



**MK Together**  
SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP

# **MK Together Annual Safeguarding Report 2024-2025.**

**August 2025**

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# Introduction

In September 2024 the MK Together Safeguarding Partnership implemented revised multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 whilst maintaining the functions of an all-age partnership ([MK Together Partnership Handbook](#)). This included agreeing a new set of strategic priorities that have been used as the basis of the 2024-2025 Annual Safeguarding Report and have informed a new safeguarding strategy that will be published in Summer 2025.

Revised arrangements have further strengthened the Partnership's approach to assuring itself that safeguarding systems for children and vulnerable adults are robust and risk is identified early. Our solid partnership approach also stands us in good stead for new national requirements by ensuring streamlined work plans and reporting pathways.

The combination of governance for safeguarding and community safety enables the Safeguarding Partnership to take a flexible and dynamic approach to cross policy duties including Prevent, Domestic Abuse and Serious Violence, as well as capitalise on strong operational and strategic partnerships and keeping safeguarding at the heart of everything we do.

# Independent Scrutineer's Reflections

I am pleased to be able to contribute to the MK Together Safeguarding Partnership annual safeguarding report. I have recently taken on the role of Independent Safeguarding Scrutineer and so will offer my first impressions of the effectiveness of the MK Together Safeguarding Partnership arrangements.

During the time I have been in this role I have I have attended many of the partnership meetings and had one to one discussions with key partners discussing relevant issues with all of them. I have found all partners welcome the role of the independent safeguarding scrutineer and are able to discuss the significant benefits and also the challenges that the system shares when working together to safeguard the residents of Milton Keynes. I have experienced the partnership showing mature relationships with strong leadership promoting and supporting a culture of transparency and openness.

This year the partnership has agreed a new set of strategic priorities to direct their work. The priorities are broad ranging and encompass all the elements of good safeguarding practice. Within this report it can be seen that the priorities drive the work of the partnership and support the partnership to fulfil its statutory duties. It is recognised that further work is needed to ensure that the partnership has in place a framework with relevant and appropriate measures to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of all the areas of work being progressed within the MK Together Safeguarding Partnership.

I have seen the MK Together Safeguarding Partnership arrangements support the good progress that has been made this year and look forward to undertaking my duties as Independent Safeguarding Scrutineer within this system during 2025-2026.

**Jill Wilkinson, Independent Scrutineer for MK Together Safeguarding Partnership**

# Priority One

**Take a well-rounded approach when working with families, focusing on what children or vulnerable adults need to manage risks and achieve the best outcomes.**

Through a collaborative and strength-based approach, we are ensuring that our children and vulnerable adults are receiving the support they need. This is demonstrated successfully across our agencies and partners in multiple ways. One example is the embedding of the 'Think Family' approach across the partnership, as well as including it in our Adults Inter-Agency Risk Management protocol. This highlights the importance of considering the views of family/carers not just the service user. Milton Keynes City Council's Adults and Children's Social Care staff have completed joint domestic abuse training which promotes a 'Think Family' approach, enhancing cross-service collaboration and safeguarding.

Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust's training package has been revised and remodelled, utilising anonymised examples to support theory-to-practice links. It has been well received by staff, who comment on how appropriate and relatable the training is. As well as this, Level 3 Safeguarding training was revised last year, since then there has been an improvement and increase in compliance from 83% to 86%.

South Central Ambulance Service staff are trained to ensure the voices of both the adults at risk and children are heard and respected, specifically regarding cases of domestic abuse where a child is involved. Central and North West London (CNWL) NHS Foundation Trust is continuing to roll out Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment (DASH) training across all teams, to develop a greater awareness. Alongside this, focussing on supporting adults who disclose historical abuse or harm experienced in childhood, BLMK Integrated Care Board has contributed towards the development of the Domestic Abuse SNA and future strategy. The Multi Agency Tasking And Co-ordination (MATAC) meetings led by TVP convene regularly, bringing together representatives from across the partnership to address perpetrator behaviour and reduce on-going risk of domestic abuse. Together with this, the domestic abuse perpetrator intervention programme DRIVE has landed in Milton Keynes and continued funding has been secured for 25/26.

The learning bulletin from a Safeguarding Adult Review has been disseminated across the partnership, highlighting the importance of considering all family members and their care and support needs. A co-produced Carers Strategy and Preparing for Adulthood Strategy have strengthened the whole family approach, particularly in identifying hidden carers and young carers and additionally supporting seamless transition for young people into adult services.

Milton Keynes City Council's Children's Services transitioned in May 2024, from a Family Support model to Child First practice. The shift was informed by a revised Quality Assurance

Framework and a growing awareness of criminal and sexual exploitation, prompting a more proactive and child-focused strategy. The accompanying Early Help Strategy outlined ten key priorities aimed at early identification of needs and supporting children within their families. Both the Child First offer and Early Help Strategy are connected to the outcomes set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework, and the five key Working Together 2023 principles; collaborate, learn, resource, include and mutually challenge. The impact of this approach is evident, Ofsted rated the service as Good, including Outstanding for Care Leavers. Audit results show a positive trajectory, with 60% of audits in 2025 graded as good. Overall, families and children are more engaged, and risks are identified earlier, preventing escalation. Recent audit information shows that there was a 16% reduction in care proceedings between November 2024 and March 2025 coupled with an 18% decrease in referrals and 3.4% decrease in Children in Need. These reductions support our ongoing commitment to early identification of need and improved relationships with services for families who need tier 2 and 3 responses. Early identification supports less children being referred into more formal child protection processes.

Looking ahead, social care reform will further enhance engagement by distinguishing between safeguarding (preventative and universal support) and child protection (targeted intervention for those at risk). The development of Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams and Family Help Teams will reinforce this distinction and improve outcomes, as well as continuing to develop joined up working across training and practice.

Milton Keynes City Council Adult Services recorded a 44% increase in safeguarding referrals (6,912) in total. Each case was appropriately screened and responded to, demonstrating the system's capacity to manage increased demand without compromising on quality. There has been completion of over 1,300 new Care Act needs assessments, reflecting a proactive commitment to identifying needs early and tailoring care to individual circumstances. The Adult Social Care Outcome Framework (ASCOF) indicator has highlighted that 8.2% of young adults with learning difficulties are in long term residential care, well below the 15% national average. For older adults, 469 out of 100,000 are in residential care, significantly lower than the England average of 566. Both these examples showcase the success in promoting family-based living and independence as well as a community-based support.

MKUHFT has commenced a safeguarding champions model, which is in its early developmental stages. The model will encompass opportunity for improvement and development for staff, improved ward safeguarding and ward communication.

CNWL is continuing to improve its system-wide visibility of and vulnerabilities for professionals involved in care. Alongside all the great work that is happening all agencies have committed to developing assurance data sets, to gain a more in-depth understanding of what the current picture is across the agencies.

Through the implementation of revised multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, the MK Together Safeguarding Partnership has strengthened relationships with education settings. A formal consultation was carried out with education providers on how best to involve them in decision making. The recommendations are in the process of being embedded, including the use of 'quadrants' to consult on new policies and procedures, to learn about new challenges being faced by the settings and support senior leaders within education to be part of the solution.

Moving forward, the partnership will monitor the impact of the new Preparing for Adulthood and Carers strategies to inform further development and implement any further recommendations set out in the new Domestic Abuse Strategy. Assurance of the impact of new practice models and strategies will be sought by the MKTSP Assurance Group.



## Priority Two

**Listen to the opinions of children and vulnerable adults in our decision making and everyday work, making sure we recognise and understand their unique traits to provide fair services.**

Ensuring that children and vulnerable adults have a voice in decision-making by actively listening to their perspectives and recognising their unique traits is a key priority for the MK Together Safeguarding Partnership in recognition that it is an area of development. By fostering meaningful engagement, we create fair and responsive services that address the individual needs.

MKUHFT actively contributes to the NHS's Friends and Family Test (FFT), increasing submissions by over 15,000 from 2023/24 to 2024/25 strengthening the ability to capture patient feedback. As well as this, the patient experience platform further enhances understanding by providing a rolling score based on the previous 90 days, along with detailed narrative feedback from adults and specific children's tools designed to amplify their voices. This data is instrumental in shaping fair and effective services.

BLMK ICB has refreshed its People and Communities Strategy, ensuring that the voices of the residents, including those with protected characteristics, are heard and reflected in service design. Milton Keynes City Council's Adult Services has developed the Stronger Together Board, which is co-chaired by an individual with lived experience and the Director of Adult Services. The board meets monthly and drives service improvements through sub-groups on direct payments, supported living, and carers.

Workshops have brought service users and practitioners together to improve outcomes. To address accessibility challenges, MKUHFT has developed a Learning Disability Strategy, equipping staff with adjustments to better support the learning disability community in hospital settings. Further reinforcing this commitment completing the National Learning Disability Improvement Standards Benchmarking, engaging staff, patients, and carers in feedback to identify opportunities for improvement.

Multiple agencies contributed to the MKTSP Section 11 audit which included listening to children and families, improving agency understanding of protected characteristics, and ensuring that services are responsive to diverse needs. The annual review of restraint at Oakhill STC includes capturing the lived experiences of young people in a unique situation, ensuring that their insights inform best practices in the care and support provided.

Revised guidance has been issued to all front-line staff at Thames Valley Police (TVP), focusing on capturing the voice of the child and vulnerable adult, in order to identify where early intervention and safeguarding opportunities can be applied for the most vulnerable



individuals. This has allowed TVP to respond to the concern, whilst enabling them to seek feedback on the policing they received. Alongside this, new toolkits have been introduced to monitor the frequency of recording the voice of the child.

Addressing future challenges requires agencies to look in-depth at themes arising. One example of this is raising awareness of female genital mutilation (FGM). This is being undertaken by encouraging conversations to identify risks and protect individuals, training professionals and embedding FGM into safeguarding protocols, prioritising engaging with affected communities, survivor voices and ensuring supportive actions are incorporated within the partnership.

Review Group oversees the completion of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPRs), Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) and Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs). Whilst it is not always possible, family members are always invited to contribute to the review and recommendations identified via the learning process. Review Group also seeks the participation of independent experts to support reviewers, the Panel and Review Group to better understand the impact of any identified protected characteristics, ensuring that we challenge ourselves appropriately to achieve the best learning outcomes. In the reporting period MKTSP used independent experts to support panels with information on the experiences of people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and older aged adults.

Delivery Group is responsible for ensuring all actions derived from statutory reviews, including those elicited from family members are embedded into practice.

One Learning Bulletin disseminated emphasised the importance of considering all family members and their care and support needs. This will ensure a more holistic approach to safeguarding and support. MKCC Children's Services maintain a strong audit and moderation culture. Since June 2023, audits have consistently rated the voice of the child as a strength, with 57% noting it is well captured. At the time of writing this report, in 2025 alone, 61% of 58 audits confirmed this quality.

The Safeguarding Partnership is planning an adult benchmarking exercise which will take place in September 2025. This will include questions on how agencies listen to the voice of the service user and use data on protected characteristics to drive improvements to services. Multiple agencies will take part, and this will include a practitioner event and separate event with managers.

The Safeguarding Partnership, via Delivery Group, is currently reviewing recommendations from the Section 11 audit which will be combined with findings from the adult services benchmarking exercise. Whilst individual agency collection and use of feedback is a strength, we are committed to improving how this can be utilised across the safeguarding system in Milton Keynes.

# Priority Three

**Improve the quality of care and support by learning from feedback and focusing on continuous improvements while maintaining high safeguarding standards.**

BLMK Integrated Care Board has launched a training matrix for primary care ensuring that staff receive education focused on key areas identified through reviews and learning, strengthening safeguarding practices. Within CNWL, children's safeguarding professionals are working closely with adult services to identify 'the child behind the adult'. Safeguarding Champions Networks have been put in place for both adults and children services, ensuring that safeguarding remains a core focus across all departments. These networks enable regular assessments, identifying areas for improvement while providing ongoing opportunities for learning.

Children's services audits in social care consistently demonstrate that feedback from children is robustly captured, with widely used tools effectively extracting their views. Care-experienced young people regularly report positive engagement with their personal advisors (PAs), who remain ambitious on their behalf and actively support them into employment, education and training opportunities.

MKUHFT safeguarding metrics demonstrate an average overall score of 93% for Trust-wide safeguarding knowledge, showcasing a strong commitment to staff awareness and implementation. Addressing the need for continuous improvement, frequent 'Tendable' assessments are undertaken in all wards and departments on a regular basis. Tendable is a smart inspection App that replaces the manual pen and paper audit of inspection used to assess and improve quality across clinical areas. Safeguarding forms one arm of the assessment and demonstrates areas that require improvement.

Engaging with service users, families and professionals helps identify strengths and areas for development, ensuring responsive and effective care. One example of this is the reviewing of the Child Death Pathway, incorporating partnership feedback to enhance support mechanisms.

MKCC Adult Services is committed to hosting regular safeguarding forums, which support practitioners in managing complex cases to improve outcomes. As well as this, the service continues to gather feedback from individuals via various methods including surveys, compliments, and complaints. Themes are analysed and actioned via the Assurance operational group. In March 2025, they reported 100% satisfaction of service users with regards to their hospital discharge experience. The introduction of a new crime management framework across all teams in TVP has significantly enhanced the quality of investigations by ensuring consistent progression and clear strategic direction. This

structured approach has directly contributed to improved victim satisfaction across the board – an achievement that stands in contrast to national trends observed in other forces.

A qualitative sampling of specialist child abuse investigations is set to be introduced by TVP, aimed at identifying best practices as well as areas for improvement. This initiative will promote continuous learning, as well as ensuring that safeguarding efforts remain victim-centred and evidence-informed.

Right Care Right Person (RCRP) is a national initiative aimed at ensuring individuals experiencing mental health difficulties receive the most appropriate support from the correct agency. It recognises that police are not always best placed to respond to mental health-related incidents, and in many cases health or social care are better suited to provide the necessary care. At TVP, the initiative is being implemented with trained call handlers using a decision-making toolkit to assess and appropriately allocate calls for service.

The implementation of the Children's Social Care reforms presents a valuable opportunity to engage children, young people and their parents in evaluating how these changes are supporting positive outcomes – particularly in enabling more children to remain safely within their family units. To strengthen this approach, the pathways through which feedback is gathered and acted upon will be enhanced, ensuring that the voices of children and families are central to continuous improvement.

Further plans are in place across the safeguarding partnership to continue to develop this priority. In MKCC Adult Services, an audit is taking place in June 2025 looking at safeguarding decision-making, specifically focusing on the voice of the person and their feedback. This will contribute to continued service improvement.

## Priority Four

**Act quickly to identify and address all forms of exploitation, abuse and neglect for both children and adults by working together across different organisations to provide early help and prevention.**

Across the Partnership, agencies are working collaboratively to identify and address all forms of exploitation, abuse and neglect through timely intervention and coordinated prevention efforts.

Agencies are using innovative tools to identify hidden harm and escalating risk. TVP's Exploitation Dashboard and Operation Pathway use harm scores to uncover children at high risk, many of whom are not on Child Protection Plans, which leads to positive partnership intervention. CNWL supports early identification through the use of exploitation toolkits, and the implementation of the Child Protection–Information Sharing (CP-IS) system in community services trust wide.

Based on the success and learnings identified via the implementation of the contextual safeguarding team - a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary team that focuses on reducing harm that comes from outside of the family home and environment - an Early Help Board has been implemented which includes responding to contextual issues in families that may lead to harm for children in the future. MKUHFT and CNWL demonstrate strong practice in safeguarding referrals and information sharing. MKUHFT staff consistently complete MARFs when concerns arise, particularly in emergency settings, and work closely with mental health services, police, and children's social care. CNWL maintains robust internal reporting systems and promotes early discussions through the Person in a Position of Trust (PiPOT) pathway. MKCC Adult Services also contribute through weekly safeguarding meetings with TVP, enabling rapid information exchange and follow up.

MKCC Adult Services and the BLMK Integrated Care Board have embedded structures to support proactive safeguarding. MKCC Adult Services held over 1,000 Inter-Agency Risk Management (IARM) Meetings in 2024/25 and operate a high-demand advice line for professionals. BLMK Integrated Care Board has introduced a primary care training matrix and conducts peer reviews of safeguarding arrangements to promote shared learning and accountability. Delivery Group has led scoping exercises on the prevalence of adult female sex workers in Milton Keynes and medicinal cannabis use and is reviewing contextual safeguarding arrangements. Delivery Group is currently working on actions based on findings and recommendations from these scoping exercises. MKCC Children's Services adopted the 'Child First' approach across Early Help, supported by increased Family Centre activities and a partnership-wide push to report harm during core 9 to 5 hours.

Delivery Group meets monthly to deliver on safeguarding projects and oversees a partnership risk register that scopes and monitors new and emerging vulnerabilities within the local population or national trends that may impact on local people. All partners are asked to contribute to this register with risks they see arising in their service user cohort for early mitigation. Examples of risks include the use of synthetic opioids, adult female sex working and looked after children who go missing.

The local Prevent Partnership Board has been embedding changes to Channel Duty Guidance and assessing agencies' Prevent Training Strategies to ensure that children and vulnerable adults susceptible to radicalisation and at risk of fascination with extreme violence and mass casualty attacks are identified early and supported through Channel.

A thorough Strategic Needs Assessment for Community Safety and Serious Violence have been conducted. Metrics included safeguarding data relating to possible indicators of being victims and/or perpetrators of crime to inform the 2025-2028 Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy. This strategy will be closely aligned with the new Domestic Abuse Strategy. This, alongside coordination by the Serious Violence Operational Group, helps to address areas of concern and influences what we focus on in the future in terms of crime and serious violence prevention.

A major development is the creation of a comprehensive dataset held by Assurance Group, which will enable more effective monitoring of safeguarding performance and help earlier identify emerging risks to practice. This new approach supports informed decision-making and targeted interventions. Alongside this, MKCC Children's Social Care (CSC) is leading the development of the Risk Outside the Home (ROTH) pathway, launching in autumn 2025. This initiative will support young people at risk of exploitation by engaging them, their families, and professionals in understanding the contexts in which harm occurs and how to reduce it.

The partnership is also progressing with the implementation of a Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) pathway, a Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) audit and strategic group, and a streamlined Autism Spectrum Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ASD/ADHD) pathway to improve access to neurodevelopmental support. These initiatives are complemented by CNWL's work to develop a referral pathway for ASD/ADHD, introduce a neglect assessment tool, and implement a bruising policy for babies and immobile children. CNWL is also expanding the Child Protection – Information Sharing (CP-IS) system to Community Paediatrics, Dentistry, and CAMHS, and promoting Trust-wide awareness of the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) through audits and awareness campaigns.

In adult safeguarding, MKCC Adult Social Care (ASC) is responding to a 44% increase in referrals by exploring opportunities for improved preventative partnership working. The service is refreshing its safeguarding policies and procedures to reflect best practice and learning from recent reviews. It is also expanding the Safeguarding Provider Forum to enhance system-wide collaboration, early intervention, and problem-solving. Notably,

96.9% of adults involved in safeguarding enquiries reported that their outcomes were fully or partially achieved, demonstrating the impact of the Making Safeguarding Personal approach. Additionally, the Healthwatch Enter and View programme is being extended to include supported living and home care, strengthening provider oversight.

Both Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (BFRS) and Thames Valley Police (TVP) are developing action plans in response to key recommendations from recent safeguarding reviews. These plans will be monitored and reported through Assurance Group, ensuring transparency, accountability, and a shared commitment to continuous improvement.

## Priority Five

**Make sure that different organisations work together effectively to support individuals as they transition between our services, keeping trauma in mind.**

Across the Partnership, agencies are working collaboratively to embed trauma-informed practice, improve continuity of care, and ensure safeguarding is central to every transition.

CNWL delivers ongoing trauma-informed training across teams and ensures appropriate health professionals attend key decision-making meetings. BFRS has also strengthened its trauma-informed safeguarding through a peer-led review in partnership with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue with representation from the Partnership. Similarly, TVP, MKUHFT and Adult Social Care contribute to trauma-aware safeguarding through multi-agency forums and risk management processes.

Milton Keynes City Council, through Public Health and Children's Social Care, and CNWL all support structured transitions from children's to adult services. Multiple agencies are contributing towards the Preparing for Adulthood pathway, with Children's Social Care holding monthly meetings, which provide an effective forum to explore and agree how best to meet the care leavers' ongoing care needs through adult social care support if required. As well as this, Care Act assessments are routinely completed for children aged 16 or 17, with a focus on the transition policy which supports young people with complex needs into education, employment, and housing. CNWL supports this work through Mental Health Transition Professionals who guide young people moving from CAMHS or paediatrics into adult services in Milton Keynes.

MKCC Adult Social Care held over 1,000 Inter-Agency Risk Management (IARM) meetings in line with the MK Together Multi-Agency Safeguarding Policy, enabling professionals to come together to assess risk and develop safeguarding plans for adults at risk, including in non-statutory cases. TVP leads on Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings to protect children from extra-familial harm, whilst bringing offenders to justice. MKUHFT works with MK Act, Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) and local social care teams to safeguard individuals experiencing domestic or sexual harm.

Adult Social Care, CNWL and MKUHFT work together to improve hospital discharge and reduce delays. The integrated Discharge Hub operates seven days a week and supports safe and timely discharges. Weekly Top 5 Length of Stay meetings involving CNWL and MKUHFT help resolve extended hospital stays. These efforts are supported by the Improving System Flow group and the development of a 'virtual ward' and enhanced falls prevention services.

TVP's Harm Reduction Unit refers young people to third-sector services or charities for additional support and divert them into initiatives such as music studios, sports



programmes, and mentoring schemes. MKUHFT is signposting patients presenting with self-harm or substance misuse in the Emergency Department to community partners for ongoing support.

BLMK Integrated Care Board leads a Transition Workstream, overseen by the Deputy Chief Nurse. A funded post supports the Transition project and focuses specifically on End-of-Life care. BLMK ICB is continuing to review complex care pathways to improve continuity and integration.

Information sharing is key to a trauma-informed transition, reducing the amount of times people have to repeat their stories to different professionals. Partners carried out a serious violence audit where cases were assessed on how well information was shared between services. Recommendations from this audit were agreed at Assurance Group and added to the Serious Violence Action Plan. These recommendations included agencies improving information sharing for children returning from care placements out of area and shared ownership of care plans.

These shared efforts reflect a system-wide commitment to trauma-informed, person-centred, and collaborative care. By aligning our approaches and learning from each other, we can ensure that individuals experience safe, supported, and empowering transitions across services.

Partners across the system are aligning their efforts to strengthen trauma-informed, multi-agency working and improve transitions for individuals at every stage of life. A key focus will be on enhancing risk management and safeguarding through the continued use and wider promotion of the Interagency Risk Management (IARM) process, with regular reporting to the MK Together Assurance Group to ensure transparency and shared accountability. Alongside this, agencies are evaluating transition pathways to identify gaps and improve trauma-informed practice, while also working to strengthen joint funding and commissioning arrangements to ensure seamless service delivery.

MKCC Public Health will be rolling out a new trauma-informed practice offer including bespoke training packages and refreshing key tools such as the self-harm toolkit and teenage pregnancy self-assessment, ensuring professionals are equipped with up-to-date, compassionate approaches.

TVP is developing Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams and working to reduce the disparity between single-agency and joint-agency Section 47 investigations, in line with national learning and legislative developments. Meanwhile, Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is implementing an action plan to address key safeguarding recommendations from its recent peer review, with progress monitored and shared through the MK Together Safeguarding Partnership.

# Compliance with Children's and Adults Safeguarding Legislation

## Statutory Safeguarding Reviews

In Milton Keynes, the Case Review Panel carries out Rapid Reviews for all Safeguarding Adult Review referrals as well as in response to Significant Incident Notifications for children.

In 2024-2025, the Case Review Panel completed Rapid Reviews for the following number of Incidents:

- Three Safeguarding Adult Reviews
- Four Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

The Case Review Panel commissioned:

- One Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review
- One Safeguarding Adult Review
- Two Domestic Homicide Reviews

In addition, two Domestic Homicide Reviews were completed, and reports published.

For Rapid Reviews that do not meet the threshold for statutory reviews, learning identified is added to an action log for completion by Delivery Group and where appropriate a learning bulletin is developed and disseminated throughout the partnership.

Once a statutory review has been commissioned Review Group provides the governance, ensuring they are carried out in a sensitive and timely manner.

The resulting action plans from reviews are overseen by Delivery Group and any larger system change identified through repeating themes is monitored by Assurance Group to measure impact.

Learning identified and actioned from Safeguarding Adult Reviews in the reporting period include:

- Local guidance updated to reflect the use of professional judgement in cases of self-neglect.
- Auditing the use of lead professionals and escalation contacts.
- Adult provider services embedding the early help strategy when working with vulnerable adults who are parents/carers to children.

- Greater emphasis placed on the needs of carers.

Learning identified and actioned from Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews for the reporting period include:

- Formal escalation process agreed and disseminated with specific reference to escalating concerns regarding the care of neurodivergent children.
- Supporting professionals' competence to understand the impact on parenting of a parent's medicinal cannabis use.
- Partnership review of the quality assurance processes in agencies for effective record keeping on work with families.

Learning identified and actioned for Domestic Homicide reviews include:

- The introduction of an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- Opportunities to make sensitive enquiries related to domestic abuse and protected characteristics should be considered as part of agency routine conversations.
- Partners must share information when they become aware that a person who provides care may pose a risk to themselves or others.

The MK Together Safeguarding Partnership also considered findings from the National Panel Report into interfamilial sexual abuse. As a result, a new reflective practice board has been established and an audit into cases is currently underway; recommendations will be reported back to the partners.

The previous MKTSP Independent Safeguarding Scrutineer carried out an audit of strategy meetings to review the effectiveness of the discussion in considering whether the threshold for a Rapid Review, as defined by Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, is met. Assurance was provided that the right incidents were being referred however there needed to be an escalation process for disagreement. A process has since been put in place and the Designated Safeguarding Partners now make the decision where consensus is not reached within the Strategy Meeting.

### **Themes from local and national reviews and local scrutiny**

The priorities have been identified by partners following independent scrutiny and reflection on learnings from national and local reviews.

Further work was carried out by the former Independent Safeguarding Scrutineer into inpatient mental health services which will be combined with recommendations from the recent CQC inspection and monitored by Assurance Group.

We continue to monitor out of area care placements of children placed in Milton Keynes due to risk of criminal and sexual exploitation; they form a significant proportion of our 'missing' cohort. Significant work is being carried out by TVP and MKCC Children's Social Care and has resulted in a reduction in missing episodes in this group.

Mental capacity and the needs of carers continues to be a theme locally and work continues in these areas as described in the priority section of this report.

The Safeguarding Partnership will review the Baroness Casey report on group-based grooming and child sexual exploitation to assess current preventative and mitigation pathways and implement any learning that is identified.

### **Working with Education**

We take a holistic and well-rounded approach in relation to supporting access to education and fulfilling our 'children missing education' duties - working with partners to ensure there are 'eyes on' from the earliest opportunity and supporting children to remain with the professionals who know them best. This is supported through the work of the Milton Keynes Inclusion Partnership, Youth Justice Strategic Board, Local Area SEND Partnership, and includes:

- High take up of early year education for disadvantaged 2-year-olds.
- Prompt access to education via co-ordination of admissions for children starting school, transferring to junior/secondary schools, or moving schools in-year.
- Ensuring Fair Access to Education for the most vulnerable children, or those displaying behaviours that challenge.
- Low school exclusion rates using proactive earlier intervention dual placements with high quality alternative education provision.
- Robust tracking of children without a school place or who go missing from roll.
- Access to multi-disciplinary support, advice, and guidance for those who struggle to attend school, including taking legal action where required.
- Taking action on unsuitable home education.
- Ensuring sufficiency of high-quality provision, including the creation of additional specialist SEND places to meet rising demand for children with more complex needs.
- Access to specialist teacher advice, guidance, and support.

Close partnership working between MKCC's Community Learning MK and MK College ensures learning pathways are available for Post-16 onwards to support people of all levels of education and abilities to grow their confidence and gain employment. Specialist careers, advice, guidance, and support is available to assist the most vulnerable.

Regular communication is shared with schools and early years providers via 'Heads Up' and the 'MKEYE' to ensure they are kept apprised of key information and updates nationally and from local partners. Headteacher/SENDCo/DSL Quadrant Meetings provide an opportunity for more detailed discussion and co-production. Training is also available to governors and school leaders.

TVP's school's officers are key to helping schools protect their children and build up the trust of students and families towards police. National awareness weeks such as Operation Sceptre, a national knife crime prevention week, are also opportunities for police to deliver education to children on important topics, helping to prevent future harm.

### **Review of the Use of Restraint at Oakhill Secure Training Centre**

Oakhill Secure Training Centre is a national resource for children on remand or sentenced to custody. The annual Partnership review of restraint at Oakhill STC was led by the previous Independent Safeguarding Scrutineer and paid particular attention to the impact of the introduction of females to the facility. The review, which was shared with the Youth Custody Service, identified a variety of improvements including an increase in social workers in the safeguarding team, a positive Ofsted report and the introduction of a quality assurance tracker. The review also reflected that new engagement events held with families demonstrated its commitment to supporting consistent family contact and investment in family relationships for the children. The report concluded that improvements have been made in managing restraints and the culture is more child focussed, however recommended that Oakhill review its out of hours medical resource for when restraints occur during the night.

The MK Together Safeguarding Partnership is currently working towards the 2025 review which will take place in July and have a focus on proportionality of restraint.

### **Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Prevention**

The partnership has carried out one rapid review into the death of a rough sleeper. This was not progressed to a full Safeguarding Adult Review as the individual had been well known to agencies who visited him regularly to offer support, which he always declined. Whilst the death was tragic and had an impact on the local community who had got to know the individual, good practice was identified as agencies continued to check on the person's welfare regularly, were actively making sure the rough sleeper knew about all the local support available and were sharing information.

As part of improvements to adult safeguarding, a proactive and structured approach is being taken to address the needs of individuals experiencing rough sleeping, particularly those who may be at risk of abuse or neglect. By appointing a named partner member specifically responsible for rough sleeping, the MK Together Safeguarding Partnership ensures that this

vulnerable group receives focused attention at a strategic level. The Partnership member plays a critical role in championing the needs of rough sleepers, providing regular updates on complex cases and ensuring that safeguarding concerns are escalated and addressed in a timely and coordinated manner. Their involvement helps bridge the gap between frontline services and strategic oversight, fostering a more responsive and accountable safeguarding system.

Complementing this strategic oversight, the Rough Sleeper Team conducts monthly inter-agency Adults at Risk meetings. These meetings bring together professionals from various sectors including Housing, Health, Substance Misuse, Social Care, Police, Probation, and the Voluntary Sector to discuss individuals who are rough sleeping and may be at risk. In accordance with the multi-agency protocol, these discussions aim to identify safeguarding concerns early, coordinate interventions and develop person-centred support plans. This collaborative approach ensures that no single agency bears the burden of complex cases alone and that individuals receive holistic and sustained support. Together, these efforts reflect a robust, multi-layered safeguarding framework that prioritises both strategic leadership and frontline collaboration.

MKCC's "No Second Night Out" promise and significant investment in suitable temporary accommodation, means those who find themselves with nowhere to stay will not only be found a temporary address but will continue to be supported to find permanent accommodation and maintain their tenancies. Those who decline the offer of accommodation continue to be supported by the multi-agency outreach team which includes colleagues from the MKCC Homelessness Prevention Team, mental health and drug and alcohol services. The street outreach approach enables these teams to build up relationships with rough sleepers and as well as supporting them into accommodation also assesses their more holistic needs that may be barriers to securing and sustaining housing such as pharmacological support for opiate or alcohol dependency, health screenings, access to GPs and handholding into formal treatment.

Information sharing and joint action plans are supported by colleagues in the police where those rough sleeping are also perpetrators of anti-social behaviour; this enables us to balance enforcement and safeguarding activities to encourage people to take up the offer of support whilst keeping Milton Keynes streets safe. The multi-agency ASB for Adults at Risk Pathway also ensures we can work to mitigate the risk of a vulnerable adult becoming homeless as a result of perpetrating anti-social behaviour.

## **Challenges**

A key challenge faced by the MK Together Safeguarding Partnership this year has been the implementation of a Partnership Safeguarding data set. Whilst assurance is provided in single agency reports, the vision for a proportionate reporting framework for multi-agency safeguarding data has been difficult to establish. It is important that Safeguarding Partners do not add to the data burden already felt by agencies, however a shared reporting system will enrich our insight into the challenges, needs and progress of the whole system in safeguarding practice and help us understand the needs of the diverse community in Milton Keynes. Work will continue to agree a framework in 2025 - 2026.



# Summary

The MK Together Safeguarding Partnership has maintained strategic oversight of safeguarding activity whilst implementing the revised arrangements as set out in Working Together 2023 and continuing to assess Care Act compliance by revisiting the adult benchmarking exercise completed in the East of England in 2023/24.

The revised arrangements are bedding in well, demonstrated by multiple workstreams being delivered towards the Partnership's priorities and in response to emerging themes and vulnerabilities.

Priorities for 24/25 were agreed in early 2025 to set the scene for a new three-year strategy which has been adopted by the MK Together Safeguarding Partnership. The benefits of a single team supporting both the Safeguarding Partnerships and Community Safety, and the clear links with the re-structured Health and Care Partnership, continues to outweigh the benefits of separate approaches as safeguarding remains the golden thread in all partnership activity.

In addition to the agreed priorities, the Partnership has focused on ensuring the voice of the child and people with lived experience is captured within its work. This was considered in a variety of single agency audits and the multi-agency section 11 safeguarding compliance audit. It will be repeated in the planned multi-agency audit in 2025, ensuring the Partnership dataset captures responses to people with protected characteristics.

In addition to the safeguarding priorities, the Safeguarding Partnership will continue to work on the following areas of development over the coming year: voice of the child/people with lived experience; data regarding protected characteristics; multi-agency training; and developing a robust programme of safeguarding performance management using proportionate data collection.

The Partnership is transparent about the challenges it faces with the changing needs of an ever-growing local population and national restructures in partner organisations. It therefore keeps arrangements flexible enough to effectively adapt and respond to these changes.

The MK Together Safeguarding Partnership remains proud of its innovative approach to ensuring the most vulnerable residents are protected and safeguarded, and that we collectively learn from each other and are committed to the residents of Milton Keynes.

# Appendix A

## Agency attendance – MK Together Safeguarding Partnership meetings 2024-25

Agency	April 2024	July 2024	Oct 2024	Jan 2025
Milton Keynes City Council	✓	✓	✓	✓
Thames Valley Police	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board	✓	✓	✓	✓
Independent Scrutineer	✓	✓	✓	x
Bucks Fire and Rescue Service	✓	✓	✓	✓
Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust	✓	✓	✓	x
HMP Woodhill	✓	x	✓	✓
Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	✓	✓	✓	✓
National Probation Service	✓	x	✓	✓
Oakhill Secure Training Centre	✓	✓	x	✓
Public Health, Bedford and Milton Keynes	x	✓	✓	✓
Community Action MK (Voluntary & Community Sector)	✓	✓	x	x

# Appendix B

## Agency Contributions for 2024-2025

	Children's	Adults	Total
BLMK Integrated Care Board	-51,482	-14,300	-65,782
Thames Valley Police	-18,595		-18,595
National Probation Service		-4,539	-4,539
MK University Hospital Foundation Trust	-1,974	-3,250	-5,224
G4S Care & Justice Service (UK)	-1,974		-1,974
CNWL MK	-1,974	-3,250	-5,224
Police & Crime Commissioner (via TVP)		-7,800	-7,800
Bucks Fire & Rescue Service		-650	-650
MK City Council incl Public Health	-107,504	-41,500	-149,004

## Summary of 2024/2025 End of Year Budget Position

2024/2025 Actuals		
Income	Brought forward from 2023/2024	-200,154.91
	Contributions	-258,792.00
Expenditure	Employee costs	203,141.83
	Independent Chair/Scrutineer	9,704.62
	Review activity costs	27,162.50
	Website, policies and procedures	8,427.12
	Miscellaneous	15.46
	Total carried forward to 2025/26	-210,485.38

# Appendix C

## Glossary

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
ASCOF	Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework
BFRS	Bucks Fire & Rescue Service
BLMK	Bedford, Luton & Milton Keynes
CAMHS	Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service
CNWL	Central & Northwest London
CP-IS	Child Protection Information System
CSC	Childrens Social Care
CQC	Care Quality Commission
DASH	Domestic Abuse Stalking & Harassment
DHR	Domestic Homicide Review
FFT	Family & Friends Test
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
IARM	Inter-Agency Risk Management
ICB	Integrated Care Board
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advisor

LCSPR	Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review
MACE	Multi-Agency Child Exploitation
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
MATAC	Multi-Agency Tasking And Co-ordination
MKCC	Milton Keynes City Council
MK-Act	Domestic Abuse Charity in Milton Keynes
MKUHFT	Milton Keynes University Hospital Foundation Trust
MKTSP	MK Together Safeguarding Partnership
PA	Personal Advisor
PiPoT	Person in a Position of Trust
RCRP	Right Care, Right Person
ROTH	Risk Outside The Home
SAR	Safeguarding Adult Review
SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centre
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SNA	Strategic Needs Assessment
STC	Secure Training Centre
TVP	Thames Valley Police

