



**Hounslow Safeguarding Children
Partnership
Yearly Report
2023-24**

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1) HSCP Executive Board – Statement of Assurance

There are solid and mature partnership relationships in place across the Hounslow Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) and operationally, with the Executive leaders meeting sufficiently regularly throughout the performance year offering robust discussion and challenge to ensure organisations are held to account.

As demonstrated throughout the 2023-24 yearly report, the Statutory Safeguarding Partners individually and collectively as a partnership team have undergone a substantial amount of independent scrutiny either from regulatory bodies or by invitation through our multi-agency safeguarding scrutiny arrangements, the outcomes of which have supported the Executive Board to collectively feel assured that safeguarding children's systems in Hounslow are safe.

However, the Executive Board on behalf of the Statutory Safeguarding Partners are unable to provide positive assurance about the circumstances within Feltham Young Offenders Institute as detailed in Section 9 of this report. Given the establishments recent inspection outcomes and ongoing concerns it remains a priority of the partnership to continuously seek assurance that young people in the establishment are safe and their wellbeing is prioritised. The dedicated sub-group of the partnership is closely monitoring progress and will report directly into the Executive Board

2) Comment from the Independent Scrutineer – Tom Savory

Having undertaken the independent review of the effectiveness of the Safeguarding Partnership I can support the Board's Statement of Assurance.

The year ahead is significant as the Safeguarding Partnership puts arrangements in place that respond positively to Working Together 2023 and builds on the feedback from the independent review of the effectiveness of the Partnership, which invited leaders to focus on 'purpose, people and process' (see Section 4).

Working Together 2023, strengthens the expectations of scrutiny to provide safeguarding partners and relevant agencies with independent, rigorous, and effective support and challenge at both a strategic and operational level. I am looking forward to developing the role of Independent Scrutineer, with a focus on holding partners to account for ensuring that as the Partnership develops, statutory duties continue to be fulfilled, quality assurance mechanisms remain in place and are developed further, and that local child safeguarding practice reviews and national reviews are analysed, with key learning areas identified and effectively implemented across the safeguarding system.

Developing the role of the Independent Scrutineer, my approach will draw from, Six Steps for Independent Scrutiny: Safeguarding children partnership arrangement¹, through an agreed schedule of scrutiny and feedback, whilst also exercising the Hounslow Scrutineers "Right to Roam" across the safeguarding system.

I will also focus on promoting engagement, with the professionals and organisations that are the Hounslow Safeguarding Partnership, and through connecting with the various engagement arrangements for the children, young people, parents and carers that the Safeguarding Partnership is here to serve. I will ensure that as Independent Scrutineer, the

¹ Originally produced in 2019, author Jenny Pearce, The Six Steps to Independent Scrutiny has been updated in 2024 with feedback from colleagues across the sector and to incorporate requirements of WT23

voice of children and families is considered as part of scrutiny and that this is at the heart of developing arrangements.

3) Introduction

Keeping children safe is a shared partnership responsibility, with each agency fulfilling their role to promote the welfare and safeguarding of children in Hounslow. Effective partnership working requires each agency to commit resources to deliver strategic and operational priorities under Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance, London Child Protection Procedures and local safeguarding protocols and guidance. The report reviews the activity of the HSCP over the 2023/24 performance year.

Throughout the year the partnership has continued to be Chaired by the Executive Director for Children's and Adults Services following the departure on the Independent Chair in January 2023. In November 2023, the partnership was successful at appointing its first Independent Scrutineer who started the role in February 2024.

The evidence to support this report has been drawn from the activity across the partnership such as Executive Board meetings, subgroups, training evaluation, learning from the multi-agency case reviews and audits, and assurance and monitoring activities.

4) The effectiveness of the HSCP

Partnership Effectiveness Review 2023

The HSCP commissioned an independent effectiveness review, ahead of the revision of Working Together 2023, to assess how well the partnership was operating since the implementation of Working Together 2018 and the change from Boards to Partnerships.

The review considered whether the current operating structure, systems, processes, leadership engagement and governance were effective in delivering its statutory responsibilities and obligations, and, most importantly whether it was having an impact on improving safeguarding outcomes for children and families.

The review acknowledged significant strengths in the partnership arrangements, however made some recommendations to improve quality assurance activity, leadership visibility and meeting purposefulness and impact. The recommendations reflected the revised partnership requirements outlined in Working Together 2023. The review has put the HSCP in a strong position to operationalise the requirements within the timeline set out by the Department for Education.

To ensure full partnership commitment and support of the refreshed arrangements, the review themes were considered as part of a whole partnership Development Session which included representatives from all statutory safeguarding partners and relevant agencies. By taking this inclusive approach, all agencies who support children and families in Hounslow have a renewed understanding of the partnerships purpose and understand how the contribution they make impacts improved outcomes.

Safeguarding Assurance

The Executive Board has continued to maintain oversight of key areas of safeguarding assurance activity which include inspections and targeted areas of scrutiny.

Children's Social Care Ofsted Inspection

In October 2023 Children's Social Care received a "Good" rating following its ILACS inspection and achieved an "Outstanding" grade for Leadership.

The Council has a stable political and senior leadership with the Leader, Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services, Lead Cabinet Member, and supporting Members maintaining a culture where the needs of children and families are prioritised. The inspection recognised this '*clear strategic direction, strong partnerships and good political and corporate support for children's services have improved the conditions for frontline social work practice*', with corporate leadership teams being active contributors in strategic partnerships.

As documented within the inspection report [Hounslow ILACS Report October 2023](#), senior leadership have developed and maintained a *strong, child-focused culture that is evident throughout the organisation*.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Child Exploitation Inspection findings

In the autumn of 2023 HMICFRS undertook a themed inspection of Child Exploitation. The findings of the London wide inspection commissioned by MOPAC were highly critical and in response a notice of accelerated causes of concern was published prior to the full report being available.

The findings triggered urgent action and reflected the basis for the New Met for London plan. The accelerated causes for concern were:

- a failure to adequately identify and assess risks, and to respond adequately, when children are reported missing.
- not carrying out sufficiently effective investigations when children are at risk of, or harmed by, criminal or sexual exploitation.

The two key areas that the Met were required to take immediate action on were:

- missing children at risk of exploitation were consistently not graded high enough.
- investigations into exploitation are not robust enough in pursuing offenders or possible evidence that can lead to prosecution of offenders/groups.

A third cause of concern around the use of victim blaming language was also added alongside 8 further recommendations for action.

Through the Executive Board the Detective Superintendent for Public Protection for West Area Basic Command Unit had provided ongoing reassurance that significant progress had been made in taking safeguarding action when a case reaches the Exploitation Team. Specifically in response the West Area took the following action:

- immediately strengthened and standardised the response to missing people by the frontline teams.
- Stabilised the RADT postings and uplifted this team who deal with initial missing person reports.
- Increased the size of the Exploitation Team.
- Increased the size of the Missing Persons Unit in the West Area.
- Ensure all missing children are passed to secondary investigators as soon as on duty rather than previously after 48 hours.
- The Exploitation Team reviewed cases for possible crime allegations linked to exploitation including all sexual allegations where the victim is under the age of 18.
- appointed a new Detective Inspector in the Exploitation Team to develop the team to be offender focused and proactive, and who will Chair a monthly Police Exploitation meeting to hold other units to account who might have a crime allegation.

Oversight of progress will continue to be monitored via local Multi-Agency Child Exploitation arrangements and reported into the Adolescent Safeguarding Group of the HSCP.

Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Waiting Lists

The partnership continued to seek assurance that reducing waiting lists for children remained a priority for the service locally despite the ongoing national crisis in mental health services.

The service has remained committed to meeting the needs of young people that are increasingly complex. There had been a reduction in waiting times by a few months, despite there being an increase in referrals. There had been some extra investment however the surge in demand placed ongoing pressure on the service. Referral trends continued to increase 588 (2020), 395 (2021 – coincident with Covid-19); 706 (2022) and 953 (2023). Not all referrals were accepted, but the increase in identifying need is informing the activity being done at systems level in Hounslow in respect of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) offer.

The Children and Young People's Mental Health Partnership Board continued to monitor waiting times. The group was working towards a whole-systems approach to tackle waiting times, by reducing the number of children and young people on the waiting list and to reduce referrals and by understanding how long waiting lists link to other challenges across the system.

Following analyses of information collated from all services, six priority areas were identified:

- improving recruitment and retention of staff
- working more closely with schools
- resolving network challenges
- reducing waiting times
- reducing the increased volume of referrals
- addressing the increasing complexity of need

The HSCP Executive Board has scheduled into its agenda forward plan periodic reporting until it is assured that waiting list times are reducing.

5) Contextual Information

Children living in Hounslow.

68,630 children and young people aged 0-19 live in Hounslow, 23.8% of the Borough population – of which 14,680 are aged 0-4 years and 19,080 aged 5-9 years, accounting for nearly 50% of the 0-19 population, evenly distributed across all age ranges.

- 21.0% of children in primary schools and 26.7% of children in secondary schools are entitled to free school meals. (LBH is 18th in London-wide Deprivation table.)
- The diversity of Hounslow is reflected in our school population with the largest groups being Indian 23.4%, White British 14.8%, any other white background 13.5%, Black African 7.8%, Pakistani 7.2%, with approximately 188 languages spoken.
- 64.1% of children in primary schools and 52.9% of children in secondary schools have English as an additional language.
- 4.6% of children in primary schools and 4.8% of children in secondary schools have an EHCP. 15.4% of children in primary schools and 12.2% of children in secondary schools have SEN support. (Previous year 15.2% and 11.6%.)
- 491 children were known to have been electively home educated, and 649 children were recorded as missing education for the September 2022 to August 2023 academic year.
- Overall attendance data for all school aged children is 93.6%; however, 18.2% of children were persistently absent and 1.6% severely absent. Those who are Looked

After Children have 86.9% attendance, and those on Child Protection Plans have 82.8% attendance.

Children's Social Care in Hounslow

At the start of April 2024:

- Contact at Front Door for 2023/24 - 21,400.
- 2500 Referrals, of which 92% led to an outcome of Child & Family Assessment
- Over 1000 S47s completed with 430 having an outcome of Initial Child Protection Conference.
- Average of 1600-1700 children open to CSC at any one time.
- At the start of the year 2024/25, there was approximately 360 children subject to Child in Need plan.
- At the start of the year 2024/25, there was 250 subjects to a child protection plan (last year there were 301 new Child Protection Plans and 42 repeats).
- Proceedings: 44 applications issued for 61 children for 2023/24.
- At the start of the year, there were 290 LAC, with 53 of those being Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). Last year there were 489 Looked after Children in total of which 159 were UASC.
- At the start of the year, there were over 200 children supported by Children with Disabilities team.
- At the start of the year, there were approximately 400 Care Leavers (16–24-year-olds), 300 of these were under 21 with an allocated Personal Advisor, and 100 were over 21s who are also receiving a service through the Leaving Care Team.

The experiences of children who need help and protection.

In line with Social Care reforms, 'Stable Homes Built on Love', updated WT23 guidance and recommendations from the Independent Social Care Review, Children's Social Care are moving toward a Family Help approach in Hounslow. The service will bring together the former targeted Early Help Team and some of the Front Door social work capacity to form the Family Help Service. The team will utilise the skills of family support practitioners with additional oversight and input from qualified social workers.

Front Door (MASH) & Early Help

The improvements and changes that were made over 2023/24 at the Front Door are having a positive impact, moving away from the long-standing norm of stepping down two thirds of assessments to a limited Early Help offer to a right intervention at the right time. Consequently, the service is seeing referral and re-referral numbers gradually, safely, reduce, allowing teams to increase qualified social worker capacity at an Early Help level to ensure suitable monitoring of risk and timeliness of step-up.

More intervention capacity at an earlier stage through a 'Family Help' approach, ensures children and families receive the right support at the right time. The front door liaison meetings, attendance at vulnerable children in education meetings, hospital psycho-social, pre-birth, daily MARAC meetings and the liaison social worker roles all support how Children's Social Care work effectively with partners to provide earlier support as a part of proactive multi-agency discussions at an early stage. Social workers at the Front Door have a dedicated area of expertise: Domestic Abuse, Education, Health, Housing and UASC. Dedicated Early Help and Adolescent Support practitioners sit within the service to help prevent cases escalating to statutory services, by offering an early intervention. *Partnership working in the MASH is highly effective. MASH specialist workers help families to access the right support quickly.*

The contact process has been improved and streamlined to differentiate between safeguarding or Early Help contacts. The approach throughout 2023 was reflected in the consistent upward trajectory of contacts, with year-end figure of over 45000 submitted, over half from education and a good increase from health.

Additionally, the impact of the partnership with Hounslow Education Partnership to form the Specialist Home Engagement Lead (SHEL) programme shows a 10% reduction in contacts to Children's Social Care for schools who participate in the SHEL programme.

There has been a reduction in the overall number of statutory referrals (2500 referrals, compared to 3300 last year) but an increase for those referrals that then progressed to an assessment (90%, compared to 81%), demonstrating that the current approach is working. Re-referral numbers have also subsequently reduced, which continues to be monitored closely.

Early Help

Work has continued to embed an Early Help approach in Hounslow. The Early Help Partnership acts as the strategic governance for Early Help delivery in the borough and meets regularly, with 30+ partners represented at the partnership board, positively influencing the development and progression of the Early Help system.

- The Early Help commitment has been updated and published, and the development of Early Help strategy is ongoing and will be launched Autumn 2024.
- The Partnership were introduced to the topic of reducing parental conflict which will be a core element of the Early Help Strategy.
- The funding from the Best Start to Life assisted in the creation of Family Hubs, and have now established three hubs, which is essential to the Early Help offer in the community.
- The Community Action Partnership Panels (CAPP), chaired by local schools, brings together multi-agency partners from the operational Early Help system to discuss approaches to support families, ensuring they receive the right support at the right time.

There continues to be positive evidence for early intervention leading to good outcomes and there is assurance that the targeted early help assessments and plans are of good quality. Timeliness measures for children requiring this targeted early help intervention are being developed and changes are being implemented to generate data reporting.

Child in Need and Child Protection (including Children with a Disability & Adolescent)

Children in need and children on child protection plans are managed across Intake, Children with a Disability, Safeguarding & Support, and Adolescent teams.

Strategy meetings continue to be used effectively to bring together partner agencies to discuss risk and formulate actions to protect children in a timely way with good attendance from multi-agency partners.

6) HSCP Priorities

The HSCP Strategic Safeguarding Children Plan sets out the strategic commitment of the partnership in making its vision a reality and forms the basis of its work ensuring that the partnership continues to oversee and drive improvements.

The plan has focused on key areas of safeguarding which were identified by either local need following quality assurance and learning activity or responding to national safeguarding agendas.

HSCP Priorities 2021/24

The HSCP has been focusing on four areas of priority over the last three years.

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)

The partnership undertook a multi-agency audit in 2020 which led to the development of local CSA strategy and implementation plan which has been successfully completed. The learning predominantly focused on improving the skills and confidence of the workforce to better identify CSA and a bespoke multi-agency training offer was developed and continues to be part of the course programme supported by Children's Social Care CSA leads.

Hounslow was successfully selected by the NSPCC to re-launch the PANTS campaign which will be rolled out over 2024/25 and already has a strong legacy to build upon. The partnership continues to be an active member of NWL CSA implementation programme to improve the multi-agency response to children suffering current and historic CSA and shape the creation of a NWL CSA Hub.

The partnership will seek to undertake further assurance activity in the future to determine the impact of the strategy and training offer locally on identification of abuse.

Neglect

The most recent neglect themed audit undertaken in December 2023 was commissioned to support an assessment of practice linked to the thematic partnership priority which has been in place for several years. The audit demonstrated that multi-agency practice has significantly improved over the lifespan of the partnership leading the strategic work to improve systemic practice. Improvements identified were:

- Better understanding of risk and impact of neglect
- Improved multi agency collaboration
- Creative and comprehensive use of the Quality-of-Care (QoC) tool leading to evidence of tangible improved outcomes.
- Evidence of direct work with children
- Good supervision and management oversight
- Child Protection plans are stronger and having a good impact.
- A strong contribution from schools

The audit did highlight further areas of development which will be used to update and refresh the neglect multi-agency strategy and new multi-agency plan. Developments required are:

- More Health input and engagement with families in neglectful circumstances
- Child in Need plans managing issues of neglect need to have more impact.
- Unstable housing and multiple moves have a significantly detrimental impact in families where neglect is a factor.
- Improve formal escalation and challenge through appropriate routes when there is professionals' disagreement in care planning.
- Strengthen the response in complex and entrenched neglect cases to make progress quickly.
- Develop practice to effectively address adolescent neglect.

The activity undertaken and outcomes achieved in strengthening neglect practice and CSA recognition supported the Executive Board to agree that as priorities for the partnership they could be successfully concluded and moved to areas of monitoring through core assurance and learning activity.

Safeguarding Adolescents

Good progress has been made against the priority since the Serious Youth Violence Systemic Review was completed and the multi-agency Safeguarding Adolescents Strategy was developed. A dedicated sub-group is continuing to implement some aspects of the strategy as well as expanding its focus to consider transitions for vulnerable children within the 10–13-year age group. The partnership is currently undertaking a self-evaluation on Child Criminal Exploitation and Multi-Agency Child Exploitation arrangements, led by the Independent Scrutineer to provide assurance about the effectiveness of the system response.

Given the ongoing activity linked to this area as well as the ever changing local, regional, and national landscape for adolescents at risk, the Executive Board has agreed to retain the priority for a further performance year.

Vulnerable children in education

Some progress has been made to better understand the cohort of young people that are considered most at risk within education. A dedicated task and finish group was set up, chaired by the Education Safeguarding Advisor and a workplan was developed. There is still more to do, particularly given the further challenges nationally, with increasing numbers of children absent or persistently absent, the numbers of primary school children being excluded, and Elective Home Education (EHE) numbers are increasing. The Executive Board has agreed to retain the priority for a further two years.

To ensure robust representation of Hounslow Education within the partnership, the Local Authority safeguarding advisor holds a strategic position as well as engaging with schools. The role involves facilitating regular updates from education colleagues and gathering feedback through various channels such as networks, surveys, and school visits which is vital for understanding the unique needs of each school and identifying necessary support. The School Improvement team continues to ensure that the partnership remains informed by providing comprehensive reports, action plans, and outlining next steps. This proactive approach ensures that schools stay abreast of the latest updates, continuing professional development requirements, and receive support with any rapid reviews and assistance with their chronologies.

Hounslow takes a proactive approach to the support it provides to schools. Nearly all Hounslow schools have an Ofsted Overall Effectiveness judgement of good or better. 100% of all schools inspected by Ofsted in the last year received a judgement of good or better.

The Spring School Census 2024 (academic school year 2023/24) showed the attendance average for Hounslow Schools is 93.8%, with all primary and secondary schools above 90%. This is an improvement of 1.4% compared to the same point for 2022/23 with an accompanying reduction of three primary schools and one secondary school that were below 90%.

The School Attendance Support Service (SASS) has established effective working relationships with schools across the borough. All schools have an allocated SASS team member and an attendance toolkit aligned to the table of responsibilities that was provided at the start of the academic year (September 2023). The schools follow their individual attendance policies referring to the SASS team for additional interventions.

The increase in the number of EHE children and young people is an area of focus and is reflective of a significant shift being seen across other local authorities.

At the end of March 2024, there were 491 EHE children. This is an increase of 122 children and young people when compared to the same point last year. The numbers within EHE

changes frequently and is impacted by meaningful change within homes and circumstances. In addition to the rate of those electing to home educate rising, there is significant fluctuation in the numbers of children and young people leaving the service. In 2022/23, 183 left the service by returning to school, moving away, or exceeding compulsory school age. From September 2023 to March 2024, 106 children and young people left the EHE service. Further analysis will be done on the cohort in greater detail this year to get a clear picture of these changes.

Over the last year, the Front Door, EHE and Attendance teams established monitoring arrangements to maintain oversight of EHE children and young people considered most vulnerable and this together with close partnership working with SEND and Children's Social Care, has enabled the team to fulfil its role as part of the safeguarding net. It will be a priority to maintain the focus on safeguarding as well as strengthen the joint and collaborative working with the Attendance, Children Missing Education (CME), and Access to Education teams.

As a way to foster improved collaboration and processes between Children's Social Care and EHE, the EHE liaison meeting established a named representative from Children's Social Care to discuss any possible safeguarding issues and to ensure processes are in place such as ensuring that EHE are invited to all core groups and conferences for children subject to child protection plans and child in need plans and for EHE to inform Children's Social Care where annual home visits have been missed upon two attempts.

HSCP Priorities 2024/27

In April 2024 the Executive Board set the priorities for the partnership for the next three years. As referenced throughout the report, two of the five priorities agreed are areas which require an ongoing, preventative, strategic focus from the partnership. Two new priorities were agreed evidenced by local learning activity and are reflective of issues all Local Authorities are facing nationally. The final priority was identified to ensure that the strategic safeguarding partners and all its relevant agencies are continuously seeking assurance that systems are safe and effective.

1. Safeguarding adolescents (ongoing priority for 2024/27)
2. Vulnerable children in education (ongoing priority for 2024/27)
3. Mental Health, self-harm, and suicide prevention (new priority for 2024/27)
4. Online harm (new priority for 2024/27)
5. Continuous assurance that safeguarding systems are safe and effective.

7) Learning

Rapid Reviews

There were two Rapid Reviews held in 2023/24. Both cases had themes of Domestic Abuse and one included the robustness of pre-birth assessment.

Theme 1: Domestic Abuse Practice

Domestic abuse practice has improved vastly since 2017 and the recognition and response to domestic abuse is high on all agency's agendas which has been evidenced by external regulators and independent consultants in more recent years.

Hounslow has embedded a range of successful domestic abuse programmes and practices such as CADA which works directly with children who have experienced domestic abuse and Daily MARAC. In 2017 a successful domestic violence themed Joint Targeted Area

Inspection (JTAI) took place which acknowledged the strength of the multi-agency response to domestic abuse in the Borough.

Following a domestic abuse themed Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) in 2018 the HSCP voluntarily opened itself up to further external scrutiny and undertook a systemic learning review in 2020 to assure itself that practice was still strong across the multi-agency system and explore ways to enhance practice further. The HSCP has also maintained a strong link with the Community Safety Partnership who lead on domestic abuse in Hounslow.

Although schools do not receive Merlin reports Operation Encompass is well embedded in Hounslow and work is underway to expand the definition of a “child being present” to evidence of a child in the home to ensure that notifications are not just shared when a child is seen by Police but when their presence in the home is clear.

The partnership was assured about Domestic Abuse practice through the Rapid Review process and no actions were identified.

Theme 2: Pre-Birth Practice

Pre-birth practice is a complex area of work as assessments are done without being able to physically see a baby. This has meant that pre-birth assessments are often too parent-focussed and even more so when the assessments are started at a very early stage. It was also acknowledged, that pre-birth work needs more time to complete, with a higher level of systemic thinking and reflection, which was not possible in the assessment teams.

Children’s Social Care proactively moved pre-birth work to be managed by the Safeguarding and Support Teams from the point of referral which would allow for early assessment, intervention, and permanency planning, in addition to tracking any cases where legal advice was sought.

Pre-birth training was rolled out in April 2023 and was in line with national good practice standards for early permanence and a revision of the protocol and flowchart was reviewed and rolled out in the summer.

Routine monthly audits were completed by Children’s Social Care in respect of pre-birth cases as a theme in July 2023 with findings and learning monitored through relevant scrutiny and oversight meetings.

The HSCP developed a Pre-Birth action plan which was monitored by the Safeguarding Effectiveness Sub-group throughout the year with the aim to successfully conclude the plan in mid-2024/25.

Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPR)

The HSCP did not identify any cases that met the threshold for an LCSPR in 2023/24 and provided rationale in its Rapid Reviews to support its recommendations which was supported by the National Panel. The HSCP received positive feedback from the National Panel on the quality and robustness of its Rapid Review process and the learning that it generates. This is an area of strength that the partnership will continue to develop and use to identify and address learning quickly.

As outlined above, the cases which were notified tested practice providing good reassurance in one area and learning in another which the HSCP was able to seek reassurance that practice was already improving, and activity was being undertaken.

Local Learning

The Cases Sub-Group continued to have an active and varied programme of exploring local cases for learning which did not meet a threshold for notification. Four cases were discussed in total and the following learning themes were identified:

- Alerting other Local Authorities of a vulnerable child who has moved out of Borough and to advise of considering a welfare check.
- Response to referrals, particularly re-referrals within a short period of time post closure.
- Communication with professionals about rationale of decision making on cases to provide reassurance for example after a re-referral or strategy meeting.
- Recording of Father's information.
- Online harm, exploitation, and scams particularly for adolescents.
- Impact of online influences on adolescent mental health.
- Supporting young people to keep themselves safe online, particularly from websites encouraging them to harm themselves.
- Consistently work in collaboration with adult agencies to Think Family
- Implementation, application and most importantly understanding of Right Person Right Care Policy.

Not all the learning themes identified when explored resulted in the need to consider areas of improvement. Good practice was noted in the implementation of the Right Person, Right Care policy. A strong theme was identified regarding online harm which supported the Statutory Safeguarding Partners decision to adopt it as a themed priority area.

To ensure that there is robust and consistent feedback to referrers, the Chair of the Partnership has asked the Independent Scrutineer to undertake assurance activity and feedback to the Executive Board in the summer of 2024.

Local Learning Review on Mental Health & Suicide

In March this year the HSCP held a learning review for a care leaver who sadly took their life. This was a proactive decision taken by HSCP, as Working Together 2023 now states that LSCPs should take this action for case which involve care leavers.

Themes identified for further exploration:

- Pathway planning and earlier preparation around change in transition.
- Support for young people around emotional health and wellbeing.
- Safety planning for young people as they go into adulthood.
- Online harm
- Suicide prevention.

As part of review the HSCP held a reflective learning discussion with those involved in the young person's life, as well as a small group of additional representatives from partner agencies who have experience of and were working with other young people who are impacted by the same issues. The purpose of the session was to consider more closely the themes identified and consider how they are impacting other young people and what the multi-agency network needs to do to better support them.

The session identified six questions for Safeguarding Partners to consider:

1. Does our focus shift when a young person turns 18?

2. Is the Working Together 2023 revision from January 2024 on reporting deaths of care leavers up to 25 years, going to impact on our service?
3. Impact of UASC numbers on services and PA allocations?
4. Issue of capacity and consent post 18?
5. Thresholds into adults' services – are they fit for purpose?
6. How do we promote contact with family beyond 18 years?

It will never be possible to stop online harm in Hounslow, however it is essential that professionals have knowledge of the language and culture of children and young people to help address the huge concern of online harm. The Executive Board accepted the questions and challenge posed and agreed it would form the basis of the work by the partnership in its new priority area throughout 2024/27.

National Learning “True to Us”

The Child Delta Case published by Brighton & Hove Safeguarding Children's Partnership was considered by the HSCP using its “True to Us” model to benchmark Hounslow practice against the findings and seek assurance that any relevant learning was being addressed locally.

The exercise sought good reassurance that there was strong practice across the partnership in the following areas of learning:

- Assessments completed by Children's Social Care (evidenced above in Section 6)
- Pre-birth practice (evidenced above in Section 6)
- Trauma informed training is embedded into organisational expectations across the system.
- Strong step up and step-down processes are in place.
- ACEs is a strong focus in health professionals practice and development.
- A joint Housing Protocol with Children's Social Care is in place.
- Complaints procedures are well embedded in all organisations and used to develop services.
- There is a good inclusive education offer for young people who are parents.
- There are good relationships between Social Workers and the CAIT teams.
- The Child Delta Safeguarding Practice Review could be used as a case study for reflective analysis, specifically in early years.

The discussion highlighted that further work is needed through the coming year on:

- Reviewing the robustness of commissioning arrangements (Children's Social Care)
- Address issues of disproportionality as a priority (all agencies)
- Being more inclusive and working more closely with father's (all agencies)

It is expected that the Statutory Safeguarding Partners will be able to report progress against the areas of focus in the coming performance year.

8) Training

The hybrid role of Training and Development Manager for Children's Social Care and the HSCP was established in 2023 and the Manager started in the role in August 2023.

In September 2023, the joint Training Strategy was agreed by the partnership. The strategy sets out the HSCP's vision for multi-agency training across the Borough and priority actions

to develop and embed a needs-led, responsive, training offer; that will build a shared responsibility for professional development, training facilitation, attendance and engagement, and evaluation.

To ensure the programme met the needs of all professionals working across the multi-agency system and at all levels a training needs analysis was launched in November 2023. Although there was a low response rate, some broad themes were able to be drawn out such as requesting more training and development opportunities with a focus on Neglect and Adolescent Safeguarding.

Alongside this feedback, areas of shared training need have been identified via discussions in HSCP Cases, Adolescent Safeguarding and Safeguarding Effectiveness subgroups and are in line with learning identified in both national and local case reviews.

In response to the Local Learning Review outlined above, the strongest theme identified from this event was the need for a much deeper practitioner understanding of Online harm, which is a Partnership priority for the coming year; alongside Safeguarding Adolescents (with a focus on mental health, suicide prevention and self-harm) and Vulnerable children in Education, with active workstreams focusing on Neglect and CSA.

In re-establishing the role of Training and Development Manager strategic gaps were also identified in addressing communication of training opportunities, identifying a dedicated training space, consistent and regular attendance, and evaluation and impact of training in improving outcomes for children and families. Strengthening these areas will be prioritised in the coming year, along with developing a more collaborative approach to meeting the training and development needs across all agencies within the Partnership.

Current offer

The full multi-agency training programme was launched in March 2024. Most of the training available is delivered by practitioners and managers across agencies within HSCP. This ensures the content is informed by local knowledge and practice in specific areas of practice. To ensure the training offer remains responsive to need, the brochure will be updated and re-circulated quarterly. The full training offer can be found at www.hscb.org.uk

There is further development required to provide a face-to-face suicide prevention training for practitioners and a specific focused online harm – which includes a focus on the links between online harm and mental health. The Practice Development Sub-Group will be key in supporting this engagement and development.

Training priorities for 2024/25

- Refresh communication channels to ensure high level promotion and ease of access to training opportunities.
- Establish a Practice Development Sub-Group to build collaboration and a shared commitment and responsibility to training, across agencies.
- Ensure the sustainability of the training offer through training and supporting practitioners and managers across agencies to deliver training.
- Provide dedicated training spaces for face-to-face training to take place.
- Develop a system that can incorporate service user feedback to measure the impact of training on outcomes for children and families.
- Develop and embed the role of training champions across agencies to improve attendance.

9) Private Fostering

The service has been consistent this year with five newly privately fostered children, and six cases open at year end, compared to four open at last year end. The dedicated fostering

practitioner completes monthly quality assurance audit activity on new cases, and re-audits on longer term placements. The audit tools are being adapted and updated with a longer-term plan to add this process onto the child's electronic records, in line with wider Children's Social Care audits. The team have worked hard to make improvements and raise awareness with ongoing support from the partnership members, with scrutiny processes now in place. A transfer protocol meeting has been introduced following notification and referrals to the fostering team to ensure each case follows the same process, to achieve consistent oversight from the outset.

Dates have been agreed for multi-agency training to be targeted at certain groups, including community groups and the voluntary sector and will continue to be promoted. Seven-Minute Briefings have been added to the Partnership website and training has taken place with GP's the MASH and Intake Teams.

10) Feltham Young Offenders Institute (FYOI)

The relationship between FYOI and the HSCP has continued to develop into a mature, transparent, and responsive partnership. The proactive engagement particularly by the Safeguarding function has ensured that the role of the HSCP as a critical friend has been positive and robust. The dedicated sub-group has seen an encouraging increase in the participation from multi-agency partners and a range of functions which has supported seeking assurance on specific issues as well as seeking assurance on the safeguarding and wellbeing of the young people in the establishment.

Representatives from FYOI actively took part in the wider programmes of work across the partnership such as attending the development session in October 2023.

In March 2024, the establishment received its annual unannounced inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP). Despite the dedication of the Governor and heads of functions, the outcome of the inspection resulted in the safety function dropping to level 1 from level 3 and purposeful activity also dropping to level 1, which was linked to the Ofsted inspection of education where concerns about the curriculum were identified.

As outlined in the published report inspectors reached their conclusion based on the data presented which included issues FYOI experienced in August 2023 but recognised the stability and improvements that had been put in place since then.

Despite the decrease in grading no urgent actions were identified and inspectors were not concerned about the position of the establishment, systems, or safety of young people.

Positively, inspectors noted that:

- Safeguarding practice was robust at the time of the inspection and identified areas of good practice which should be adopted by other YOI's.
- There was evidence of a strong and positive relationship with the LADO and HSCP.
- Good safeguarding reviews are undertaken.
- CUSP and Team Around the Child practice was the most developed of all YOI's.
- Separation systems were good, young people had access to a good regime, were clear about why they were separated and the targets they needed to reach.
- Use of Force was justified and proportionate.
- 92% of young people reported feeling safe with other young people and staff.

FYOI, like all of the secure estate are being impacted by the national crisis across the prison system. There has been an increase in the number of 18+ year olds that are residing on Feltham A. Whilst the establishment has always been permitted to hold up to 19-year-olds on the young people's side, historically they were limited in numbers. To ease the pressure

on prison places across the adult estate, FYOI have been directed to hold more young people above the age of 18 on Feltham A than they have previously. The establishment is monitoring the impact of this closely. In addition, the decision to close Cookham Wood and re-roll a significant number of young people into FYOI is further adding to the pressure on the establishment. This was a centrally made decision and one that FYOI was unable to control. The impact of increasing numbers of 18+ on Feltham A, the closure of Cookham Wood and expansion of the Court catchment area will be monitored through the sub-group at every meeting over the coming year. The sub-group will now report directly into the HSCP Board (formally the Executive Board) to ensure proper scrutiny and oversight by the Designated Safeguarding Partners on behalf of the Lead Safeguarding Partners.

11) Conclusion

As demonstrated through the report, the HSCP has continued a journey of development and self-reflection particularly in anticipation and preparation for the revision Working Together 2023.

The HSCP has remained a reflective and committed partnership as evidenced in the range of assurance and learning activity that it has undertaken.

Looking forward to 2024/25 like others across the country will work hard on embedding its revised operating and governance structures, publishing its new Multi-Agency Safeguarding arrangements (MASA) and working towards meeting the requirements outlined in statutory guidance alongside working on the themed areas of priority and ensuring systems are safe and robust.

Appendix 1 – HSCP Budget and Expenditure 2023/24

Budget	
Local Authority	£157,500.00
ICB	£31,698.00
MOPAC	£5000.00
London Fire Brigade	£500.00
DfE	£47,300 (<i>one off funding to support implementation of Working Together 2023</i>)
Total budget	£241,998.00
Expenditure	
Activity	Cost
Salaries	£164,190.45
Neglect Audit	£5,400.00
Website Hosting	£1002.00
TASP Membership	£825.00
HSCP Effectiveness Review & Partnership Development Day	£11,875.00
Adolescent mental health & suicide learning review	£3,182.10
Virtual College e-Learning package recommission.	£5,961.67
Multi-agency chronology system expansion	£6,000.00
Total Expenditure	£198,486.22

