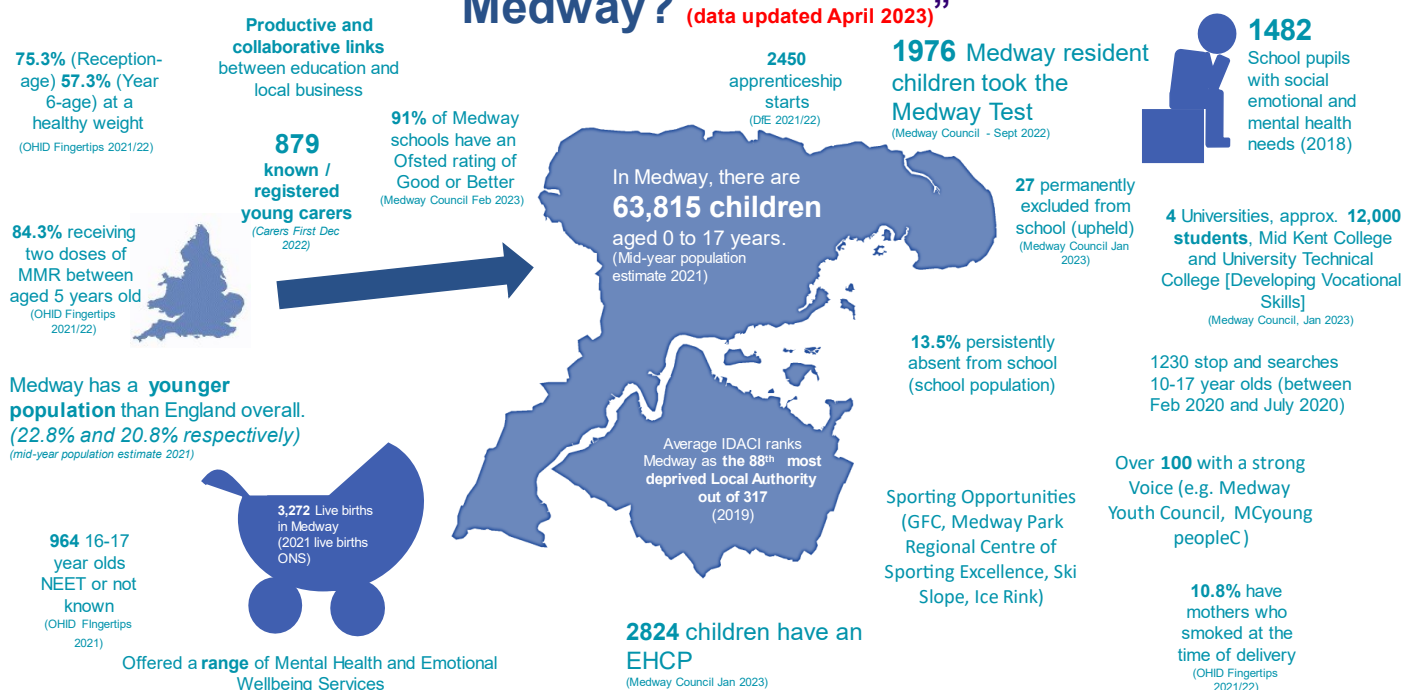


Medway is set around the river Medway within the Thames Gateway Growth Area. There are 5 main towns in the area: Chatham, Gillingham, Rochester, Strood and Rainham, as well as significant rural areas.

Between the last two censuses (held in 2011 and 2021), the population of Medway increased by 6.0%, from around 263,900 in 2011 to around 279,800 in 2021. The population increased by a smaller percentage than the overall population of the Southeast (7.5%), and by a smaller percentage than the overall population of England (up 6.6% since the 2011 Census) (ONS, 2023)

In 2021, 5.6% of Medway residents identified their ethnic group within the "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African" category, up from 2.5% in 2011. In 2021, 84.3% of people in Medway identified their ethnic group within the "White" category (compared with 89.6% in 2011), while 5.9% identified their ethnic group within the "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" category (compared with 5.2% the previous decade).

## “What is it like to be a child or young person growing up in Medway?” (data updated April 2023)”



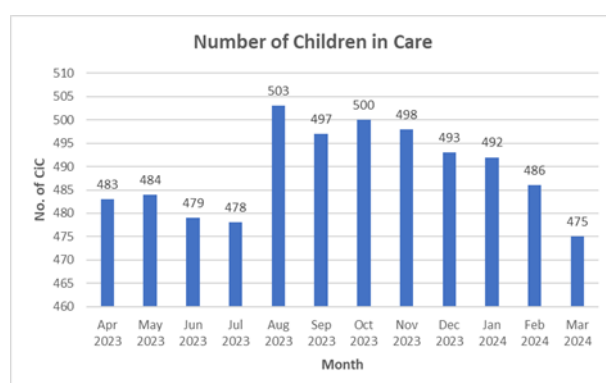


**Children with a child protection plan:** 290 children were subject to a child protection plan at the end of March 2024<sup>1</sup>, compared with 288 in March 2023.

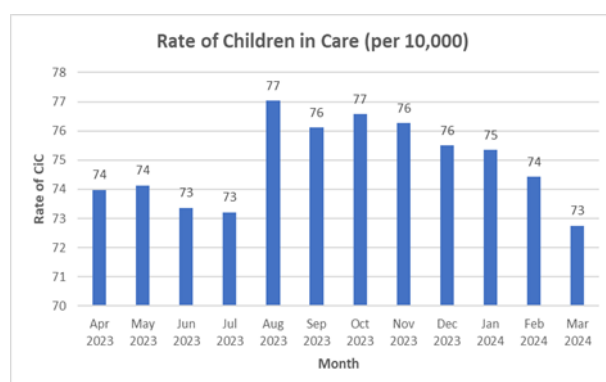
This equates to 44 children per 10,000 of the child population<sup>2</sup> and is slightly higher than the national average of 43.2 children<sup>3</sup> and Medway's statistical neighbours<sup>4</sup> which is 41 children.

**Children in Care:** 475 children were in the care of the local authority at the end of March 2024 compared with 467 in March 2023, as set out in table 1. This equates to 73 Children in Care per 10,000 and remains below Medway's statistical neighbours at 74 per 10,000.

**Table 1 – Number of Children in Care 2023-2024**



**Table 2 – Rate of children in care 2023-2024**



<sup>1</sup> Figures are provided by Mosaic reports 'Open CP Plans' and 'Open CiC cases', downloaded on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2024

<sup>2</sup> Rates are calculated using the latest available ONS Mid-Year Medway population figure (65,289) 2022-23 as the denominator

<sup>3</sup> Latest available national rate (2022-23) are from GOV.UK

<sup>4</sup> Statistical neighbour models provide one method of benchmarking progress. Each local authority is grouped with a number of other local authorities that are deemed to have similar characteristics – known as statistical neighbours. Medway's statistical neighbours are: Havering; Dudley; Rotherham; Swindon; Southend-on-Sea; Thurrock; Kent; Telford and Wrekin; North Northamptonshire; West Northamptonshire. Rates for Medway Statistical Neighbours are from GOV.UK and reflect 2022-23



## Section Two – The Partnership

Medway Council, Kent Police and NHS Kent and Medway (ICB) are the three safeguarding partners that make up the MSCP. The MSCP acknowledges the support from relevant agencies with their participation in sub-groups, delivery of training and engagement with multi-agency audits and case reviews. A full list of relevant agencies can be found in Appendix One.

### Strategic Leadership and Accountability

The MSCP Accountable Officer group is made up of the Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP), as defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, from each of the statutory safeguarding partner agencies. Accountable Officers meet twice yearly to review the MSCP performance and impact and shape the future direction of the partnership. Accountable Officers chair the meetings on an annual rotational basis.

In line with the Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) each Accountable Officer has appointed a Delegated Safeguarding Partner (DSP) to work together to ensure oversight of the quality and compliance of the delivery of agreed MSCP priorities. The DSPs form the Executive.

### Delivering Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

The MSCP Executive is made up of the three DSP's and have joint responsibility to ensure effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. DSPs chair the partnership on a rotational basis.

Schools, colleges, and other educational providers play a pivotal role in safeguarding children in Medway and the role of schools in the partnership continues to be recognised. There was formal representation from primary and secondary head teacher forums at the Executive group in 2023 – 2024 enabling schools to shape the safeguarding agenda and engage the wider school leadership in the partnership.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) requires the DSPs to have processes in place to provide assurance that multi-agency practice is reviewed and operating well. The MSCP has a structure of sub-groups who lead on the statutory requirements and shared priorities, reporting to and seeking feedback from the Executive group on their work and impact.

Sub-groups are chaired by and made up of representatives from across the children's workforce in Medway. Two of the statutory safeguarding partners work across Medway and Kent along with several other agencies and Kent and Medway Safeguarding Partnerships have several joint sub-groups to ensure continuity and consistency. The MSCP structure can be found [here](#).

## **Key Relationships**

The MSCP has a joint working protocol for working with the Medway Health and Wellbeing Board, Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adult Board and the Medway Community Safety Partnership.

The protocol sets out the expectation that each Board will have the opportunity to see, comment on and challenge the priorities of other strategic bodies and be updated on progress on their work. Also, the commitment that all key strategic plans whether they are formulated by individual agencies or by partnership forums should include safeguarding children as a cross-cutting theme. This has helped ensure there is synergy between the priorities of the partnerships and boards and enabled joint work around domestic abuse and exploitation.



## Section Three – Scrutiny and Assurance

The MSCP is committed to ensuring that independent scrutiny provides assurance, through monitoring and challenge, in judging the effectiveness and quality of multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Medway.

The MSCP engage two independent scrutineers, acting as a constructive critical friend, promoting reflection to drive improvements, and reporting how well the safeguarding partners are providing strong leadership to fulfil their safeguarding children role.

One of the scrutineers focuses on the secure estate including chairing the Secure Estate and Safeguarding sub-group. The second is the functions as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. Towards the end of 2023-2024 this role was vacant, and the Executive engaged a new scrutineer in April 2024.

### **Independent Scrutiny: Ensuring children in residential custodial secure units are safe. John Drew CBE**

The independent scrutiny arrangements for the MSCP include a specific function for the secure custodial estate for children in Medway. Over the years the size of the custodial estate in Medway, always a national resource, has changed considerably. As recently as five years ago, for historical reasons, 1 in 4 of all children in custody in England and Wales were accommodated in the Medway area. The numbers and proportions of such children have declined over the past year. While they live in Medway the Medway Safeguarding Children's Partnership has specific responsibilities towards these children, shared obviously with the home areas of each child.

John Drew, CBE, is the Independent Scrutineer for the Secure Estate, a role he has held since 2019.

The work of the Independent Scrutineer for the secure estate includes:

- Chairing quarterly Secure Estate Quality Assurance meetings
- Maintaining regular contact with key individuals involved in safeguarding (e.g. Local Authority Designated Officer, Head of Safeguarding in the establishments, other parties)
- Undertaking periodic visits to Cookham Wood and the Oasis Restore, the Secure School (due to open in the summer of 2024)
- Overseeing the production of the annual 'Review of Safeguarding and Restraint'.

The MSCP Executive will review these arrangements in 2025, once the new residential Secure School, Oasis Restore, has become established.



The partnership has continued to maintain a Secure Estate Safeguarding Assurance sub-group in recognition of Medway the place's unusual position, last year, as being the site of one of only five children's prisons in the country, HMP Young Offender Institution (YOI) Cookham Wood on the outskirts of Rochester. This was a national resource, and at any one time accommodates about 80 boys out of a total in England and Wales of approximately 430. These are mainly 16- and 17-year-olds.

There has remained a high level of engagement from members of the partner in overseeing the safety of children in the prison, work that is powerfully enhanced by the Inspectorate of Prisons (although they are not members of the sub-group, at their choice).

However, a high level of engagement is no guarantee that children in custody are kept safe. All England's YOIs represent severe challenges in terms of safety, and in no sense is Cookham Wood an exception to this, indeed at many times the Prisons Inspectorate has identified Cookham Wood as the most troubled and troubling children's prison in the country. When the Inspectors visited Cookham Wood in 2023 they described the prison as being "in crisis after six years of decline". Under a procedure agreed with the Lord Chancellor the inspectorate issued an 'Urgent Notification' requiring the Prison Service to make immediate changes to the prison. The Inspectors found "there was widespread weapon making and namely a quarter of the children felt unsafe/ Solitary confinement had become normalised ... and some children did not come out of their cells for days at a time". The Chief Inspector criticised the Leadership Team for lacking cohesion and a failure to improve standards and said staff lacked confidence in their managers.

Safeguarding partners had been well sighted on these problems and several challenges had been presented locally and nationally about specific incidents in the prison. During the last year we have observed the Governing Governor making determined efforts to improve standards in the prison, and they have been very open with safeguarding partners about the challenges they faced, not least due to very high turnover rates and difficulties in filling vacancies. Despite much extra support from the national leadership of the Youth Custody Service, and regular restrictions on new admissions, it was hard to see significant improvement in these and other areas,

At the same time the Prison Service came under increasing pressure to find prison accommodation for adult prisoners, and these two pressures, apparently taken together, led the Prison Service to announce in March 2024 that they were going to re-roll Cookham Wood as a prison for adults and move all children elsewhere. This decision was made shortly before the next scheduled inspection by the Prison Inspectorate. All children have now left Cookham Wood and there is no plan for their return. The national crisis in the availability of prisons for adults remains.

At the same time steady if not rapid progress has been made towards the opening of Oasis Restore. During 2023/2024 no children were admitted but, out

of the period of this annual report, the first children did arrive in July 2024. The plan is that there should be a gradual build up in numbers of children placed at Oasis Restore through the year. In essence the Secure School is seen by the Ministry of Justice as being a complete replacement for Young Offender Institutions.

The Safeguarding Partnership and others have been in detailed discussions with the leadership of Oasis Restore and are putting a series of arrangements in place, drawing on experience elsewhere including the old Medway Secure Training Centre, to secure safe care for the children at the Secure School.

### **Annual Review of Restraint**

The Independent Scrutineer and Secure Estate Quality Assurance sub-group oversee the production of the annual report of safeguarding and restraint. Production of the 2023-2024 annual report is in progress and will be submitted to the Youth Justice Board, the Youth Custody Service, and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons as per Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.

In previous years young people at HMP YOI Cookham Wood have been asked to complete a survey to contribute to the annual report. In 2023-2024 it was agreed a more effective way of hearing their voice and experience would be 1-2-1 conversations exploring wider safeguarding topics as well as the use of restraint. Their contributions will be included in the annual report with the section below providing a snapshot of their feedback:

#### *Seeking and Utilising Feedback from Children – Restraint*

Six young people took part in the conversations and whilst a small sample, five had had experience of restraint sharing *“being restrained is stressful”* and *“yes if you are calming down, they notice that and tell staff to back off.”*

### **Independent Scrutiny: Experiences of children detained by police.**

Independent scrutiny was deployed to review the experience of children and young people detained by Kent Police. The review covered both Kent and Medway and was undertaken due to concerns raised by the police about the continued high proportions of children detained overnight in police custody.

As a result, an inaugural Children's Concordat meeting was held in January 2023, which later developed into a Concordat agreement fully supported by both police and Kent and Medway Local Authorities. This meeting, chaired by the Head of Criminal Justice and Custody within Kent Police, takes place quarterly. The performance data gathered and shared has evolved significantly and now puts us in a strong position to understand the demand

and necessity of both secure and appropriate accommodation. The Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel, which reports into the Concordat, has a strong and wide-reaching partnership contingent carries out reviews of issues or matters of concern. Independent Custody Visitors are also represented at this meeting and have supported this objective by re-focussing their questions specifically to children in custody to really hear their experiences. Both forums allow a tactical and strategic assurance of the procedures and operational matters impacting children in custody.

**2024-2025:** Engage a new independent scrutineer and establish a scrutiny framework.

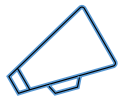


## Section Four – Voice of Children and Families

The MSCP is committed to listening to the voice of child and families and has integrated this ambition into the 2023-2025 Strategic Plan. The following provide examples of how children and families have been consulted and included in decision making processes with safeguarding partner services.

### Child-Friendly Medway

The MSCP shares the ambition for Medway Council to become a child friendly city, where all children have a meaningful say in, and benefit from, the local decisions, services and spaces that shape their lives.



In 2023-2024 Child Friendly Medway engaged with and captured the voice of 90,000 children. Feedback is gathered from families across a variety of events including a diverse cultural and ethnic background who may be accessing support.

### Make Your Mark

Make Your Mark is the biggest annual poll of 11–18-year-olds in the UK where young people vote on the issues most important to them. This information informs the UK Youth Parliament agenda and campaigns for the following year.

Medway Youth Service worked closely with Medway secondary schools to ensure that as many young people as possible were able to take part in Make Your Mark. Medway was in the top twenty for both percentage of voter turnout and for the number of votes cast across all local authority areas in the UK. Medway also had the second biggest percentage voter turn outs in the Southeast region.



8399 young people from 21 secondary schools participated.

This represents an additional 417 young people from 2022.

### Medway Parent & Carer Forum



Medway Parents & Carers Forum played a key role in the recommissioning of Medway's Health Visiting & School Nursing Service, mobilised in January 2024. They issued a survey to local parents and carers, feedback from which helped to shape the service specification. Forum representatives were also involved in the provider selection process by as members of the interview panels.

**2024-2025:** The MSCP recognise that further work is needed to provide children with the opportunity to be involved in the work of the partnership.



## Section Five – Achievements and Impact on Priorities

### Priority One – Effective Partnerships

#### National reforms and key decisions

Changes to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) have been reviewed and considered by the Accountable Officer and Executive groups. The partnership chairing arrangements and reporting lines between the two key groups (LSPs and DSPs) are in line with the guidance.

The Accountable Officer group has provided shared oversight of the delivery of the Rapid Review, Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review and the Learning Lesson review and agreed plans for the implementation of associated recommendations.

The Executive group have considered the independent scrutiny function and made the decision to continue to engage an independent scrutineer (see section three).

#### Improved information sharing.

The Performance Management and Quality Assurance (PMQA) subgroup brings partners together to consider data and review performance. The group identified a gap in information sharing of missing children with hospital partners. A system review was completed to ensuring daily missing children alerts were shared with the hospital, an alert added to the hospital recording system, including emergency departments, along with a flag advising that the child is recorded as missing and that the Police and social care should be contacted.

#### Expanded communication.

One of the principles of the MSCP is that frontline practitioners are well informed of, and involved in, the work of the MSCP and over the year have increased the MSCP presence on social media via LinkedIn and increased utilisation of the MSCP YouTube channel (see section six for impact)

**2024-2025:** Consideration of changes in Working Together to Safeguarding Children (2023) including principles for working with parents/carers and national multi-agency child protection standards alongside the children's social work national framework.

Review and publish the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

## Priority Two - Contextual safeguarding and trauma informed practice

### Contextual Safeguarding

A child exploitation intelligence portal was set up by Kent Police working with partners with an updated portal going live in November 2023. It provides partner agencies with a secure platform to submit non-urgent intelligence where there are concerns of child exploitation, child criminal exploitation, county lines, and gangs.

The multi-agency network of exploitation champions continues to support the development of a safe, responsive and effective service for children who experience or are at risk of exploitation. The network has around 70 members with meetings held quarterly with a direct line to the Joint Exploitation sub-group. This year there have been two conferences with involvement from exploitation champions; Exploitation Awareness Conference held on National Exploitation Awareness Day in March 2024 and a Young Persons conference held a few weeks later attended by children and young people from secondary schools in Medway.

#### *Seeking and Utilising Feedback from Children*

Medway Youth Service lead a programme of School and Location Assessments that support the voice of young people to have a direct impact on the places and space around them. Youth Workers recruit young people to assess, map and put in place plans to reduce harm beyond their homes.

Five school assessments were completed in 23-24, engaging 384 staff trained in contextual safeguarding, 20 assemblies reaching 3000 young people in years 7-13, recruiting 45 young assessors, 1946 young people engaged across the five assessments, 1333 in PSHE lessons, 256 completed the online surveys and 304 involved in mapping exercises about the school area and potential harm.

Examples of the changes made following the young people led school assessments include adaptations to toilet areas and changes in staff communication practice in corridors during transition periods.

### Trauma Informed Practice

Medway Public Health have strategic oversight of embedding Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) across Medway, and work with partners to develop systems of change that promote recovery and prevent re-traumatisation within the children and young people's workforce.

The training programme raises awareness of ACEs and increases knowledge and creates a shared understanding of the wider impacts of trauma and how to prevent re-traumatisation for children, young people, and families (CYPF) accessing universal services in Medway. The Child Health Team are

ensuring the Trauma Informed CYPF workforce are able to recognise common trauma responses, including challenging and unsafe behaviour and to be aware of the impact of language when addressing traumatised people.

The positive impact of this learning is that professionals understand the importance of self-care and how our own mental health effects those around us, to prevent burnout in all areas of work and social life. In addition, in 2023-2024:



182 professionals trained  
98% excellent rating  
2 specialist courses development (families and social care)

**2024-2025:** Increase use of child exploitation intelligence portal.  
Review the Contextual Safeguarding Strategy, including the exploitation toolkits.

### **Priority Three - Domestic Abuse.**

During the year the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024 – 2029 was developed and published. The strategy builds on the achievements of the previous strategy and works to achieve the joint collective aim to: 'reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse, and ensure that where domestic abuse takes place, all those affected get the right support, quickly'. The strategy was developed following a needs assessment, a thematic review of learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews, workshops with key partners, focus groups with children and young people and narratives of lived experience.

The MARAC Change Programme is underway and will introduce a new more efficient system for proactive work, timelier information sharing and hold agencies to account for their response to high-risk victims of domestic abuse. A new MARAC manager has been appointed and a new Case Management System identified and will launch in 2024-2025. The MSCP is contributing to the development of MARAC training to support the new model.

The Medway Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (MDALBP) manages the Medway response to the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy through a localised action plan. Referrals into the IDVA support service and Medway Domestic Abuse Service (MDAS) delivered by Oasis, have seen a steady year on year increase and this is monitored via contract review meetings with commissioners. The service was re-commissioning in April 2024 with the same provider.

[The Medway One Stop Shop](#) provides immediate support and advice from a range of professionals and continues to have good attendance from victims/survivors and is well supported by a multi-agency team. A gap in support from Kent Police was identified and proposals for a virtual response supported by the Kent Police Domestic Abuse Hub is planned in 2024. This will ensure those wishing to speak to the police can do at the time of attending.



The Medway Domestic Abuse Forum (MDAF) successfully bid for funds to support the Medway One Stop Shop and the community based domestic abuse perpetrators programme for men.



297 victims/survivors supported



68 men accepted onto the programme, 23 completed the programme

**2024–2025:** Review the MSCP training.

## Priority Four - Violence against Women and Girls

The MSCP has been working alongside Kent Police to support the delivery of the partnership aspects of their Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2021-24. National data shows that one in five women are victims of sexual assault (or attempted assault) in their lifetime (5% of victims are men), over 27% of women had experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 (14% of men), and 20% of women aged 16-74 had experienced stalking since the age of 16 (10% of men). The picture in Kent and Medway is similar.

A key focus of the MSCP work has been on the development of guidance and learning opportunities for practitioners to ensure Medway professionals are aware of services for children and young people and harmful sexual behaviour pathways. During the year the MSCP, in partnership with the KSCMP the [Kent and Medway Working with Children and Young People who are Sexually Active or Displaying Sexual Harmful Behaviours procedures](#). After significant multi agency consultation the revised policy has moved to the NSPCC Hackett's Sexualised Behaviour Continuum. The Hackett's Continuum is a free and nationally recognised resource with helpful guidance and short video explainers (2-3 minutes each) on the NSPCC website making it a sustainable resource for agencies and practitioners.

**2024-2025:** Kent Police and partners have developed a Child Exploitation Multi Agency group, which commenced in July 2024 and takes place monthly. The group are working to ensure there is a collective response to disrupting and preventing child exploitation in Kent and Medway. The group identifies themes, and drives change, using shared good practice to disrupt and prevent child exploitation.

## Priority Five – Neglect

To help practitioners identify and assess areas of neglect to improve outcomes for children the MSCP continue to invest in the NSPCC evidenced-based Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) tool. Four courses ran this year, all 78



delegates from across the partnership passed the assessment, with currently 500+ practitioners licensed to use the GCP2 tool in Medway.



Practitioners are confirming an increase in confidence in identifying and evidencing neglect via pre- and post-course questionnaires following GCP2 training.

To sustain the use of the GCP2 tool the MSCP provides the training the trainer course, with three new practitioners completing the course this year, two of whom have gone on to deliver training. There are currently four active trainers across the partnership, including children's social care, NHS Kent and Medway, Medway Community Health and the MSCP Training Officer.

The NSPCC completed a GCP2 review this year to assess implementation progress including training, use of the tool and leadership. This review noted 75% implementation had been achieved by April 2024 and increase from 49% in 2022. The Executive group though remain alert to evidence from the PMQA sub-group that whilst practitioners from across the partnership are trained to use the GCP2 tool, data on completion of the tool with families is provided by two partner agencies which limits the evidence of impact on children and families.

Kent Police have developed the AWARE framework underpinned by an ACEs, trauma informed approach with mandatory training being rolled out from January 2023. AWARE includes a tool for front line officers to support them in being professionally curious in their interactions with children and families where they have concerns regarding neglect. It also ensures consistent recording of neglect across the force as is integrated in the child risk assessments within the Police recording system.

Since the implementation of the AWARE framework and associated training a review has taken place which identified an increase in the quality of referrals to Medway Children's Services, due to the enhanced details provided in the AWARE framework and skills front line officers have developed. Within the framework the submitting front line officers now also provide a risk grading which enables the Central Referral Unit to prioritise referral assessment and prompt submission for the highest risk cases.

As all the child risk assessments are reviewed prior to onward submission to Medway Children's Services this further ensures that the right service is requested to support the child at risk. This framework has contributed significantly to the identification and prioritisation of risk to children in Medway.

**Priority for 2024-2025:** Increase evidence of use of GCP2 and equivalent partner tools with families.

Deliver annual neglect conference focusing on learning from local reviews.

## Priority Six: Effective Early Help

### Early Help Partnership

The Early Help Partnership Board (EHPB) remains part of the MSCP structures and leads the effective early help priority. The EHPB have oversight of the Early Help Ethos and Early Help Strategy which set out the expectation that early help is everyone's responsibility, and how they can all contribute. The development of an Early Help Operational Group in 2023-2024 aimed to enhance the shared culture further, bridging the gap between strategic leads and the operational workforce.

Area meetings hosted by Early Help Coordinators support the ethos and shared culture and these meetings are delivered across the partnership. Leadership events, Secondary and Primary Head meetings are attended by early help staff and the Supporting Families Coordinator to enhance collaboration and delivery.

### Start for Life and Family Hub programme

Medway Parents & Carers Forum (MPCF) and Medway Maternity & Neonatal Voices Partnership (MNVP) have been instrumental in the development of Start for Life services – as founding members of the multi-agency steering group which has overseen the delivery of the programme. Representatives from the MPCF and MNVP have been involved in the task and finish groups overseeing implementation of the different funded areas of the programme and have played a key role in shaping services such as the Medway Family Hub app, Medway Early Talkers and the Grow Through Play (Early Language and Home Learning Environments) campaign.

#### *Seeking and Utilising Feedback from Families*

Medway Parents and Carers Forum have taken the lead in establishing a Parent & Carer Panel for Family Hubs & Start for Life in Medway. The panel is now represented on the Multi Agency Working Group and will be the principal vehicle for working with parents & carers in the co-design, planning and commissioning of services as well as service improvement.

**2024-2025:** Review Threshold of Need, including recommendations from the NSPCC review of GCP2 implementation.

## Section Six – Learning and Improvement



The MSCP is a learning organisation where ‘learning is a habit not a goal’ and supports the development of Medway professionals. The MSCP has in place a [Quality Assurance Framework](#) which sets out how the MSCP monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of multi-agency work to safeguard children.

### Section 11 Audits

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a statutory responsibility on key agencies and organisations to make arrangements to ensure that in discharging their functions, they have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The Section 11 audit is a self-audit and repeated by the MSCP, in partnership with Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership (KSCMP), in full every two years with the last one taking place in 2022-2023. The MSCP uses the Section 11 audit to provide assurance around how agencies are working to safeguard children, reporting to the PMQA sub-group.

In 2023-2024 the Medway and Kent safeguarding partnerships reviewed the audit process including feedback from the S11 Champions, the audit tool, staff survey content and functionality of the scrutiny panel meetings. As a result, the MSCP Executive made the decision to commission a new online tool to better enable agencies and organisations to complete the self-assessment and create relevant actions plans. This will be launched for the 2024-2025 audit cycle.

### Section 175/157 Audits

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a legal duty on schools and educational institutions to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of students, whilst Section 157 conveys the same responsibilities on independent schools/settings. Governing bodies are required to conduct safeguarding audits to assess the effectiveness of safeguarding measures within schools, educational institutions, and other relevant organisations, providing information to the local authority on how the duties set out in the guidance have been discharged.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) multi-agency safeguarding arrangements confirm the requirement for education providers, including multi-agency trusts, to comply with safeguarding audit requests made by the local authority/local safeguarding partners.

As with the S11 audit the Section 175/157 audit provides assurance around how education partners are working to safeguard children, reporting to the PMQA sub-group. To aid ease of audit completion and analyses of the 2024 S175/157 audits the MSCP has funded a new online tool.

## Multi-Agency dataset

The PMQA subgroup have revised the quarterly multi-agency dataset over the last year with the support of Medway Council Performance Team, using Power BI to make the data more accessible and improve analysis.

Examples of the groups analysis of the dataset to identify challenges and successes:

- Quarter on quarter increase in the number of GCP2 tools completed with families. The number of completed GCP2 tools is limited to two partners, Medway Children's Services and Medway Community Healthcare - see section five for 2024-2025 priorities.
- Increase in referrals to First Response by health partners from Q3, attributed to improvements in communication with safeguarding teams, proactive sharing of threshold training with staff as well increase in young people's mental health needs.
- Low number of submissions to the child exploitation intelligence portal along the number of exploitation toolkits completed. See section five for 2024-2025 priorities.

PMQA have had oversight of the effectiveness of child protection arrangements including data and feedback from professionals on hybrid child protection conference arrangements. Feedback included improved efficiency and information sharing, particularly for the Police, as could access information in 'real time' to inform discussions and decisions.

## Rapid Reviews, Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Learning Lessons Reviews.

### Rapid Reviews.

Rapid Reviews are undertaken following the notification of a serious incident and must be completed within 15 working days. The following have been completed by MSCP over the last 3years:

Year	No. of Rapid Reviews
2023-24	3
2022-23	0
2021-22	2

The MSCP Executive is assured that the notification process to trigger Rapid Reviews is effective and that the numbers are in line with expected trends.

### Local Children Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPR).

The MSCP published LSCPR Isabel, giving an overview of the family background, identified good practice and lessons arising from the review for both individual agencies and the safeguarding children partnership.

A copy of the LCSPR Isabel report is available on the MSCP website [here](#).

There have been changes to specific areas of practice as follows:

<b>Maternity Safeguarding Hub (MSH)</b>	Revised terms of reference
	MSH referral form amended to prompt for more detailed information
	Improved recording of decision making at referral point
<b>Maternity Service Did Not Attend (DNA) Policy</b>	Revised policy live
	Clarity on when the DNA checklist is initiated
	All DNA checklists are reviewed by senior managers and subject to audit arrangements
<b>Safe Sleeping</b>	Updated procedures to reflect that sleeping areas should be seen by the community midwife and documented as a minimum
	Lullaby Trust leaflet should be given at all first day visits, with specific discussion on substance or alcohol use and co –sleeping






Changes in practice will be evaluated via an audit due to take place in the autumn of 2024.

### Learning Lessons Review (LLR)

The findings from the Jones family LLR were published this year following a referral to the MSCP due to concerns about agency responses to ongoing neglect and the family's "on and off" involvement with services over many years.

As with all reviews completed by the MSCP the action plan against the recommendations will be overseen by the Learning Lessons subgroup.

### Strengths and areas for improvement from reviews.

 Safe sleeping	 Consideration and involvement of fathers and significant males in multi-agency working
 Multi-agency assessment of and response to domestic abuse	 Diligent sharing of concerns
 Complex and long-term child neglect	

### Dissemination and impact of learning from reviews.

Learning is disseminated through briefing sheets and learning events.

A learning event for the LLR, led by the independent reviewer, was held for 25 professionals who had had involved with the family. Evaluation of the event noted the value and importance of multi-agency learning.

The PMQA sub-group considered findings from a practitioner survey focused on the dissemination of learning from reviews and impact on practice. Of those practitioners who responded:

- 90% were aware of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- 52% were aware of Medway specific reviews
- 40% gave examples of a case review having an impact on their practice.

To increase the awareness of Medway specific reviews the MSCP introduced video explainers to share learning. These short videos, produced by the independent reviewers provides an overview of the process, good practice and areas for learning. The videos are available on the MSCP [YouTube](#) achieving the following views:

MSCP YouTube video's	Published	Views (as of April 2024)
LCSPR: Isabel	September 2023	140
Learning lessons review: Jones family	March 2024	38

## Other Reviews

The MSCP has engaged in a Domestic Homicide Review where children known to Medway were involved. The MSCP also supported the multi-agency conference “Changing the narrative: Learning from Domestic Homicide” where delegates reported increased knowledge of local specialist services and the importance of learning from lived experience *“a powerful way to learn”*.

## Multi Agency Audits

The MSCP has in place a Multi-Agency Audit Group, the Case File Audit Group (CFAG) whose role it is to undertake audits to identify good practice and multi-agency learning; it is not designed to be a case management tool. The CFAG focuses on a theme, agreed by the Executive, and works on a rotational basis in order that learning overtime can be considered.

The 2023-2024 themes:

- Children with a child protection plan, where domestic abuse was a concern.
- Children with a child in need plan.
- Child sexual abuse.

An area for development in the strategic plan 2023-2025 is to assess the child's voice and lived experience through multi agency audits which has been incorporated into the audit structure.

### Themes Multi-Agency Audits and Practice Improvement

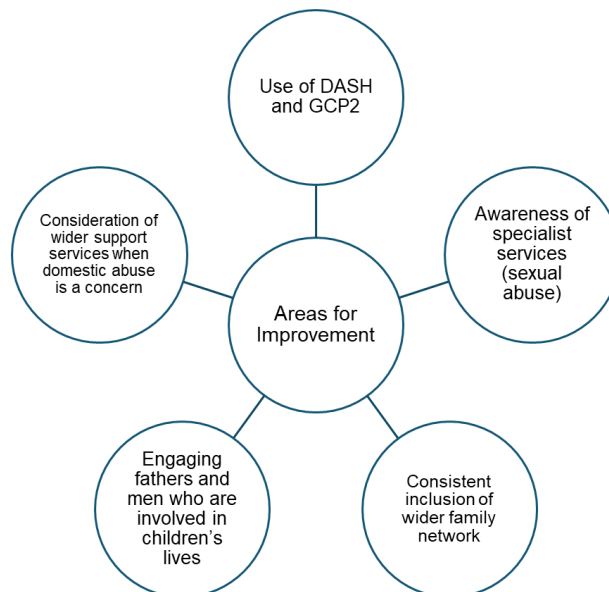
After each audit an overview report is produced giving brief summaries of the cases with grading and themed learning. These form the basis of the MSCP action plan for that audit which the Learning Lessons sub-group has responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and evidencing impact.

The MSCP Independent Scrutineer has identified the work of the Case File Audit Group (CFAG) as one of the strengths of the system and there is a strong link to the learning lessons subgroup which monitors implementation of actions from reviews and audits.

There was evidence of the following strengths in practice:



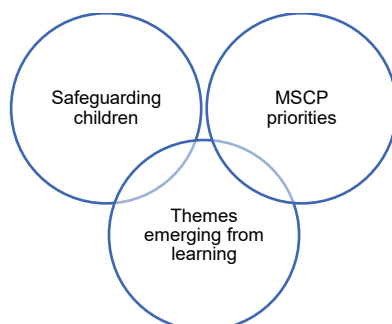
Areas for improvement:









## MSCP Training Programme

**The MSCP Training Offer:** One of the most immediate ways in which the MSCP influences the effectiveness of safeguarding in Medway is through running a range of multi-agency safeguarding training programme for professionals. The programme is planned and delivered around three key areas of training and learning:



### Participation and Evaluation.

We continue to deliver a hybrid training programme with the following participation achieved in 2023-2024:

 <p>290 completed in-person training</p>	 <p>450+ attended a conference</p>
 <p>222 completed virtual training</p>	 <p>7,197 e-Learning courses completed</p>

We achieved 100% post course evaluation completion rate for in-person training.

### Impact on Knowledge and Practice.

Through course evaluation and the annual training survey the following impact on knowledge and practice was reported:



Confidence in recognising safeguarding concerns  
Confidence in evidencing concerns  
No barriers to taking safeguarding action  
Improved the way practitioners worked  
Shared learning with teams



### *Impact on practice*

*"I was able to learn about the different signs of abuse and the signs in children. How to refer a concern. I will be able to use my knowledge of abuse signs when interacting with children and families."*

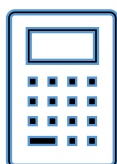
*"I am more equipped to detect signs of abuse and neglect and a better understanding of the laws and threshold to offer better support to students".*

*"From this course I was able to learn the importance of coordination with other agencies to achieve child safeguarding...connecting with different parties to ensure a child is protected".*

*"I learnt the need to use professional curiosity".*

*"Reflecting on this course, I now understand that the Signs of Safety approach is about working in partnership with the parent/carers and the wider network to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child. It should be child focused, and strengths based. An important area which stood out for me is how the language professionals use can be a barrier to the framework working effectively. This is something that I will reflect on and adopt".*

## Section Seven – Resources



Partners agree funding contributions at the beginning of the year with 2023-2024 percentage contributions based on previous years. The funding is used to directly support the work of the partnership including the business unit, independent scrutiny, conducting learning reviews and training programme.

Partners also give resources 'in kind' to support the functioning of the partnership including chairing and participating in sub-groups, task and finish groups, conducting reviews, audits and analysing and submitting data.

Partners plan to review the budget and contributions in 2025-2026.

### **MSCP Partner Contributions 2023-2024**

Medway Council	69.5%	(146,799)
NHS Kent and Medway ICB	3.2%	(6,764)
Medway NHS Foundation Trust	3.2%	(6,764)
Kent & Medway NHS & Social Care Partnership	3.2%	(6,764)
NELFT	3.2%	(6,764)
Medway Community Healthcare	3.2%	(6,764)
Kent Police and Crime Commissioner	7.3%	(15,434)
National Probation Service	2.5%	(5,235)
HMYOI Cookham Wood	3.3%	(6,996)
Kent Fire & Rescue	1.3%	(2,833)
Other Income (Training)		(1,000)
<b>Total partner contributions at current levels and other income</b>		<b>(212,117)</b>
<b>SHORTFALL/ FUNDING FROM MSCP RESERVE</b>		<b>£29,600</b>

In this financial year the Department for Education gave all local safeguarding partnerships a one-off grant of £47300 to help implement the new iterations of working together. This grant stipulated it was required to be used against the 23-24 financial year but didn't reach partnerships until the last quarter. Expenditure of the grant included a new S11 online audit tool, salaries of the scrutineers and learning management system.

## Appendix One – Relevant Agencies

Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider is required to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children. The relevant agencies for Medway have been chosen as organisations and agencies that can work in a collaborative way to provide targeted support to children and families as appropriate.

Agency	How where they involved?
<b>Probation</b>	
Probation Service	Sub Groups
<b>Health</b>	
Kent and Medway Partnership Trust (KMPT)	Sub Groups
NHS England	Sub Groups
Medway NHS Foundation Trust	Sub Groups
NELFT	Sub Groups
Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust (KCHT)	Sub Groups
Medway Community Healthcare (MCH)	Sub Groups
Open Road	Sub Groups
Turning Point	Sub Groups
<b>Education</b>	
Medway Primary Schools	Executive; Engagement through Medway Educational Leaders Association (MELA)
Medway Secondary Schools	Executive; Engagement through Medway Secondary Heads Association (MSHA)
Mid Kent College	Sub Groups
Medway Independent Schools	Training & Learning Events
Early Years Providers	Training & Learning Events
<b>Secure Estate</b>	
HMYOI Cookham Wood	Sub Groups; Secure Estate Sub Group
<b>Voluntary Sector</b>	
Medway Voluntary Action (MVA)	Sub Groups
MY Trust	Sub Groups
<b>Other Agencies</b>	
Medway Youth Offending Team (YOT)	Sub Groups
Medway Council - Public Health	Executive; Sub Groups
Kent Fire and Rescue Service	Sub Groups
British Transport Police	Leadership Group
Housing Providers	Sub-Groups
Children's Homes	Training & Learning Events
Sports Groups/ Associations	Training & Learning Events
Faith Groups	Training & Learning Events