

# Impact of Safeguarding in Luton



## The Yearly Report for Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership

**2023/2024**

September 2024 – Final Version

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## INTRODUCTION

This Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) Yearly Report 2023-24 covers the work of the [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements \(MASA\)](#) in Luton from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. It is the fourth such report and has been prepared by the LSCP Strategic Business Manager on behalf of the lead safeguarding partners.

Revised statutory guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)*, sets out that the safeguarding partners' yearly report should provide transparency for children, families and practitioners about the activity undertaken by safeguarding partners in the previous twelve months. It must also set out what the partnership have done because of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including learning and improvement from local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR), and how effectively the arrangements have been in practice. The Yearly Report should be reflective of work undertaken during the previous financial year (i.e. April 2023 to March 2024) and submitted and published by the end of September 2024.

In addition, the yearly report should also include:

- the contribution of each safeguarding partner to the functioning and structure of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
- any themes emanating from aggregated methods of scrutiny, for example, reviews and scrutineer activity and multi-agency audits
- evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families
- an analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities
- an analysis of learning from serious incidents
- a record of key decisions and actions taken by the safeguarding partners in the yearly cycle, including in relation to implementing the recommendations from any local and national child safeguarding practice reviews and the impact this has had
- ways in which the safeguarding partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision
- the breakdown of costs in delivering the arrangements for that period, including the financial contributions of individual partners, any changes to funding and an assessment of the impact and value for money of this funding
- evidence of how safeguarding partners are ensuring the adequate representation and input of education at both the operational and strategic levels of the arrangements
- an overview of how data is being used to encourage learning within the arrangements and evidence of how information sharing has improved practice and outcomes
- a review of the impact and learning from independent scrutiny arrangements to ensure the leadership is strong and the arrangements are leading to the desired and necessary impact
- any updates to the published arrangement with the proposed timescale for implementation

- evidence that national reforms have been implemented, taking into account key decisions and actions taken by safeguarding partners in response to reforms, and any issues or concerns encountered within the yearly cycle.

This report demonstrates how the LSCP has progressed its work from its intentions last year through to its achievements in the current year. The Luton safeguarding partners have been committed to work together effectively in a multi-agency approach to identifying where action can be taken to improve the services provided to children and their families. A structured programme of highlight reports and multi-agency audits has identified areas of good practice as well as those for further improvement. This together with analysis of data, scrutiny of performance information and learning from recent reviews informed the LSCP Strategic Business Plan for 2023/24.

However, following the publication of '*Stable Homes Built on Love*' the LSCP undertook a review of their proposals for multi-agency working and refreshed their Strategic Business Plan, structure and governance accordingly. As a result, the LSCP developed a new Strategic Business Plan 2024-26 to take its work forward during the remainder of the year and to ensure compliance with the requirements of Working Together 2023 into 2024/25.

The yearly report therefore sets out the partnership activity against its identified priorities across the year, which includes their joint work with the Local Safeguarding Adults Partnership and priority areas of focus alongside the other two Pan Bedfordshire safeguarding partnerships. These priorities are:

#### **LSCP Strategic Business Plan - Safeguarding children and young people priorities:**

- Domestic abuse (Pan Beds and joint with adults)
- Neglect (Pan Beds)
- Emotional wellbeing and mental health (Pan Beds)
- Child Sexual Exploitation (Pan Beds)

#### **Other Learning from reviews and audits:**

- **Contextual safeguarding** - Serious Youth Violence, Gangs Association, Criminal Exploitation and Missing, Online Abuse
- **Through effective systems and processes** – Transitions, Early Help and Thresholds, Information sharing, Integrated Front Door, SEND and absence, and Cultural Competence.

Alongside this the LSCP has a Pan Bedfordshire focus on the work streams around the Voice of the Child, Cultural Competence and Safeguarding in Education.

#### **Partnership structures and governance**

- Effective policy and procedures
- Impact of Training Undertaken
- Evidence of impact arising from independent scrutiny.

The report considers how well the safeguarding partnership has responded, as a multi-agency safeguarding system, to deliver on their priorities and to identify emerging safeguarding themes as a learning organisation and to make improvements where required. It recognises the progress Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership has made throughout the year whilst also highlighting those that remain and which we will continue to address together in 2024/25.

The LSCP has continued to seek assurance about the effectiveness of single agency and multi-agency adult safeguarding in Luton against its priorities and to ensure it meets its statutory obligations for practice development and sector-led improvement.

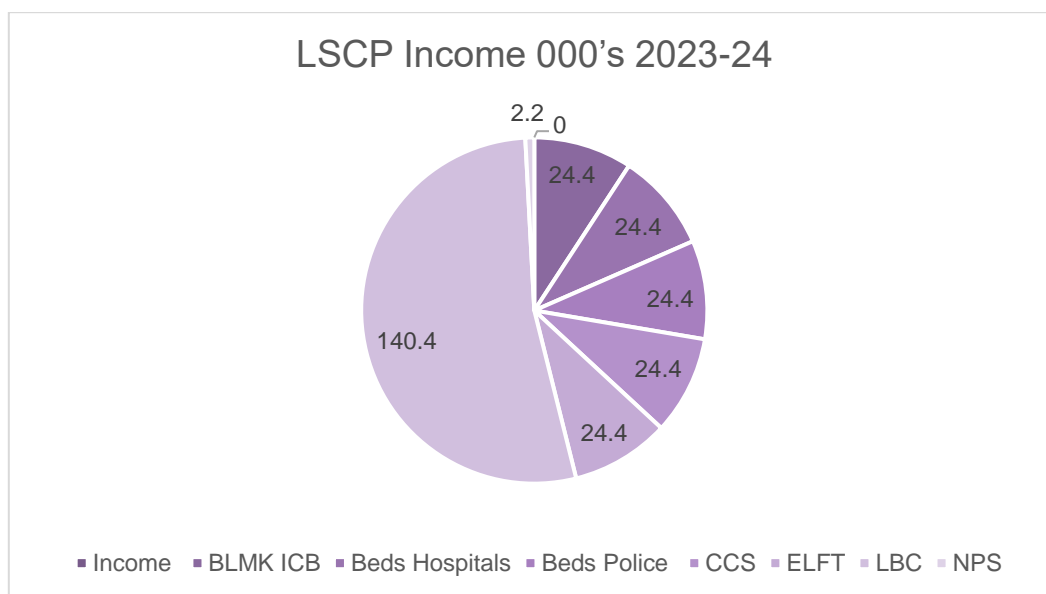
The LSCP Annual Report 2022-2023 recognised the LSCP needed to undertake further work across the following areas and had agreed to:

- **to move forward with a mixture of face to face, virtual learning experiences or blended learning experiences** for those courses available.
- **to continue its assurance around systems, structures, processes and governance** which is also being collated with oversight by the Pan Beds Strategic Leaders Group.
- **to continue its work on the already established priorities** during in 2022/23 including through its new Pan Beds Safeguarding in Education group and golden threads such as Cultural Competence with a mid-year review to be planned.
- **to review of our MASA arrangements** to ensure that both the structure, form and function are the best fit for ensuring effectiveness of decision making and making best use of limited resources.
- **reviewing the partnership funding with the LSAB for its shared business support.** Partnership funding levels have remained static since 2018 with the Local Authority, as the largest contributor, taking the burden of funding requirements.
- **engagement with our partners from across the Luton system** to look at how we achieve partnership pledges to have the shared goal of Child Friendly Town at the heart of all decision making.
- **as part of further understanding of the effectiveness of multiagency safeguarding practice we intend to increase our placed base audits** as this is a key message coming out from the Bedford Borough JTAI and our recent Ofsted focussed visit.
- **renew our efforts to increase awareness and understanding of private fostering**
- **use its Scrutiny and Performance space to learn more** about emerging themes
- **further work on the as application of the levels of need, risk and intervention** within the Effective Support Strategy guidance and escalation
- **communication of what safeguarding is**, and the role that all people can play in promoting the welfare of and safeguarding children at the earliest opportunity.

This report therefore considers how well the LSCP has addressed these areas of practice throughout 2023-2024. It also reports on evidence of the impact of this work and emerging themes. As well as why and how LSCP has revised its priorities and structures accordingly and as a result of national drivers such as Working Together 2023 and Stable Homes Built on Love.

## SAFEGUARDING PARTNERS' IMPACT AND REFLECTIONS

The LSCP statutory partners and relevant agencies both make financial contributions and to the partnership as follows:



These contributions cover the total Business Costs of the LSCP including Staffing, Provision of Training, CSPRs, Practice Improvement, Chairing and Scrutiny costs, Communications, LSCP Development, Office Costs, Website and Multi-agency Procedures.









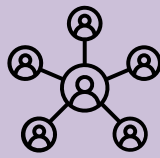

The partnership has a whole has undertaken much work to assess the impact of its work as well as to review its function and structure. The LSCP has continued to used data and to develop highlight reports to understand the context of Luton and how well partners have worked together to promote welfare and ensure effective safeguarding of children in a range of different circumstances. It undertook both thematic multi-agency audits of cases as well as the yearly Section 11 self-assessment. This safeguarding compliance audit tests how well organisations are meeting their statutory safeguarding responsibilities. The Section 11 audits also show the quality of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements across the partnership. A summary of the Section 11 findings for 2024 are presented on pages 25 which demonstrate the strength of the partnership and single agency safeguarding effectiveness.

The LSCP also undertook a Pan Bedfordshire multi-agency audit on neglect to seek assurances that partners are appropriately identifying and responding to the needs of children and young people who experience neglect in all its forms. These highlight the quality of practice by focusing on a small number of cases. All participants reflected on the elements of good practice and identified any gaps at a practice, organisational or system level. The audits illustrate a very strong commitment to safeguarding, and where action is required in any partner organisation, this is addressed very swiftly. More information on this audit can be found on page 26.

The DfE made revisions to [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#), which introduced fundamental changes in how Safeguarding Children Partnerships are structured and introduce

ways in which established practice needs to be changed alongside the new [Children's Services National Framework](#). The LSCP has been working with our partners throughout 2024 to make these required changes and more information on these can be found on pages 31, 45 and 61.

### Overview of key changes in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023'

	<b>System reform and multi-agency expectations for all partners including family help, family networks and lead practitioners</b>		<b>Further inclusion of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector within local multiagency safeguarding arrangements</b>
	<b>Multi-agency standards for working with parents, carers and families</b>		<b>Strengthening accountability, data monitoring and impact reporting</b>
	<b>Changes to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA) strategic leadership, chairing and funding arrangements</b>		<b>Tackling all forms of abuse with a focus on harm outside the home</b>
	<b>Defining and strengthening the independent scrutiny function</b>		<b>Support for children with special educational needs and disabilities</b>
	<b>Ensuring interdependencies with other strategic boards and organisations including safeguarding adults and NPS</b>		<b>Strengthening the role of education, early years and childcare providers</b>

Embedding education settings into our MASA is a priority area for the LSCP and our colleagues within the neighbouring SCPs, and during 2023/24 we took steps to strengthen our relationship with the education sector and to make sure it is 'front and centre' in all safeguarding activity.

To support the strengthening of arrangements a dedicated Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education group, chaired by our three local authority Child Education Officer was developed alongside a *Pan Beds Safeguarding Education Strategy Action Plan*. It aims is for schools to have strengthened access to LSCP decision making and involvement in local safeguarding practice.



In addition, the three statutory partners supported Luton Borough Council in their application to become a ['Families First for Children Wave 2 Pathfinder'](#) local authority. Following notification in February 2024 of the application being successful, the LSCP has been heavily involved in developing the Multi-agency Safeguarding partner reforms required.

The LSCP continually reviews it communicates with partner agencies and Luton residents which is mainly via the [Safeguarding Bedfordshire website](#). The Children's Information pages which went live in March 2023 were updated with new practitioner resources throughout 2023/24 to include updates on education support within Early Help. It also undertook regular review of the multi-agency safeguarding procedures as detailed on page 48.

The LSCP also promoted improved practice through increased use of escalation and professional curiosity. Wider conversations to support challenge and respectful challenge are evident and as a result there are improved interprofessional relationships at a senior level. There is more willingness to share risk across partner agencies, evidence of multi-agency collaboration and problem solving and listening to children and young people and advocating for changes at higher levels.

### **BLMK Integrated Care Partnership**

The ICB has supported GP training sessions around prevention and early help, supported by partner agencies including Social Care, police and voluntary sectors. Commissioned providers are also given support to improve the quality of their referrals into early help services.

ICB safeguarding leads also hold portfolios such as neglect and VAWG and this supports early intervention and prevention work in these areas. Police colleagues in Luton have spoken with GP safeguarding leads about VAWG in terms of presentation, and implications for those women and children who are affected by it. This has led to more referrals into the system via primary care and GPs have also expressed an interest in displaying signposting information in their surgeries for support and help for those who need it.

The ICB continues to effectively collaborate with other agencies, including in the voluntary sector space. ICB will contribute to practice development days whilst participating in quality assurance reviews and disseminating learning. ICB will be assured through supervision of practitioners, contract and KPI monitoring, and delivery of training. Review of cases demonstrates how recommendations from learning reviews and CSPRs have improved practitioners' responses to safeguarding needs of children, young people and their families. Feedback from service users also tells us about their experiences and how improved organisation policies have had a positive impact on their lives.

The ICB along with our health partners in CCS and ELFT continue to work with our system partners to ensure the health needs of our babies, children and young people are met and that safeguarding remains at the forefront of everyone's minds.

Our teams of Designated Professionals and Named Professionals provide the expertise, support, and guidance across our systems, and have contributed to the development of and

implementation of strategies, processes, and policies not only at Bedford Borough Place, but across the Pan-Bedfordshire footprint.

Population health and health inequalities continue to drive our priorities across the health system. Understanding and shared learning from our CSPR's, SAR's, DHR's and Rapid Reviews tell us that there is more to do to safeguard adults and children especially around Neglect, Serious Youth Violence, Violence Against Women and Girls and Mental Health and Learning Disability and Autism, however, our safeguarding arrangements allow us to explore and develop solutions collaboratively.

### **Bedfordshire Police**

As a partnership we have sought to work together and support each other across the system and at all levels of our organisations to continue to identify and respond effectively to children in need of safeguarding.

In respect to the Education and Diversion team we link in with a number of partners (both statutory and charity based) around this area. Engagement has started with schools to provide support to children who are on a reduced timetables or excluded from school. Historically we have supported events alongside a suicide prevention charity in Bedfordshire and have undertaken projects with the Samaritans school service and PAPRYUS (Prevention of Young Suicide).

The team attend several professional meetings, strategy meetings and child protection conferences when appropriate. Through our diversion work we have several children on our caseload that do have emotional and mental health issues and in addition as part of our day-to-day engagement with students we often encounter children and young people that disclose concerns - As the team are not trained around this area then we tend to signpost to more appropriate agencies.

As part of our work, we support a lot of young people who are victims of crime and through our support and engagement we are often told we have made that individual feel more positive about things. Some of the team's work is driven by Local Authority SHUE (School's Health and Wellbeing) surveys.

In more general terms we include screentime and mental health and cyberbullying as part of our digital safeguarding inputs both to students and parents/guardians and professionals and raise the risks around this area in our internal training to new PC's, PCSO and FCR staff.

Through home office funding the education and diversion team now offer free police based educational resources to all schools and other educational establishments across the county via Pol-Ed (An educational program developed and managed by West Yorkshire Police). The Pol-Ed resources are available to be delivered directly by schools and cover key areas such as:

- Relationships – Consent, Domestic Abuse, Sexual offenses, Grooming, Bullying
- Keeping Safe – Emergency Services, Child Criminal Exploitation, Anti-social behaviour, Gangs, Addiction
- Understanding the law – Responsible citizens, Stop and Search, Public order, Hate Crime

Within this work there is an aim of driving forward child focussed and self-reflective practice with a strong challenge both within and across all agencies that make up the partnership.

### **Luton Borough Council**

We remain committed to partnership working closely with our statutory partners and all other anchor organisations across the town, and the wider BLMK region. Our partners remain integral to our improvement journey and with statutory (Police, Health CCS, ICB, Primary and Secondary Headteacher representatives) and non-statutory colleagues (Third Sector) sitting on both strategic and operational boards, such as the Children's Trust Board, Children's Improvement Board and MASH boards. An example of our joint working is the Dallow Cares safeguarding initiative who are working with the Dallow Community to build community resilience for our young people and the impact of knife crime and mental health.

Following our Ofsted ILACS Inspection July 2022 we have continued to work on the following areas to improve early identification of need and safeguarding of children in Luton:

- **The quality and impact of supervision and management oversight:** Collaborative Audits capturing supervision and management oversight. Focused training completed with Management staff to strengthen the decision making on files and ensuring progression of cases being discussed through supervision. Supervision data was consistently improved evidencing case supervision is being completed, and Audit reports capturing the impact on cases.
- **The stability of the workforce:** A reviewed and strengthened Workforce Strategy in place for the recruitment of Social Work qualified staff. Star Chamber Meetings in place for each service to review the use of agency staff and discuss recruitment and temp to perm for agency workers. Our agency rate in April 2024 is 27.7%% compared to 32.3% in April 2023.
- **The quality and analysis of assessments of children:** Focused training was provided for all front line staff on analysis and assessment writing, forms were reviewed to support the completion of assessments capturing all relevant information required. All decision making is recorded within the assessment and audit/ performance data is correlating that assessments are being completed in a timely manner and with management oversight.
- **The quality of evidence based assessments undertaken to support effective placement matching:** Placement matching form in place and embedded in practice within the service, capturing all decision making in terms of placements. Practice Weeks have had sessions in place capturing the voice of children and young people. All Placements reviewed by Director of Operations at weekly panel to ratify all decision making.
- **The consistency of support and pathway plans for care leavers:** Pathway plan training has been delivered to Care Leavers team, all plans are co-produced with the young person, and audit/ performance data has captured improvement in pathway plans for young people.

Signed by Statutory Safeguarding Partners

**Chief Officers**

Luton Borough Council – *Robin Porter*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robin Porter', with a stylized, cursive script.

BLMK Integrated Care Board – *Felicity Cox*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Felicity Cox', with a stylized, cursive script.

Bedfordshire Police – *Trevor Rodenhurst*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Rodenhurst', with a stylized, cursive script.

## ABOUT LUTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

During 2023/24, **Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP)** has continued to operate under the [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#), which were revised in June 2023 with the three safeguarding partners, **Bedfordshire Police**, **BLMK Clinical Commissioning Group**, and **Luton Council** (Local Authority) having a shared and equal duty.

The LSCP provides the safeguarding arrangements under which the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies work together to coordinate their safeguarding services, identify and respond to the needs of children in Luton, commission and publish local child safeguarding practice reviews and provide scrutiny to ensure the effectiveness of the arrangements.

### Our Purpose

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) as a safeguarding children partnership has retained its name as the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership's (LSCP). Its main objective is to assure itself that local safeguarding arrangements and relevant agencies act to protect young people from abuse and neglect. We do this by ensuring that children and young people in Luton are effectively safeguarded, properly supported and their lives improved by all agencies working together.

### Our principles

The overarching principles that the safeguarding partners work within are to:

- Have an informed understanding of safeguarding arrangements and performance in single agencies and an authoritative oversight of the quality of front-line multi-agency practice.
- Have effective governance arrangements and operating structure, with clear lines of accountability with other strategic partnerships, and be able to demonstrate its influence on the work of those partnerships. Partnerships have a strong culture of challenge that is the responsibility of all Partnership members.
- Ensure learning from audits, case reviews, Serious Case Reviews, Significant Incidents and Safeguarding Adult Reviews is identified and is used to develop practice and service provision.
- Ensure the provision of high quality multi-agency safeguarding training and evaluate the impact on practice of such training

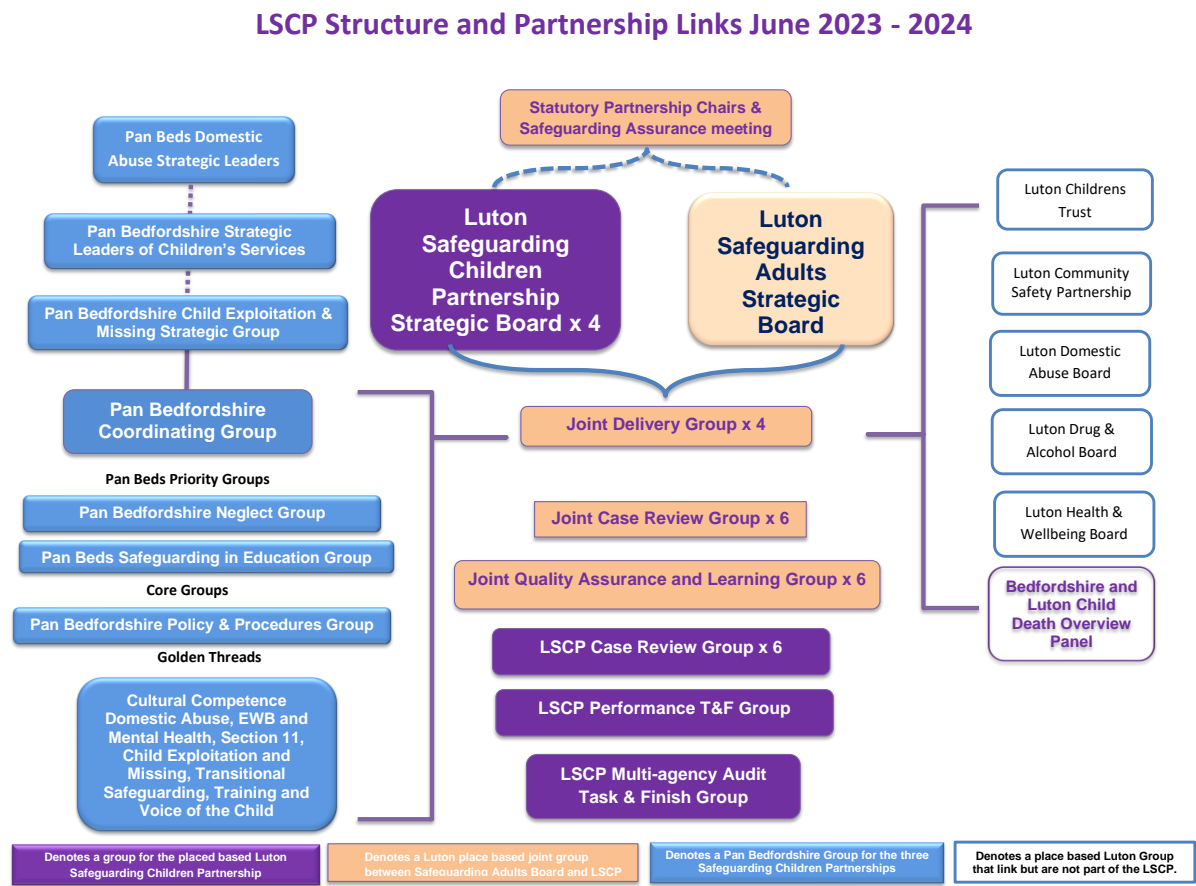
As the three statutory partners are accountable for the safeguarding arrangements, with an independent scrutineer taking on a role to work with the safeguarding partners but also offer scrutiny on the arrangements and their impact on children and their families. The scrutineer holds partners and relevant agencies to account for their contribution, training and delivery of services to safeguard children and to challenge areas of practice where the standard falls short of expectations.

It is our role to ensure the arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in Luton is effective. This includes agreeing on ways to coordinate safeguarding services, acting as a strategic leadership group to engage and support others, and implementing learning from local and national serious child safeguarding incidents.

As statutory partners we meet monthly with the independent scrutineer to provide oversight and governance to the work undertaken by the Joint Safeguarding Executive and our subgroups to achieve our priorities. The statutory partners are accountable for assuring the robustness and quality of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) and demonstrating impact on practice as well as bring focus on the LSCP priorities and objectives.

The LSCP also brings together representatives from each of its relevant agencies and meets every three months as a Joint Delivery Group alongside the Luton Safeguarding Adult Partnership to work on cross cutting themes. The activity against agreed priorities is progressed through its designated subgroups, and task and finish groups.

The LSCP is also part of a wider network of strategic partnerships, which exist in different forms across Pan Bedfordshire and includes the Luton Children’s Trust, Domestic Abuse Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Partnership. The LSCP multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and relationship with the Pan Bedfordshire SCB subgroups is shown below and also shows the relationship with wider strategic partnerships as of April 2024.

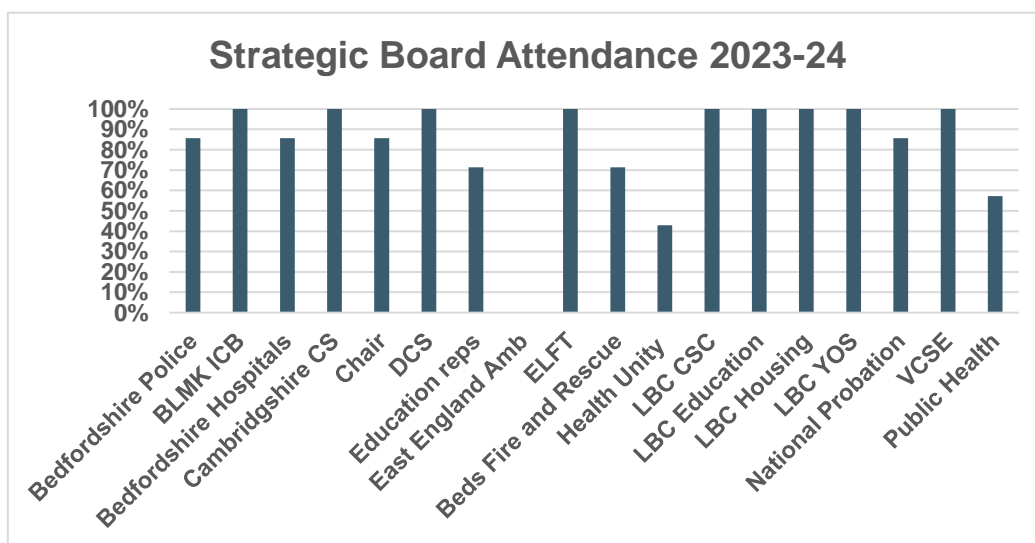


An accessible LSCP structure chart as updated in June 2023 is available [here](#).

## LUTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP MEMBERSHIP

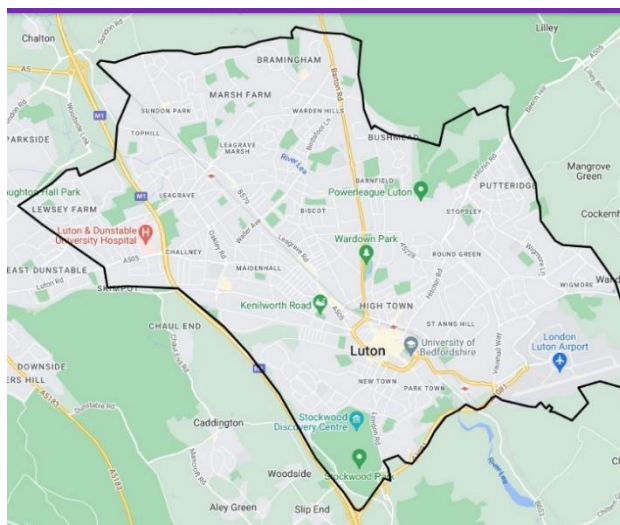
The Luton Statutory Partners (SPCSA) hold a quarterly executive meeting to set strategic direction and vision. The LSCP Strategic Board is made up of the following partners, relevant agencies and lay members who are residents of Luton who have links to the community and are able to bring information to and from the LSP. The LSCP meets at least four times a year with a themed agenda linked to the LSCP priorities. In 2023/24 the Strategic Board met six times including an annual Development Day and meetings to review its contribution to consultations.

	<b>Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes NHS Integrated Care Board (BLMK ICB)</b>
	<b>Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service</b>
	<b>Bedfordshire Police</b>
	<b>Bedfordshire Hospitals Foundation NHS Trust</b>
	<b>Cambridgeshire Community Services</b>
	<b>Department of Work and Pensions</b>
	<b>East of England Ambulance Service</b>
	<b>East London Foundation Trust</b>
	<b>Education representation including from primary school, high schools, further education and complementary education establishments</b>
	<b>Luton Council including Children, Families and Education, Housing, Public Health &amp; YOS</b>
	<b>National Probation Service - Bedfordshire</b>
	<b>Voluntary, Community &amp; Social Enterprise Sector including NSPCC and ResoLUTiONs CGL</b>





## LUTON IN NUMBERS



**Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) is one of three safeguarding partnerships, which operate within the County of Bedfordshire.**

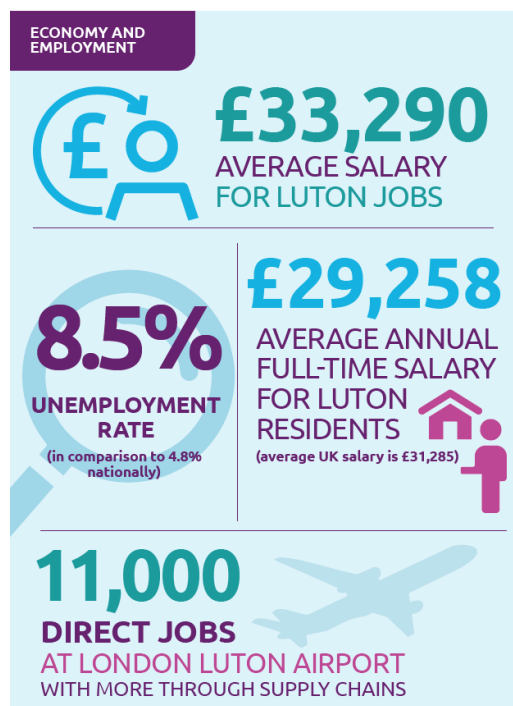
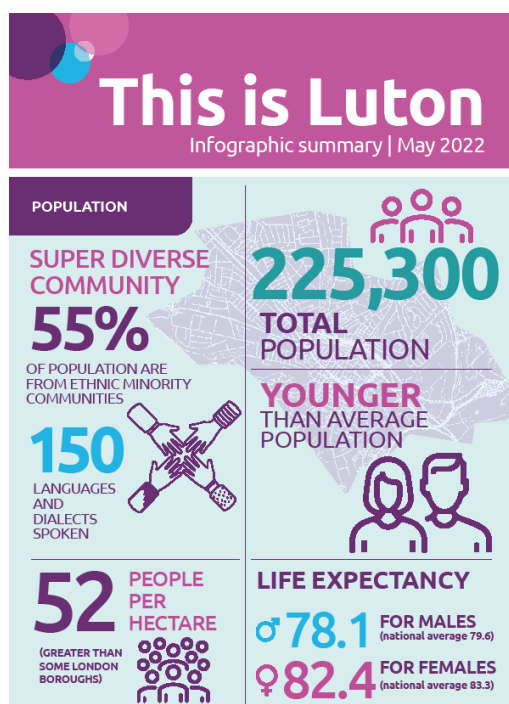
**The demographic of Luton is unique when compared to the rest of Bedfordshire and is detailed in the section on population.**

### Population 2021

- ❖ **225,300** residents in the town up by **10.9%** Higher than overall increase for England (6.6%),
- ❖ One of the youngest populations in the country – **27%** of residents aged below 18.
- ❖ Super diverse town – **55%** non-White-British.
- ❖ Approximately **50%** population churn since 2011. 225,300 in 2021. where the population grew by nearly 3.5 million to 56,489,800.

### Economy

- ❖ Luton economy worth **£7.2** billion per year prior to the pandemic.
- ❖ **Among the worst-impacted places in the country during pandemic** – second highest number of vulnerable jobs during the pandemic of major towns and cities.
- ❖ Claimant count of **8.4%** - up from **3.4%** in March 2020 – the sharpest rise in the country.



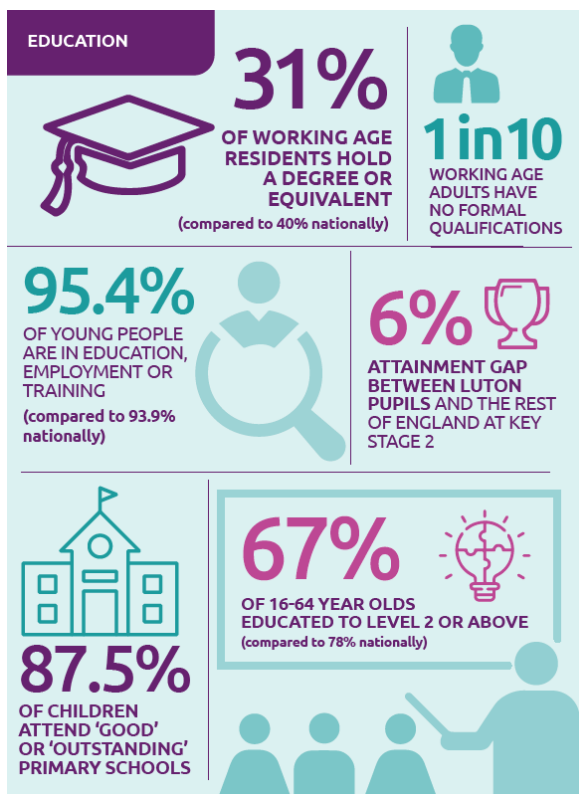


## Employment

- ❖ **75.3%** working age adults in employment.
- ❖ **24.7%** of working age adults economically inactive.
- ❖ **More than 1 in 4 workers** earning below the Real Living Wage.
- ❖ **23,000 employees on zero-hour** and agency contracts.

## Education

- ❖ **1 in 10** working age adults have no formal qualifications.
- ❖ **67% of 16-64 year olds** educated to level 2 or above compared to 78% nationally.
- ❖ **6%** attainment gap between Luton pupils and the rest of England at key stage 2.



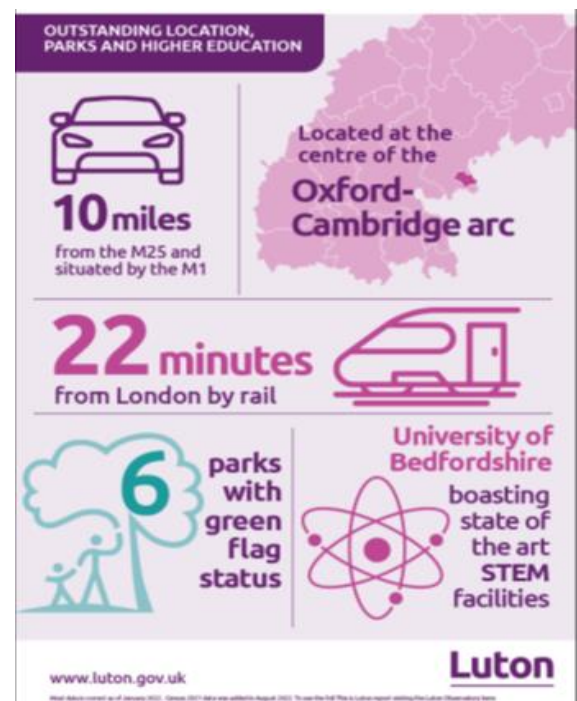
## Housing

- ❖ The median house price in Luton is **£258,000 – 34%** increase since 2015.
- ❖ The Median house price is **8.5 times** the median gross annual earnings for residents.
- ❖ **22%** of Luton households are in the private rented sector.
- ❖ **15,000** additional homes required by 2031.



## Outstanding Location

- ❖ Located at the centre of the Oxford-Cambridge arc.
- ❖ 22 minutes from London by rail.
- ❖ 10 miles from the M25 and situated by the M1.
- ❖ Home to London Luton Airport – the international gateway to England's Economic Heartland.



### London Luton Airport

- ❖ 5<sup>th</sup> largest airport in the UK.
- ❖ Over 17 million passengers per year prior to the pandemic – down to 5.4 million in 2020/21.
- ❖ Contributes £1.8 billion per year to the UK economy.
- ❖ Provides more than 11,000 jobs directly, with more through supply chains.

### Poverty

- ❖ **39.6%** of children growing up in relative poverty in March 2021.
- ❖ **6th** most deprived area in East of England by Indices of Multiple Deprivation.
- ❖ **4** wards in Luton are within the **10%** most deprived in the country.
- ❖ **26%** of working households in relative poverty.

### Skills

- ❖ **36%** of Luton businesses have skills gaps in their existing workforce.
- ❖ **29.7%** of workers are in level 4 occupations, but only **23.6%** of employed residents are in these jobs.
- ❖ **48%** of vacancies in Luton are in Level 2 occupations.

### Health and Wellbeing

- ❖ Life expectancy gap of **6.9** years between women in Luton's most deprived and most affluent wards – for men this gap is **5.1** years.
- ❖ Male life expectancy in Luton one year less than the national figure.
- ❖ **381** children in care in Luton as of March 2022.
- ❖ **26%** of 10-11 year olds in Luton are obese.

While the number of children living in relative poverty in Luton has reduced by 3.1% between reporting periods, Luton remains the area with the highest level of relative poverty and over double that of children in other parts of Bedfordshire<sup>1</sup>.

Percentage of children aged under 16 in relative low-income families	2019/20	2020/21
United Kingdom	19.30%	18.70%
<b>Luton</b>	<b>30.90%</b>	<b>27.80%</b>
Neighbouring Local Authorities		
Milton Keynes	18.00%	18.10%
Bedford	17.10%	14.90%
Buckinghamshire	12.00%	13.00%
Huntingdonshire	12.40%	11.20%
Central Bedfordshire	11.40%	10.80%
Dacorum	11.30%	10.20%
North Hertfordshire	10.60%	10.00%
South Cambridgeshire	8.70%	7.70%
St Albans	7.50%	6.90%
Luton wards with highest relative low income percentage		
Dallow	45.9%	39.9%
Biscot	42.1%	37.9%
Northwell	31.6%	27.0%
Farley	30.2%	28.4%
South	29.6%	24.4%

<sup>1</sup> **Source:** Office for National Statistics, Mid-Year Estimates of population by single year of age, 2011 and 2021

## SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE – SAFEGUARDING SNAPSHOT 2023-2024:

Partners submit data, narratives and themed highlight report to the LSCP to form the multi-agency dataset. Within the Joint Quality Assurance and Learning Group, each partner discusses their data. Key trends and issues are then picked up and escalated to the Joint Executive Group for action. Within this year the LSCP has tightened up the processes, ensuring the data and highlight reports are available every quarter from all partners and allocating more time for data scrutiny. All data is completely anonymised.

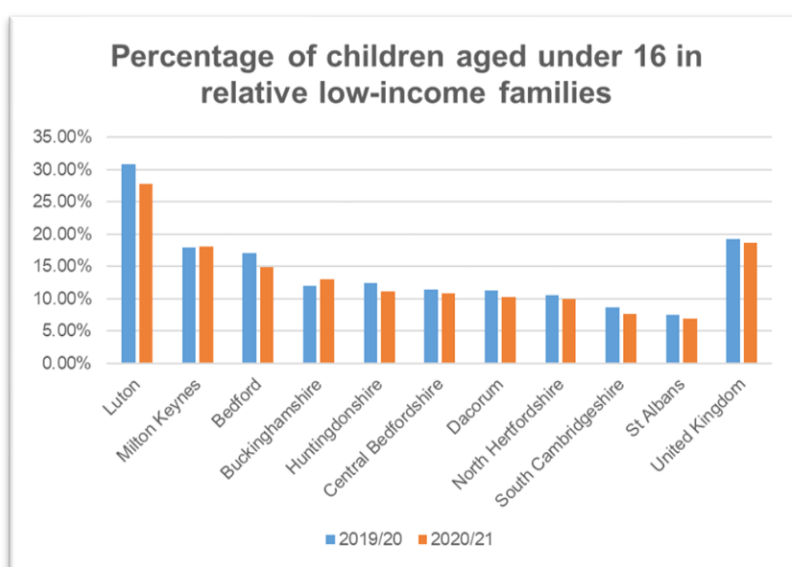
The Independent Chair / Scrutineer is running task and finish groups with key senior managers and analysis to improve the dataset overall. The Pan Beds Neglect group meet quarterly to focus on comparison of data around neglect and address it as an important issue. A Task and Finish is meeting to overhaul the Neglect Scorecard with robust data and comparisons, so as to improve the meeting's effectiveness.

The report details a small section of data that has been reviewed and discussed over the past year. Bringing the data together into one dataset allows the group to highlight cross-cutting themes. Areas were highlighted via the dataset but also through discussion, allowing the Quality Assurance and Learning group to action tasks to improve the areas of practice.

A few things we learned from our data in 23-24 and the impact this had:

- During the full year April 2023-March 2024 there was a 28.5% reduction in **3,127** Police contacts into the MASH, down from **4,374** in April 2022-March 2023.
- Domestic Abuse is the most frequently occurring category recorded issue as a Contact.
- The period with the highest proportion of Domestic Violence was January 2024 at **23.0%**.
- In the post-Christmas period, Domestic Violence, Physical Abuse, Neglect, and Parental Mental Health were all at their peak as Contact Issues

*Source: Office for National Statistics, Mid-Year Estimates of population by single year of age*



The LSCP has worked closely with the LBC Business Intelligence team to improve its Performance Scorecard, benchmarking and data analysis. In November 2023 it agreed to move to a new model and defined data cycle to support the provision of robust data analysis and intelligence. The scorecard measures have been developed and in the new financial year there is agreement to fund a Pan Beds Business Intelligence function to extend the work across the Pan Beds space and to explore accessible data collection systems that reflect local context.

The LSCP Safeguarding Snapshot can be found at Appendix A.

## LSCP STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

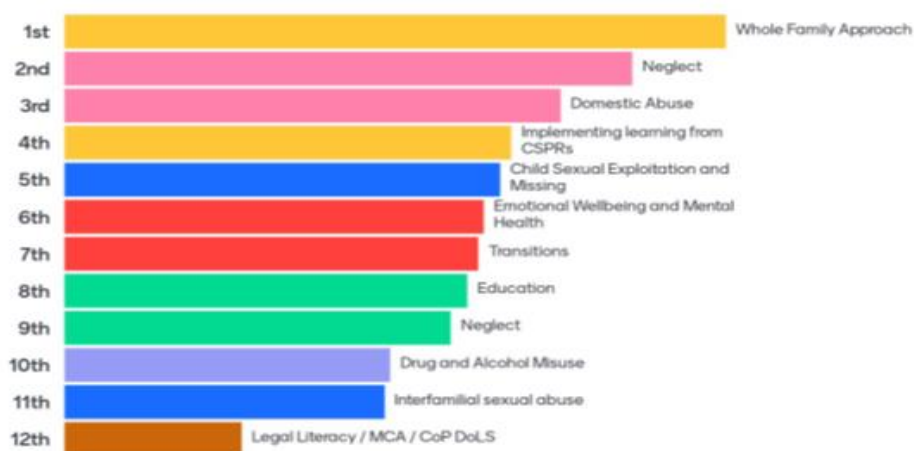
### WHY DID THE LSCP CHOOSE THESE PRIORITIES?

The LSCP has undertaken significant work to review and evaluate its work against its strategic priorities during 2023-24. In September 2023 a face to face development day took place to measure change and the impact of priorities previously set. This included a review of the cross cutting work being undertaken with the Luton Safeguarding Adults Board. The day was attended by the Strategic Board members, Subgroup Chairs and designated safeguarding leads across the partners and relevant agencies. The group were provided with information including a review of CSPRs and rapid reviews outputs, a Closing the Loop report and Performance Data. The group considered what the LSCP had done well, any remaining barriers or challenges to success and what the Strategic Board needed to do next to meet its objectives.

### What have we done well?



The group voted **for LSCP priorities in 2024/25** using their work to identify **emerging themes**.



The Strategic Board concluded that while much work has been undertaken to further the strategic priorities, which is outlined in this report, there are some gaps in practice remaining

that it needed to address, in particular around Neglect and using GCP2. The LSCP has therefore updated its priorities, impact measures and governance structures to support delivery and measure impact, as outlined in its [LSCP Strategic Business Plan 2024-2026](#).

The LSCP’s progress against its priorities during 2023-24 is described in the following sections.

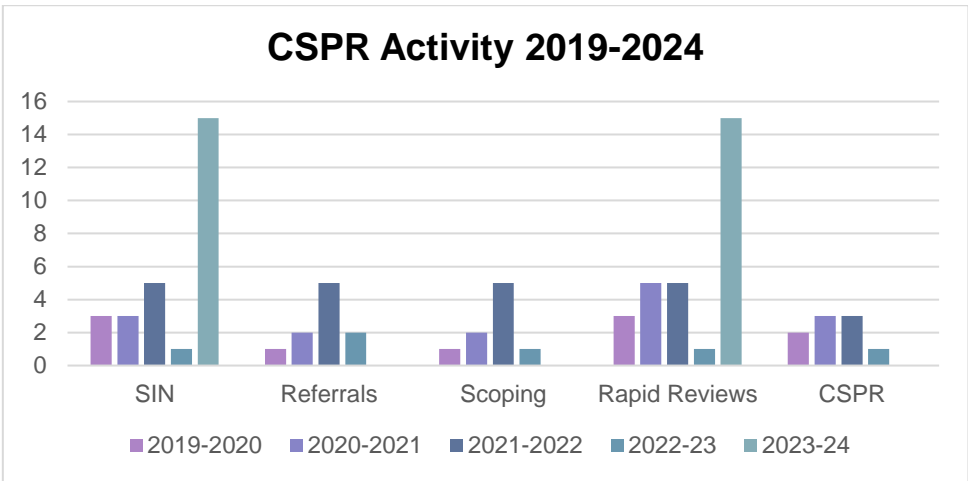
LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

The LSCP ensures rapid reviews, CSPS audits and other reviews of cases yields learning both around good practice and improvements required to enhance and develop practice and service provision. It uses a themed highlight reports to process to monitor the impact of this learning.

LEARNING FROM RAPID REVIEWS AND CHILD SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE REVIEWS

The partnership assesses Serious Safeguarding Incidents as defined by *Working Together* and decides whether a Rapid Review or Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) is required, in order to identify how to improve safeguarding responses in future. From April 2023 to March 2024, **fifteen** serious incident notification were submitted and considered by the partnership. The LSCP was also asked to contribute to two rapid reviews by another local authority, one of which became a CSPR and the other did not meet the criteria for a CSPR.

As a result of this activity the safeguarding partnership undertook **three** local rapid reviews, the first was in relation to a single case. The remaining fourteen rapid reviews were undertaken as two separate thematic rapid reviews. While the first two criteria for CSPR was met the partnership identified that no additional system learning was to be gained from further review of these cases. Therefore, no Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews were required in these cases. This view was supported by the Independent Chair/Scrutineer and by the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.



The chart above shows how activity around Rapid Reviews has increased considerably in the last year around serious youth violence serious safeguarding child incident, but fewer CSPRS were held due to the prior learning. This follows a period in 2022-23 where serious incident

notifications, rapid reviews and CSPRs all decreased after previously increasing year on year. The LSCP Case Review Group and safeguarding partners have revised rapid review processes and worked hard to ensure the right cases come to the LSCP at the right time and extract the right system learning for practice improvement.

The partnership also contributed to one Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships within a neighbouring SCP which is due to be published by them in 2024/25. The LSCP also provided information for a rapid review where no further system learning was to be gained from further review of the other three cases and therefore no CSPR was required.

The Partnership has completed a number of legacy Serious Case Reviews, as well Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR) some of which remained underway or which were published over the year. The partnership has continued to focus on the learning and to gather evidence of the impact of this activity. While activity to address the learning commences at the point of the rapid review, evidence of how well the learning has embedded in practice can take time to establish and is often tested through audit. Reporting focusses on the practice learning activity undertaken since the last report was produced. Work streams around learning from experience have been themed and taken forward in unified delivery plans which have included activity around:

- Contextual Safeguarding including Serious Youth Violence and Missing: *Unpublished Thematic Rapid Review and published CSPR Child Lena on child exploitation*
- Domestic Abuse including working across adult and children's settings: *Unpublished Integrated CSPR/SAR and cross border unpublished CSPR*
- Childhood and Adolescent Neglect in a context of adult carers disability and self-neglect: *Unpublished Integrated CSPR/SAR*
- Physical Harm including non-accidental injury to under 2's and use of ICON: *cross border unpublished legacy Serious Case Review*
- Education including special educational needs, absence, missing from education and the role of education in identifying unmet need or risk through neglect, sexual abuse and self-harm: *unpublished Thematic Rapid Reviews and published CSPR Child Lena*
- Emotional wellbeing and mental health (including self-harm, accidental death and parental loss: *unpublished Rapid Review A, unpublished Thematic Rapid Reviews*
- Thresholds (including Early Help and multi-agency approach to support Core Groups and Child Protection Plans): *Rapid Review A, unpublished Thematic Review and a published CSPR Child Lena on child exploitation.*

The 'golden threads' of 'cultural competence' and 'voice of the child' also run through these work streams. In addition to local learning, there has also been assurance sought regarding the learning from national reviews such as '*The Myth of Invisible Men*' and '*Bridging the Gap*' where the partnership tested themselves against their recommendations.

The LSCP Joint Quality Assurance and Learning Group as well as the Pan Bedfordshire subgroups have been utilised as delivery arms to ensure that the learning is given the widest reach and impact. Within the LSCP Strategic Board meetings, the model has moved to specific practice



learning activity linked to the themes and data as well as inviting those with lived experience to speak about what worked well, any gaps in service provision, and how service delivery can be improved from their perspective. The outputs are to disseminate the learning, distil key messages and ensure that practitioners have access to appropriate resources and training to support them in practice.

One legacy Serious Case Review (SCR) and one Integrated CSPR are complete but cannot yet be published due to other parallel process. However, this has not prevented the system learning being disseminated and this has been brought into service development, training and procedural updates and briefings. Two Thematic Rapid Reviews were undertaken which had similar learning to the [Thematic CSPR on Serious Youth Violence](#) which was published in June 2023 and the Serious Youth Violence Action Plan was updated to take account of the system findings from the rapid reviews.

While awaiting publication of Child Lena, which was just after the end of the reporting period, the LSCP received assurance regarding further development of MACE and MAGPAN as well as the Youth Partnership Service to address risks to young people that exist outside the home such as extrafamilial harm as well as changes to how education work with young people who are excluded from mainstream education. A large scale event called They Keep Drawing me in' took place in April 2024 and this will be reported on in the 2024/25 yearly report.

An unpublished Rapid Review took place in October 2023 and the recommendations for Luton SCB against the [Essex Child V](#) action plan were reviewed continued oversight of how the learning is embedding in practice. An overview of all the cases reviewed around suicide has also been presented to the Luton Joint Quality Assurance and Learning Group. There has also been further work in relation to the application of thresholds and escalations.

This work is overseen through the governance structures and reported across structures while accountability and final decision making sits with the Luton Statutory Partners Chairs Safeguarding Assurance meeting which acts as a joint Executive group for the two safeguarding partnerships. They have received as part of this oversight of learning from reviews:

- the detail of all recent action plan activity linked to CSPRs and rapid reviews
- an overview of how the Subgroups have triangulated the learning from reviews and are ensuing it is being taken forward
- an overview of the changes made to policy and practice guidance as a result of the learning from reviews
- the annual training report information including courses linked to learning from reviews.

The learning is being disseminated through a number of mechanisms:

- ❖ Presentation at place based and Pan Beds learning events, training and workshops
- ❖ Presentation at Luton Council practice weeks and education strategic group
- ❖ One page summaries for each CSPR published on the LSCP website
- ❖ Regular review of all rapid review and CSPR actions plans to 'close the loop'

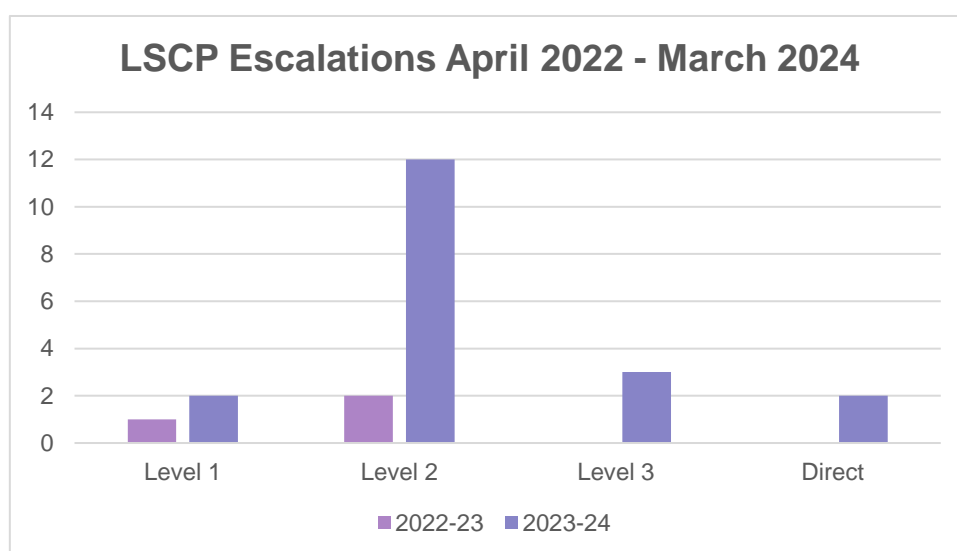


## IMPACT OF ACTIVITY – LEARNING FROM REVIEWS

The impact of this work is being regularly evaluated through the analysis of data and theme based audits as highlighted earlier in the report.

- The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel provided feedback to the LSCP that our Rapid Review reports are of good quality and evidence robust decision making.
- Reduced duplication of learning in multiple Rapid Reviews, leading to time and capacity being spent on addressing the learning rather than undertaking a LSCPR.
- The LSCP sought assurance from the safeguarding partners regarding their response and evidence of impact to the recommendations from the published CSPRs and rapid reviews action plans which are showing measurable impact
- Strong partnership working with a shared responsibility for learning and practice improvement.
- A robust Serious Youth Violence Action Plan taking forwards the learning from the rapid reviews and addressing any gaps in practice with innovative responses.

The LSCP has also undertaken significant work on resolving professional disputes and escalations as a result of findings within several CSPRs and rapid reviews. There has been significant awareness raising undertaken and it has been a theme in practice weeks. Escalations are reported on in the quarterly partnership highlight reports that accompany their dataset. The chart below shows how the number of escalations has not only increased but how their resolution has progressed. The LSCP considers it is positive that there has been an increase and that there had not been any resolutions that reached Stage 4 of the Escalation protocol.



## LEARNING FROM NATIONAL PRACTICE REVIEWS AND SARS

### Learning from national reviews

The following national reviews and reports have been shared and informed the LSCP's learning from practice during this reporting period:

[‘Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel: 2022-23 annual report’](#) is the fourth annual report from the independent Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. It looks at the child safeguarding system, based on serious child safeguarding incidents occurring between January 2022 and March 2023. It sets out patterns in practice for national government and local safeguarding partners to better protect vulnerable children.

[‘Safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings’](#) (phase 1) looked at allegations of abuse and neglect of children and young people in private residential settings in Doncaster that were operated by the Hesley Group. This was discussed and addressed by the Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leaders for Children’s Services group and local practice considered against its findings.

### **Safeguarding Adult Reviews**

The Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) undertook a [Safeguarding Adult Review \(SAR\) following the death of ‘Max’](#), who was aged 18 and had a care history. The LSCP took part in a Pan Beds Joint Adults and Children’s Safeguarding Partnership event to review the progress made against the SAR action plan in these areas.

- Transition from Children’s to Adult Services and care pathways for neurodiverse young people
- Housing options for young people transitioning to adult services
- Mental health, mental capacity and risk management
- Response to exploitation

Much of the transitional work has been led by BLMK Transitional Safeguarding Steering Group whose focus is on the transition arrangements from children to adults’ services for key groups including children, young people with disabilities and those at risk of exploitation. Promoting a safe transition from childhood to adulthood, to ensure that individuals are supported and safeguarded from abuse, exploitation, and neglect. Partners including Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Children and Adult Social Care, ELFT CAMHS, CMHT, Safeguarding Children, and adult team are working together in reviewing the co-operational between and escalation protocol.

It highlighted that all ages approach to exploitation, strengthened transitions processes and understanding of transitional safeguarding needs, and development of a housing pathway and protocol to ensure vulnerable young people are not placed at even greater risk because of unsuitable housing and rapid multiagency response to ensure risk is assessed and managed. Other recommendations included improved transition planning and understanding of mental capacity, including the concepts of executive and fluctuating capacity.

The Safeguarding Bedfordshire training offer and local website content has been reviewed and revised to ensure learning from local and national reviews was incorporated.

## **SECTION 11 SELF ASSESSMENT**

As part of its assurance regarding the performance of the safeguarding system, the LSCP uses a Section 11 self-assessment. The LSCP in conjunction with Central Bedfordshire SCP and

Bedford Borough SCP, has collaborated for several years and asked all partners to undertake a self-evaluation on specified standards. The self-evaluation has traditionally focussed on two to three of the eight standards. However, in 2023-2024 the Section 11 self-assessment there was a focus for partners across all eight Section 11 Standards with an emphasis on neglect. All Partners were asked to consider the following questions:

- *What areas in your Section 11 do you want to highlight as good practice?*
- *What areas in your Section 11 do you need to improve on?*
- *What would be helpful from other agencies to help you meet these standards?*
- *What evidence do you have that there are improved outcomes for children, young people, and their families where neglect is a concern?*

Partners identified, as appropriate, key areas which they may need to further develop. These areas of development have been collated into an action plan and are being monitored through the **Pan Bedfordshire Coordinating Group**.

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### **IMPACT OF ACTIVITY – SECTION 11**

The two Safeguarding Children's Partnerships Scrutineers for Bedford Borough, Luton and Central Bedfordshire's SCPs concluded based on the evidence provided that:

- Understanding of common areas of need across the safeguarding children system in.
- Good examples of robust supervisions models and use of escalation.
- An increased understanding of neglect and its impact on practitioners.
- The use of the Think Family approach
- There were good practice examples within Luton Borough Council's submission and in particular their approach to Youth Offending and Youth Partnership is trailblazing.

"This year's Section 11 assessment highlighted some really good collaborative and partnership working to target neglect. Agencies were able to show how they are developing and improving their services to better meet the needs of children who are suffering from all forms of neglect. This year's assessment also emphasized that we must never be complacent in this area and recognised some areas that needed to develop and improve. During the next year, we will be seeking assurance that those areas of development have been progressed."

Further information on Section 11 outcomes can be found in Appendix B

### **LEARNING FROM MULTI AGENCY AUDITS**

In October 2023, the three Local Authorities identified **9** Neglect cases (3 from each area) from the last twelve months

- One CIN case that stepped down to CIN from CP.
- One CIN case where there has been more than one referral into Children's Services.
- One CIN case where there are more than three children.

The Partnerships will capture any learning that supports improvement in practice and strengthening the safeguarding of children and young people experiencing neglect. The audit asked questions linked to the national and local learning from Reviews:

- Was Not Brought identified and addressed?
- Was there a 'Think family' approach?
- Engagement of Fathers and male carers – New Partners - Invisible and unseen Men?
- How were the following tools used: Neglect Screening Tool - GCP2 - Chronologies - Multi-agency Chronologies - Stop and Review Meetings and Cluttering and Hoarding – used in the cases?
- If there were disagreements, how were they escalated?

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### **IMPACT OF ACTIVITY – MULTIAGENCY AUDIT**

Some positive learning from the audit was the prompt moves and opportunities taken by Housing and other 'non-safeguarding' agencies to engage with families on safeguarding issues. There were examples of escalation by practitioners in some cases with generally good info sharing in most cases. Some cases evidenced good support and interventions over the years. There was evidence of good communication and information sharing across schools. There as some evidence of the GCP2 neglect tool being used. All participants reflected on the elements of good practice and identified any gaps at a practice, organisational or system level.

The actions from the audit are being monitored by the Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group.

- Partners need to assure themselves that their practitioners are gathering and recording the daily-lived experiences of children and young people and further
- promotion of Day in the Life tools to be undertaken. All partners to think about how their practitioners are assessing relevant milestones in a child's life and
- their lived experiences.
- GCP2 - all Partners to emphasize its use as an important ongoing assessment tool. The Pan Bedfordshire Neglect group to monitor the use of GCP2. What is the
- expected practice around reviewing GCP2? How clear/confident are practitioners on when to review a GCP2? What is the impact on families if there is no review
- of the GCP2?
- Earlier interventions to address educational needs are crucial and to be discussed and addressed by the Pan Beds Safeguarding Education Group.
- Practitioners need to be child focus and assess how the parents' behaviours/needs impact on their child(ren) and parenting.
- All partners to promote the use of multi-agency chronologies in all cases of Neglect – to identify/assess the family history and consider trauma in both the
- parents and child(ren)s lives and impact on the here and now.
- All agencies to address better use of recorded ethnicity, identity and cultural differences in all assessments and interventions.
- How do we measure the impact of all the interventions, and family ability to sustain change?

- Please access the Safeguarding Bedfordshire website for Neglect training and Pan Bedfordshire Interagency Child Protection Procedures

## SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN THE HOME

### NEGLECT

The LSCP works closely with the two other Safeguarding Children Partnerships in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire, utilising Pan Bedfordshire approach to raising awareness of neglect and helping frontline practitioners to identify and tackle neglect.

The Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group is Chaired by Assistant Director East of England and is steered by the [Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Strategy 2023- 2026](#) with oversight of the annual workplan. The Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Strategy sets out the strategic aims are to:

- improve the early recognition of neglect in families
- to improve agencies' responses to these families, and
- to ultimately improve positive outcomes for children, young people and their families.

The Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group holds bi-monthly themed meetings which have included learning from local and national practice reviews, emotional neglect, poverty informed practice and Think Family. The outcomes of these discussions have informed a number of new practitioner guidance documents which can be found [here](#). Neglect is the highest category for referrals and children subject to Child Protection Plans and demonstrates that neglect is being identified by practitioners and a key component of multi-agency and single agency training.

A Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Conference was held on 14.02.24 which aimed to raise practitioners' awareness of Neglect; increase their confidence and skills to respond effectively; and to understand the tools and support available to them. The keynote speaker was Jenny Malloy (aka 'Hackney Child'), other speakers included the NSPCC and local practitioners who shared the national and local picture of Neglect. The conference highlighted the Pan Beds Neglect Strategy, promoted effective multi-agency practice including raising awareness of resources such as GCP2, Day in the Life Tools and multi-agency chronologies.

**148** practitioners from a range of agencies attended the conference on the day. Attendees represented a range of agencies, including Local Authority, Police, Health Services, Early Years, Education, Independent and Voluntary Sector. The event received excellent feedback with 98% of the attendees feeling the event completely met their expectations. Jenny Molloy was noted for the impact of her presentation; *'Jenny was honest, brave and totally inspirational!! The whole day has made me reflect on my practice!'* Attendees were asked to self-rate their knowledge of neglect; those rating themselves as 4 or 5 (out of 5) rose from **62 (51%)** before the event to **114 (93%)** after, indicating the positive impact of attending. The evaluation was also an opportunity to gauge people's knowledge of local neglect resources. Many practitioners knew about the GCP2, neglect screening tool and Day in my Life tools, but yet had not used them. This has therefore become a focus of improved practice for the LSCP to take forward.

### Recommendations made were to:

- Undertake one month post attendance impact sampling and consider further evidence of impact on practice.
- Increased uptake in GCP2 training.
- Increase in GCP2 assessments and use of Neglect Screening Tool and Day in my Life tools.
- Develop a Pan Beds Practitioner Neglect Forum.
- Annual Pan Bedfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding conference and increased joint learning opportunities for children, young people and adult workforce.

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## IMPACT OF ACTIVITY - NEGLECT

### Bedfordshire Police

The table below demonstrates recorded crime, solved crime and outcome rate specifically for **neglect**. While this does show an increase of **73%** in the recording of neglect as a crime, this could be due to the recognition of the offences as a result of the staff training undertaken over the last 12 months. The outcome rate has also increased **by 2.9%**.

Date Range: 01/04/2023 - 31/05/2024

Financial Quarter	Crimes	Solved Crimes	Solved Rate	Solved Rate 3m	Solved Rate 12m
2023/24 - Q1	13	2	15.4%	15.4%	10.2%
2023/24 - Q2	31	2	6.5%	6.5%	8.9%
2023/24 - Q3	26	2	7.7%	7.7%	8.3%
2023/24 - Q4	44	6	13.6%	13.6%	10.5%
2024/25 - Q1	18	1	5.6%	11.6%	9.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>11.6%</b>	<b>9.7%</b>

The [Graded Care Profile 2 \(GCP2\)](#) is an assessment tool designed to help frontline practitioners identify when a child is at risk of neglect. It assists to measure the quality of care being given to a child in respect of physical care, safety, love, and esteem on a graded descriptive scale. The GCP2 has been adopted as the single countywide child neglect assessment tool by all partners.

The GCP2 is a standing agenda item for the Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group and data collection and analysis has identified a gap in its usage. The data demonstrates that use of the GCP2 is lower than expected given the number of referrals and Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) for Neglect, as it is good practice for a GCP2 to accompany any referral for neglect and it should be reviewed as part of any ongoing work. The LSCP has challenged agencies to use GCP2 and following an increase in the number of Accredited GCP2 Trainers and roll out of training they hope to see an increase in GCP2 within early intervention to improve the lives of children and young people who are at risk of neglect.

**Understanding Neglect:** a new one day training course was launched by Safeguarding Bedfordshire. Partner agencies, including Bedfordshire Police, Children's Social Care and

Cambridgeshire Community Services have committed staff to support with the development and delivery of this course. The course impact will be evaluated during 2024/25 but anecdotally has been well received as follows:

‘Knowledgeable trainers from different backgrounds which meant they could share different experiences and perspectives. I really enjoyed this course. There was a good level of interactive learning... enough time was allocated to answer questions and discuss.’

‘The course was well delivered, with opportunities given to everyone to make a contribution. It was relaxed and interactive and key points clearly identified.’

‘In my daily role, I work with women and their children who are already involved with different services. The training will enable me to be more aware and not just brush things aside thinking someone else would already know that but instead question things that I may think do not add up and act on them. I will also be informing my colleagues of this and sharing the slides with them.’

‘Having the training completed over Teams allowed me to still be available in the office during my breaks to meet the needs of my clients. Some Teams training can be boring however this was to the point, and interactive with everyone given the opportunity to make a contribution.’

Neglect has been a priority for the LSCP for over five years and prior to Covid pandemic Luton was previously ahead of regional in relation to use of GCP2. Neglect remains the most common form of child abuse across Luton and the LSCP aims to ensure that there is early recognition of neglect cases and that there is an appropriate, consistent, and timely response across all agencies from early help to statutory intervention. The LSCP therefore needs to do more to upscale local use of GCP2 and the neglect screening tool so that children and young people have their needs met by their parents or carers, and support is provided where this is not the case. The Pan Beds Neglect Dataset Task and Finish group began work in April 2023 to create a dataset that will support the countywide work on Neglect.

Further information on the impact of work on Neglect can be found in [Section 11 Self-Assessment](#) process on page 25 as Neglect was its key theme across all standards, For more information on neglect please visit our [Safeguarding Bedfordshire](#) and [NSPCC](#) websites.

## DOMESTIC ABUSE

The LSCP shares a joint priority with the Luton Safeguarding Adult Partnership and the other two safeguarding children partnerships in Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire.



Domestic Abuse work in Luton is led and governed by the [Luton Community Safety Partnership](#) and the **Luton Domestic Abuse Local Programme Board (DALPG)** who have developed a [Luton Domestic Abuse Strategy](#). Services, resources and training are delivered by the [Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership \(BDAP\)](#)

As shown on our structure chart the LSCP is represented on **Pan Beds Children's Strategic Leaders Domestic Abuse Strategic Group** as well as the **Luton Domestic Abuse Programme Group** who coordinate and provide strategic oversight of the local activity around domestic abuse in Luton on behalf of the **Luton Community Safety Partnership**. The **Pan Beds Domestic Abuse Strategic Group** provides oversight and traction in the development of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requirements across Bedfordshire and Luton. The purpose of the group is to:

- ensure a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to address concerns about domestic abuse in Bedfordshire
- provide consistency in approach, explore and agree joint working opportunities and common messaging
- maintain a strategic overview of domestic abuse across Bedfordshire.

Domestic abuse remains one of the single highest risk factors identified at point of contact and is a common feature in cases where there are other identified risk factors. With the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children and young people living in households where domestic abuse is happening are classed as victims in their own right due to the trauma that they experience. Further information can be found in Appendix A LSCP Dataset report.

Children and young people who live in homes where domestic abuse is happening are greatly impacted in terms of their health, wellbeing and development. This is not just the children and young people who witness domestic abuse, it is all children living in the house who may hear the arguments, items being smashed and see the injuries or damage to the house the next day. Some children are also verbally or physically abused too and may try to intervene and get hurt. Other children and young people come to accept the behaviour as normal and behave in a similar way towards the non-abusive adult or grow up to be abusive in their own relationships. Raising public awareness of domestic abuse is an important piece of work for LSCP to ensure that those who experience it, or know of someone that is, can access help and support.

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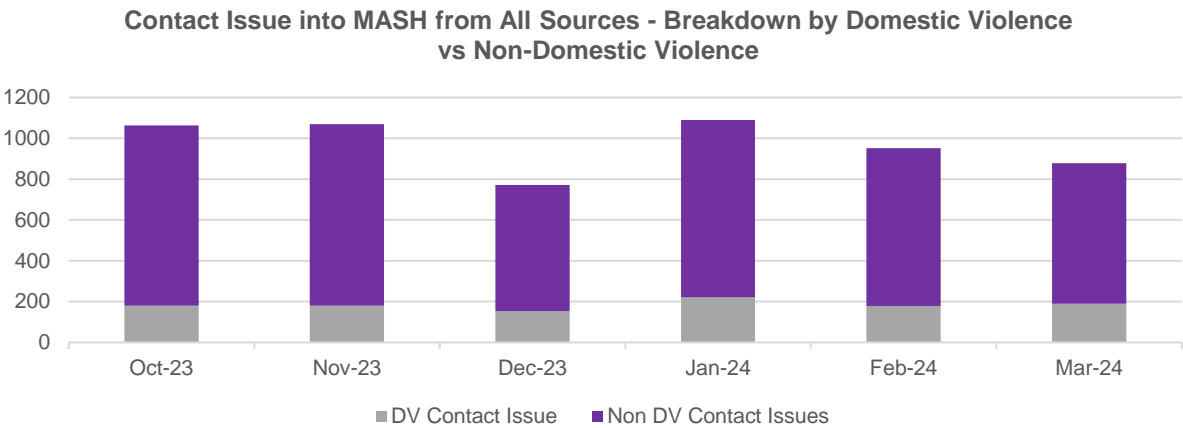
## **IMPACT OF ACTIVITY – DOMESTIC ABUSE**

Monthly place based Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings consider safety planning for both adults and children who are victims of domestic abuse as well as looking at ways of addressing perpetrator behaviour to reduce incidents both in terms of severity and frequency. Within Luton these are managed within Children's Social Care and have a focus on child safeguarding as well as safety planning for the adults. The LSCP also contributes to the Luton Domestic Abuse Local Programme Board and supports its priorities. The Luton Domestic Abuse Strategy 2023 is built around the four priorities:

- Prevention and early help
- Partnership:
- Provision and Improvement
- Protection



The figure below shows a monthly breakdown of domestic abuse vs non-domestic abuse contact issues and a percentage over the last 6 months pie chart. These numbers are largely unchanged since the previous report.



Further information on Domestic Abuse can be found in Appendix C

**MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING**

Much of the work undertaken has been as a result of learning from Child Safeguarding Partnership Reviews as well as continuing to progress system change from Rapid Reviews undertaken during the year, as detailed in the section on Learning from Experience.

The LSCP provides guidance, advice, and resources from partners in relation to the mental health and wellbeing within families, in particular we have shared resources through our website, newsletters and email circulation or distribution lists. Mental Health and wellbeing are recognised as a concern both locally and nationally) due to rising numbers of children, young people and adults needing to access services.

An increase in child death by suspected suicide was highlighted and partners received an update from Public Health regarding death by suicide. The findings from this are detailed within the [CDOP Annual Report 2023/24](#).

The LSCP has promoted the growing number of ways young people can access self-help and online support using a range of self-help apps such as [REFLECT](#) a free, confidential and 24/7 text support service for young people in Milton Keynes who need advice or help. REFLECT is delivered by trained volunteers and clinicians who are available around the clock to listen and support anyone who is feeling anxious, lonely, overwhelmed or not quite themselves. It is part of the wider network of Shout services across the UK.

[CAMHS Discovery College \(DiSCO\)](#) an educational project, was launched with a focus on improving young people’s wellbeing. DiSCO welcomes any young person aged 13 to 18-years-old living in to join free workshops held online and face-to-face to support them to explore their potential, learn new skills and flourish within their community. All the workshops are coproduced in a culturally sensitive way with young people or volunteers to promote resilience

within local communities. The LSCP has promoted these services across the partnership via an updated support service list and a wide range of emotional wellbeing related training.

**Trauma Informed Care** - As part of their focus on emotional health and wellbeing the Joint Quality Assurance & Learning Group received presentations on the Pan Beds approach to Trauma Informed Care (TIC) from East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT)

This gave examples of where Luton and Bedfordshire are in relation to their counterparts and how they are meeting regularly to update each other and deliver training.

Examples of current practices already practicing in trauma informed way:

- Violence Reduction Initiative – safety huddles utilising the TIC approach
- Consistent staff offering care
- Dialogue to identify people's needs
- Offering choice re intervention /staff

The LSCP Strategic Board received presentations from Bedfordshire Police and ELFT on the roll out of the **Right Care Right Person** initiative, which is an approach designed to ensure that people of all ages, who have health and/or social care needs, are responded to by the right person, with the right skills, training, and experience to best meet their needs. Central government agencies as well as local partners have also been at the centre of planning and delivery as often the right care is delivered by mental health or other support services.

**Phase 1, 'concern for welfare'** went live on 31 January 2024 and by the end of March 2024:

- The RCRP multiagency training programme had been delivered to 600+ staff across Bedfordshire and Luton
- A multiagency escalation pack had been developed
- A Multiagency service directory had been developed
- Multiagency twice daily huddles were in place to monitor escalations and disagreements. These huddles were reduced to three times per week in response to reducing levels of escalation in the Phase 1 rollout
- A welfare protocol was in place with policy changes across the system.

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## IMPACT OF ACTIVITY – EMOTIONAL WELLBEING & MENTAL HEALTH

Within Right Care Right Person (RCRP), the LSCP has been able to provide a child welfare focus and received data regarding the numbers of calls for welfare and their outcomes. Of the **197** incidents called in across Pan Bedfordshire, the police attended **82 (40%)**, it is estimated that previously they would have attended **171 (83%)** incidents. Signposting these services have freed up resources for other core police activities.

Where risks are related to Children's Services they have been addressed as follows

- Concern regarding families where the adult is known to adult services but child is not.
- If family is not known to social services and there are concerns then a MASH referral can be made. The earliest response for this is 4 hours (RED referral).

Mitigations:

- Where the adult is known the adult team will ascertain welfare.
- Where the child/family is known, the allocated social worker will ascertain welfare.
- Where the child is unknown, a MASH referral should be made.
- Where there is imminent risk and the child/family are not known to social services the Police should be contacted.

The LSCP will continue to receive regular updates on the phased rollout of RCRP throughout 2024/25 and will continue to provide oversight and scrutiny on its impact to child wellbeing and safeguarding effectiveness.

As highlighted in the section on Learning from Experience a rapid review following the death of a young person related to their emotional health and wellbeing was undertaken. This rapid

review led the LSCP to review the impact of the Child V CSPR Action Plan (2022) and in particular the recommendation for the LSCP from the review as below:

***‘The Luton Safeguarding Children Board will facilitate a pathway with partner agencies for the management of children and young people presenting with self-harm and suicide ideation, who are admitted to an acute hospital, so that their social care needs and those of the family can be assessed and met’.***

As a result of this the LSCP and its partners shire implemented a Protocol for a [Pan Bedfordshire Multi-Agency Response To Complex Case Presentations At Acute Hospitals](#). The LSCP received assurance that the protocol had been imbedded and that young people attending acute settings with complex mental health presentations and where there are no other immediate safeguarding concerns are routinely referred to Children’s Social Care as Children in Need.

The development of the Evergreen unit is in direct response to the gap in provision for specialist, short-term care for young people aged 13-17 who are experiencing complex mental health difficulties that cannot be managed in the community. Its development was completed in partnership with service users and carers, who chose the name ‘Evergreen’ for the unit.

For more information on this area of practice please access information [here](#). Further information on the impact of rapid reviews and CSPRs can be found on page 20.

## PRIVATE FOSTERING

The LSCP Strategic Board has remained concerned that the reported numbers of children within private fostering arrangements remained low with **four** children under the age of sixteen at the end of 2023/24. Private fostering continued to be a focus with an annual assurance report being provided to the Strategic Board in November 2023.

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### IMPACT OF ACTIVITY – PRIVATE FOSTERING

During the first two Quarters of 2023-2024 the private fostering team supported **four** children who met the definition of private fostering. However, two of these children have now achieved permanence via special guardianship. There is a new marketing strategy which will include private fostering requirements in events across the year. Awareness sessions were also held with the Designated Safeguarding Officer s and GPs in February 2024.

Whilst there is always more to do to increase awareness in Luton we are happy to report that:

- Partners promoted the CORAM BAAF Private Fostering awareness day on 08.11.2023
- The Fostering Team run monthly paid adverts in E-Luton throughout 2023. These are changed monthly to promote different areas of fostering. August focused solely on private fostering. 33,000 residents are signed up to receive E-Luton this should increase reach.

- Luton Council Communications Team post regularly to social media, Facebook and Instagram. Private fostering is regularly featured.
- Attendance at events and information stands to promote all areas of fostering, including private fostering. Events attended have included:
  - Christmas Markets
  - Community Awards
  - Eid Festival
  - Picnic in the Park
  - St Patricks Day parade
  - St Georges Day
  - Pride
  - International Women's Day event

The LSCP is aware private fostering numbers remain low, however, they are committed to continue to promote awareness and also to seek assurance and challenge partners as needed.

## SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN THE COMMUNITY

### EXTRAFAMILIAL HARM

**Contextual Safeguarding, Child Exploitation and Serious Youth Violence** have been key themes across Luton during this yearly reporting period. Partners have continued their work to ensure that children and young people in Luton and Bedfordshire are protected from extra-familial harm and missing episodes are reduced. The contextual safeguarding approach promotes thorough assessments and safety plans around children and young people who are at risk of significant harm beyond their own family. This strong partnership approach has identified adults and locations of concern and a prompt response of community safety, youth worker outreach, visits to premises, and perpetrators of exploitation served with Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWN), along with warning notices and convictions for Modern Day Slavery offences.

Exploitation is addressed in the [Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Reduction Strategic Response and Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Strategy](#) which uses a whole systems approach to prevent and reduce violence and exploitation has been refreshed for 2023/24.. A child friendly version of this document is in development. A rapid strategic needs assessment on violence and exploitation across Bedfordshire has also been completed in parallel with the Pan Beds Violence and Exploitation strategy, with the key findings from the need's assessment added into the strategy.

**Pan Beds Child Exploitation Needs Assessment** was initiated in 2022 and refreshed in 2023/24 and agreed locally in Bedfordshire by all agencies and services working to reduce and tackle violence and exploitation in Bedfordshire. The needs assessment took into consideration extra familial harm. Beds Partnership Response was coordinated regarding the recommendations from the Child Exploitation Needs Assessment.

**Developed the Bedfordshire Child Exploitation Practitioners Guidance;** We have recognised that tackling child exploitation is a complex task. There are similarities between different forms of exploitation and the criminal and sexual exploitation of children may overlap. Victims of child exploitation may, at any one time, be subject to both. It is vital that frontline practitioners recognise and respond to the complex needs of Child Exploitation.

**Developed Pan Beds Multi Agency Practitioner Events** across Bedfordshire on the Pan Beds Child Exploitation Practitioners Guidance and Screening Tool. In 2023 events have been organised specifically around Adult Exploitation; this has included **Serious and Organised Crime, Cuckooing, County Lines, Modern Slavery and Trafficking, Pan Beds Multi-Agency Information Form** the sessions have included the link with Child Exploitation. Over 200 practitioners have attended these events. There have been two sessions delivered in the Luton area and six across Pan Bedfordshire.

**Pan Beds Child Exploitation Response-NWG** We have worked with the National Working Group as our 'critical friend' to provide feedback on our Pan Beds approach to tackling Child Exploitation. This has involved the NWG attending partnership meetings and providing feedback on how these meetings are operating.

**Bedfordshire Against Violence and Exploitation (BAVEX)** Pan Beds Exploitation Communication Group continues to meet on an 8-week basis; to coordinate and deliver Pan Beds Multi Agency communications across the Partnership regarding violence and exploitation. This group is overseen by the Pan Beds Exploitation & Missing Strategic Group and the Serious Harm Partnership Board.

We have commissioned through BAVEX and the Safeguarding Bedfordshire Training Team, **Mind Your Language** briefings, to assist practitioners in understanding the impact of language on victims/survivors. Over 80 practitioners have attended the briefings.

The BAVEX website features the Pan Beds Practitioners guidance & documentation. Recent campaigns have included **16 days of action, VAWG, Online Safety, Just Drop It, Serious and Organised Crime, It's not ok**. Our forward plan includes the National Child Exploitation Awareness Day, which is always held in March, BAVEX Partnership Conference (to be held in 2024), Online Exploitation/Safety, Spiking week of action.

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## **IMPACT OF ACTIVITY – EXTRA-FAMILIAL HARM**

**Operation Make Safe** is a safeguarding initiative, existent within Bedfordshire and other authorities, whereby hoteliers, Licensed premises and the taxi industry are supported through a Police and multi-agency approach and training to be able to spot and identify potential child sexual exploitation concerns within their businesses. The support given enables them to be able to respond accordingly under Op Make safe and details the Police and partners response they can expect to those concerns, whilst always seeking to safeguard young persons and to

disrupt potential perpetrators. MAKE SAFE continues to be delivered across Bedfordshire delivered by Bedfordshire Police CSE Coordinator.

Highlights include:

- Pan Beds 'Mind Your Language' Briefings in collaboration with the NWG, Pan Beds Training Team & BAVEX Partners.
- Young People's Response to Exploitation
- First Local Authority area to undertake evaluation of the Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit
- Pan Beds Child Exploitation Tool & Practitioners' guidance received national feedback.
- BAVEX Campaigns best practice.
- Collaborative working with the NWG, CYP First & The Children's Society.
- Utilising The Research in Practice Response to CE & Contextual Safeguarding.
- Impact of MAKESAFE across Pan Beds.
- Frontline Officers undertaking CE Awareness Training.
- Pan Beds Neglect Conference including Exploitation & Neglect Workshop.

**The Emergency Department Navigator Service** is in place in Luton and Dunstable Hospital to support young people aged 12-25 presenting at hospitals with injuries and emergencies arising from involvement in violence and criminal exploitation, including gangs and county lines and help them to move away from this activity. The service will aim to reduce presentations at emergency department services for violence/exploitation related issues, reduce involvement with the criminal justice system and encourage positive engagement with other services. The service will use a trauma informed approach that will involve building a relationship of trust, beginning in the 'reachable moment' and continuing until the young person has reached sufficient stability, confidence and motivation to engage fully with other services (statutory and voluntary sector) that can provide further support. The length of engagement with each young person will vary, depending on the complexity of their needs.

The **Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation Communications group** deliver on a wide range of exploitation, but a central theme will be those exploitative practices linked to organised crime, such as county lines and other forms of exploitation linked to drug dealing, modern slavery, gangs, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation. [Bedfordshire Against Violence and Exploitation \(BAVEX\)](#) use a wide range of innovative and well-planned interventions to try and improve the response to these issues, with a view to increasing awareness and resilience in our wider community, improving knowledge among frontline practitioners, as well as targeting interventions at potential victims and those communities most at risk to encourage them to come forward.

The group has created a cohesive and overarching brand to badge all activity in this area, resulting in a more coherent and joined-up message being presented to both professionals and the public. Tackling exploitation is identified as a priority in all three local authority areas of the county. The plan is led by the Pan Beds Exploitation Communication Group who meet

on a 6-weekly basis and are overseen strategically by the [Pan Beds Exploitation & Missing Strategic Group](#) on a quarterly basis, and the [Pan Beds Serious Harm Board](#).

#### Other evidence of impact

- Increase in [Pan Beds Multi Agency Information Submission Forms](#) when campaigns and training have been delivered.
- Facebook advertising targeted into 'hotspot' areas for Cannabis factories led to an increase in [Pan Beds Multi Agency Information Submission Forms](#) on cannabis related crime.
- Increase in the use of the [Pan Beds Child Exploitation Tool](#) in referrals and assessments.
- [VERU website](#) continues to perform above average with their [Just Drop It campaign](#) being the most visited page.
- [BAVEX website](#) continues to be utilised by Practitioners across Bedfordshire.
- Increase in domestic abuse and wider Male Violence Against Women and Girls (MVAWG) reports potentially linked to the 16 Days of Action campaign as well as their wider comms work around male violence against women and girls.
- A significant focus on male violence against women and girls, including several high-profile court cases, activity in support of 16 days of action.
- A separate evaluation report on the [Just Drop It campaign](#), which has helped drive a significant increase in the number of weapons being handed into police weapons bins.
- Contextual Safeguarding Training evaluation 'When assessing young people for psychosis or at-risk mental states, this is another element to consider. The guidance for the resources available will be useful in developing services for young people at my service.' ELFT Practitioner.

For more information, please see Appendix D.

## SAFEGUARDING EDUCATION

The [Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group](#) is a strategic group, tasked to bring education as the fourth safeguarding partner and reporting directly to the Pan Bedfordshire Coordinating Group. It ensures that the voice of the education sector within Bedfordshire is heard and represented across Luton building a shared understanding of priorities. The Director of Education from Luton Children's Services chairs the Group on a rotating basis. The Group actively works with the three Safeguarding Children Partnerships (SCPs) to perform their duties in safeguarding by monitoring safeguarding activities across the county to improve outcomes for children and young people. This group provides a communication channel between education settings, including Governors, local Designated Safeguarding Lead forums and the three Safeguarding Children Partnerships. It provides support and Governance to the local arrangements as they share themes, challenges, and good practice in their safeguarding work.



The work of this group is recognised as important by all partners as children and young people spend more time in education settings than they do with all other partner agencies. The group initially met twice a term with themed meetings based on emerging local concerns, or direct requests from education. The group's first theme was **Sexual Harms** which following concerns around Andrew Tate's online misogyny and sexualised 'banter'. Questions were agreed by the group and taken back to local schools for response. There is greater representation from education across all aspects of the LSCP and mechanisms exist to ensure effective communication to share messages both from and into the partnership. Membership reflects a variety of sectors including primary, secondary, special, further and independent education.

Education settings are invited to take part in a series of health and wellbeing surveys for young people. The data collected from these surveys is not only sent back to the setting so they can really understand the thoughts, views and feelings of their school/college community but also used on a wider basis to inform future work for young people. The surveys are: Emotional Health and Wellbeing/Physical Activity and Food/Healthy Relationships/Community and Environment and Substance Misuse.

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## **IMPACT OF ACTIVITY – SAFEGUARDING EDUCATION**

**Bedfordshire Police** In respect to the Education and Diversion team they link in with a number of partners (both statutory and charity based) around this prevention and early help. Engagement has started with schools to provide support to children who are on a reduced timetables or excluded from school. Historically we have supported events alongside a suicide prevention charity in Bedfordshire and have undertaken projects with the Samaritans school service and PAPRYUS (Prevention of Young Suicide).

The team attend several professional meetings, strategy meetings and child protection conferences when appropriate. Through our diversion work we have several children on our caseload that do have emotional and mental health issues and in addition as part of our day-to-day engagement with students we often encounter children and young people that disclose concerns - As the team are not trained around this area then we tend to signpost to more appropriate agencies.

As part of their work, the team support a lot of young people who are victims of crime and through our support and engagement we are often told we have made that individual feel more positive about things. Some of the team's work is driven by Local Authority SHUE (School's Health and Wellbeing) surveys.

In more general terms we include screentime and mental health and cyberbullying as part of our digital safeguarding inputs both to students and parents/guardians and professionals and raise the risks around this area in our internal training to new Police Constables, Police Community Support Officers and Force Control Room staff.

As part of **Safer Internet Day 2024** one of the team compiled a safeguarding leaflet designed for parents and carers. In February 2024 this document went out to every educational establishment in Bedfordshire, who then disseminated it to parents and carers. This was estimated to reach approximately 100k families across Bedfordshire and the advice has been echoed via Comms on social media. This will also be shared with other Forces nationally.

**Luton Borough Council** A key success with establishing and strengthening relationships with school and other education settings in localities are the themed quarterly **Coffee Mornings** which are hosted within a locality school, who then invite all other schools in their area along with locality partners. These MASH sessions are also supported by the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service including their Head of Service and the Child Protection and Independent Reviewing Officer Team Managers. During 2023/24 themes have included Application of Thresholds, Neglect and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health. These sessions have been attended by over 150 delegates from a range of education settings.

Safeguarding in Education practice is well embedded across the education sector and continues to provide safeguarding support, challenge and intervention as required. A reviewed and strengthened Education strategy reflecting learning from 2023/24 will be finalised and embedded within the service and schools. This has been collaboratively reviewed and updated to capture the entire service and delivery. Our SEF completed in May 2024, looks back over the previous year and provides contextual information about Luton and the services for children, young people and their families. Individuals and Teams from across children's social care, early help, education, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have all contributed.

For the academic year 2023-24, there was a **100%** return rate on S175 audits from schools. These audits highlight in regard to the LSCP Strategic Business Plan that domestic abuse and neglect are key priorities within schools. Information within the audit returns indicate that schools are completing lots of work within the L2 space regarding neglect including supporting with free breakfasts, coats, shoes and vouchers. Schools are receiving **Operation Encompass** notifications which is shaping their awareness/context to families. Within the Local Authority, Safeguarding in Education have completed a review of Operation Encompass to ensure the system is supporting schools regarding domestic abuse.

Schools are going above and beyond their duties to keep children and families safe, this is evident across most audits. Relationships appear a key priority to schools to build effective working relationships which then increases the likelihood of families accepting support. Where there are concerns regarding neglect or exploitation, as per the LSCP Strategic Business plan, schools are working with families to intervene at the earliest opportunity. Particularly for secondary schools, safeguarding teams recognise the children more vulnerable to exploitation and are completing tailored work to each individual including a host of referrals to reduce the risk of harm. The Safeguarding in Education Team continue to stress

test this when auditing, reviewing their recording systems and completing case focused samples of auditing in schools to identify strengths and points for learning.

Continuous Professional Development is a key focus for the Safeguarding in Education Team for the new academic year 24-25. A whole host of training is being offered to schools to strengthen their understanding around aspects within the business plan such as exploitation and neglect. Take up will be key to the roll out of this training so we will be chasing schools to take part in the training where possible which positively will have an impact on their practice internally.

### What difference has this made?

- The development of engagement groups such as the MASH Coffee Mornings to provide information on themes selected by Luton schools and the Pan Beds Safeguarding Education Group providing a gateway for schools to share their concerns with the LSCP.
- Education representation has been strengthened at the LSCP Strategic Board meetings.
- Multi-agency open and honest discussions leading to resolutions about the issues that affect schools, for example in respect to thresholds, escalations or the use of the GCP2.
- The Police Education and Diversion Team have received positive feedback for the work/support they provide to a lot of young people who are victims of crime who report back that this work/support has made them feel more positive about things.
- Public Health work within education settings has supported both children, young people, staff, parents and the community in respect of mental health issues.
- The Safeguarding in Education Team continue to attend meetings within the MASA to voice the views of education and work is underway as to how we represent their voice first hand, ensuring that schools play a direct part in strategic decision making within the MASA across a variety of different meetings.

## CULTURAL COMPETENCE

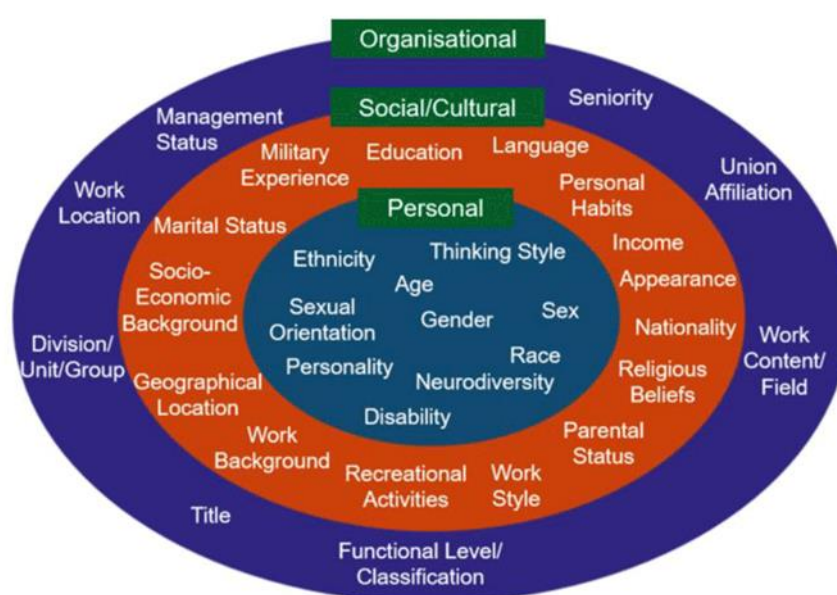
The **Pan Bedfordshire Cultural Competence Group** was created in response to the review of the adultification, disproportionality and diversity issues and the effects on the criminalisation of children and young people in the Youth Justice system by bringing together a multi-agency group of partners to review the evidence of cultural competence practice across Bedfordshire.

The group received assurance from Bedfordshire Police on their local practices and ensured the multi-agency training programme content did not carry bias messaging and addressed adultification. The National Panel included 'Intersectionality' in their updated guidance to safeguarding partnerships.

From June 2023 the Pan Bedfordshire Cultural Competence Group was stood down and the remit of the group became a golden thread across the LSCP and Pan Bedfordshire partnership structures. This was to ensure that cultural competency was embedded in all partnership work. However, data indicates that there is still a need to raise awareness of working in a culturally competent way and understanding issues such as intersectionality.

**"Intersectionality is a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking."**

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/using-intersectionality-understand-structural-inequality-scotland-evidence-synthesis/pages/3/>



## IMPACT OF ACTIVITY – CULTURAL COMPETENCE

As part of this workstream the following guidance has been developed - [Becoming Culturally Competent - Effective Safeguarding of Children from Minority Ethnic, Cultural and Faith Communities, Groups and Families, Practitioner Briefing 'Heritage'= race, language, religion, and culture and Practitioner Briefing Cultural Competency](#)

**Luton Council** have provided practice guidance and supported the use of Cultural genograms within their recording systems which support better understanding of competing needs and issues for a family network both now and previously and how these experiences and aspects shape presenting safeguarding concerns.

An ‘**annual conversation**’ will be held in April 2024 to review, and evidence, how cultural competency has remained a key theme in LSCP and Pan Bedfordshire work and this will be reported on in the yearly report for 2024/25.

## TRANSITIONAL SAFEGUARDING

In May 2023 a new **Pan Bedfordshire Principles for children transitions to adult services briefing** was signed off which can be found [here](#):

**BLMK ICB’s** Children and Young People Transformation Board identified preparing for Adulthood/Transitions as a key priority for them. An initial scoping exercise was completed to understand how current system partners were addressing Preparing for Adulthood/Transition with an overall purpose of developing system-level principles which could be adopted by partner organisations across BLMK. To support this work, the BLMK ICB Preparing for Adulthood Steering Group was established with the purpose to determine the following for children and young people:

To understand the population needs of children and young people moving from children to adult services.

- To map how current systems are delivering Preparing for Adulthood/Transitions and identify any gaps in service provision.
- To identify the aims and purposes of various partners involved in delivering a Preparing for Adulthood/Transitions offer
- To develop shared principles for Preparing for Adulthood/Transitions
- Identify local best practice guidance and how to achieve national NHS Long Term Plan ambitions and recommendations.
- Identify areas where joint working is possible.
- Establish priority sub-groups to lead on the development of place-based Preparing for Adulthood/Transition workstreams.

**BLMK ICB** held two Preparing for Adulthood / Transitions summits in May 2023. These summits were open to professionals from health, social care, education, youth justice, parents, carers and children and young people. The summits provided updates from National and Regional SEND teams, children and young people and adult mental health, safeguarding children in care, youth justice, learning disabilities and Autism along with workshops on these issues that have led to the development of a forward plan.

## SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN THROUGH EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

The LSCP and its counterparts in BBSCP and CBSCP have worked hard to review and revise their governance arrangements across Pan Bedfordshire and Luton place based arrangements especially in the light of the publication of national guidance and consultations. The LSCP has ensured it was able to make an informed contribution to national consultations.

The LSCP Strategic Board received a presentation in July 2023 regarding the DfE consultation on the draft 'Working Together' document and its proposed principles for future practice in the light of 'Stable Homes Built on Love'. They then undertook three sessions with all partners and the other two SCPs across Pan Beds and produced a placed based response to the consultation.

At the same session also consulted on and responded to the DfE Consultation on 'Information Sharing Advice for Safeguarding Practitioners'. Finally, they considered the changes needed to address the proposed principles for future practice in the light of '*Stable Homes Built on Love*' and started to plan how they would deliver these in the short, medium and longer term.

The LSCP Strategic Board also received a presentation and responded to the proposed principles of the '*Mandatory Reporting Child Sexual Abuse – a call for evidence*' and then responded to the '*Mandatory Reporting Child Sexual Abuse Consultation*' in November 2023.

In August 2023 the LSCP held a Strategic Board meeting with the explicit purpose of reviewing the outcome letter from Ofsted following their focussed visit in July 2023 and to consider the findings and how to further strengthen our partnership working. Their findings were:

- Not all professionals demonstrate an understanding of Luton's threshold framework for children's social care services or appropriately discharge their own responsibilities before making a referral for further support.
- The Luton multi-agency referral form is not used by all key strategic partners. The quality of referrals received from some statutory partners is inconsistent and the type of intervention or support required is not always clearly articulated.
- Leaders report that work is ongoing with police, education and other partners to ensure that children are best supported through multi-agency working arrangements. This, however, is not a new or recent challenge for the authority. Previous solutions have been limited in their impact, and more work is required to ensure that children and families benefit from a full joined-up multi-agency response.

Partners discussed that:

- Ofsted drew attention to a small number of cases from education where Ofsted were concerned about the contact/referral of these children as they felt education could have looked at the cases a little more closely before referring to CSC.
- Initial visits to see children, where there are concerns for their safety and responsibility for follow-up has been passed through to the Assessment Service, are undertaken quickly and when required safety plans are put in place. For some children, these visits take place before a formal strategy discussion.
- Challenges exist in getting engagement from some key statutory partners swiftly enough for a timely meeting. In these instances, the opportunity to discuss concerns and share information with the professionals who are already involved with the family to jointly agree the next steps before meeting the family is lost.

- It was felt by all partners present that this maybe a good time to think about the use of 'one form' for all if at all possible.

#### What was agreed:

That partners invited to Children's Improvement Board should endeavour to attend and agreed that all partners would complete the following assurance reports:

- 3 areas of partnership working in their area they believe is working well
- 2 areas of partnership working in their area they believe requires further work
- 3 actions points they would work to improve.

These presentations were made to CIB on 28 September 2023 and initiated robust discussion and challenge regarding the partners role in Strategy Discussions and the volume and quality of partner referrals.

The LSCP Strategic Board spent much time during November and December in its *Families First for Children Wave 2 Pathfinder Programme Bid*. This was for the government review of services and the outcome of the review is looking at stronger services for children and families. This would look at the reshaping of services looking at different areas, the family and teams around the child. The LSCP agreed as a whole partnership approach it would need everyone around the table. The partners agreed to make application and were aware that if they were to be successful, delivery would start in April 2024. The LSCP did not received confirmation of their successful application until February 2024 but due to the strength of the partnership the partners have contributed to the design requirements at pace and received regular updates.

In November 2023, the LSCP Strategic Board met with partners to review the three threshold documents across Pan Beds. It was discussed the Luton Effective Support document was set out quite differently to the other two Pan Beds documents and the title, was coined from the Essex equivalent document and their improvement suggestions. It was discussed what would partners wish to see in a new document and whether it was possible to revert to one document across Pan Beds. The group agreed the structure and principles they wished to see in one revised document and agreed to place the issue before the Pan Beds Children's Strategic Leaders. While work began on a revised document under the auspices of the Pan Beds Coordinating Group, it was remitted to the Pan Beds Strategic MASH Group for their delivery.

These actions have been monitored through the CIB Improvement Plan and partners have demonstrated improvement within these work steams. The challenge of a revised threshold document remains, for Luton this is being addressed through the *Families First for Children Delivery Plan* as there is still an appetite to produce a single Pan Beds threshold document.

In March 2024, the three SCPS held an away day with the three delegated safeguarding partners, Chairs and Business Managers from each local authority area to begin to shape principles and structures for ensuring compliance with '*Working Together to Safeguard*



*Children 2023'* and continued Pan Beds arrangements. These included the Lead Safeguarding Partners, Partnership Chair, Independent Scrutiny and the role of Education and revised structures and governance arrangements were proposed for review and agreement in 2024/25.

The LSCB Strategic Board also received themed assurance reports in March 2023 as follows:

## MANAGEMENT OF ALLEGATIONS

### Data Analysis

During a 5 month period there have been a total of **242 referrals** to the LADO service of which **123 met threshold**.

A total of **61 referrals were managed at Tier 1** which means it is a serious concern requiring the involvement of other agencies. It's important to note the threshold for referral to LADO is 'harm' not 'significant harm' therefore our threshold is lower than other areas of business.

This referral rate suggests an average of **48.4** referrals per month. This is an increase from previously reported rates of between 40 and 45. In January 2024 we received **59** referrals which included some extremely serious allegations that took up a significant resource. If this rate were to be extrapolated over a year we would expect **approximately 580 referrals annually**. As a comparison, Bedford Borough Council received 243 LADO referrals in 2022/23. The LSCP also received a break down by sector where most referrals come from schools.

The LSCP partners considered whether there were gaps in referrals from any particular sector and how they could support the function. As a result, partners agreed to create a Task & Finish group for joint awareness raising of the LADO requirements.

## IRO ANNUAL REPORT

The IRO Annual Report 2022/23 was reported to the LSCP Strategic Board and set out the contribution of Independent Reviewing Officers to quality assuring and improving services for children in care. The service has a procedure process embedded on how to escalate concerns for Looked After Children. IROs have a good relationship with children and when they become Looked After Children they are appointed an IRO within 72 hours. Luton are doing well with initiation health assessments. It was discussed that stated business continuity around face to face meetings needs to be discussed as they allow for the rich conversations but require partner input to ensure key staff are able to attend these meetings in person.

## WHAT ELSE DID WE DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

## PAN BEDFORDSHIRE POLICY AND PRACTICE GROUP

The Policy and Practice Group meets twice a year and has a rolling programme of work that continues throughout the year linked to the updates required in May and November. The procedures have been updating linked to learning from reviews from Luton, across Bedfordshire and Nationally. [Amendments to procedures](#) can be found here and are linked to learning from reviews and audit within Luton. There are the following task and finish groups also running alongside this:

- Pan Beds Cultural Competence
- Pan Beds GCP2
- Pan Beds Voice of Child Group

This has been another busy year with the group providing **93** new and/or revised procedures and guidance which can be accessed at this [link](#). There has been a number of one-page briefing documents developed on issues arising from Reviews that practitioners have feedback have been helpful in raising awareness of safeguarding issues, for example.

[The importance of history to safeguard children and young people,](#)  
[Working with large sibling group families](#)  
[Impact of poverty on children.](#)

#### What has the impact been?

- The development of a suite of briefings has provided practitioners with quick, concise, awareness raising opportunities on a number of subjects for example see above with positive feedback from Partners that practitioners are using the documents in daily practice and finding them user friendly.
- The Pan Bedfordshire [Injuries and Bruising Protocol for Immobile Children 0-18 years](#) pathway/protocol has supported a more combined and collective approach to guidance.

#### CHILD DEATH OVERVIEW PANEL:

The BLMK CDOP Panel has not yet produced its Annual Report for 2023-24. However, they continued to progress their action plan for 2022-23 as follows:

- ❖ **Data quality:** During this review data was analysed from a range of sources. In future this will be easier as all data will be on eCDOP which will make retrieval easier and more complete. We have noted that ethnicity has not always been recorded and that we have not been able to report on the deprivation quintiles for our child deaths but would hope to do this in coming years. Similarly, we would like to be able to report more detailed data relating to social care involvement for child deaths. Ethnicity. For 12 of the cases reviewed, the panel did not have information relating to the child's ethnicity. This should be resolved through easier data sharing via eCDOP
- ❖ **Public Health:** This report continues to inform public health practice and policy with emphasis on maternal obesity reduction to reduce the risks of preterm delivery or delivery complications and improve ability of antenatal scan to detect congenital anomalies. Wellbeing services across Luton and Bedfordshire provide information and

support regarding preparation for pregnancy, after pregnancy and children and family weight management programmes. Health visiting is considering collaborative work with the maternity voices group to understand the barriers to women accessing weight management support after or before pregnancy. The themes highlighted through CDOP influence public health priorities and ongoing health promotion across the system, obesity, smoking cessation, safe sleeping, consanguinity, suicide prevention.

- ❖ **Training:** Further training for GPs has been arranged in collaboration with The Designated Doctor for Safeguarding. The Child death reviews nurses at the local hospital Trust share the learning from CDOP at their level 3 safeguarding training events. We plan to develop further multiagency training..
- ❖ **Newsletter:** The Panel has previously produced newsletters to share with partners covering key themes from deaths reviewed.

Progress reports regarding safeguarding issues or themes have been provided to each CDOP meeting throughout 2023-24. More information can be found here: [CDOP](#)

## VOICE OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

A voice of the child conference was held in November 2023 focusing on Healthy Relationships and Bullying. This event was a great opportunity to hear directly from children and young people and gain understanding of how children and young people feel about relationships.



The aim of the conference was to hear the views from children and young people about these issues and how they can be better supported by the Safeguarding Children Partnerships. Eight schools attended from years 5, 6, 7 and 8 and a diverse mix of their students. Some of the children and young people had been directly impacted by the issues being discussed, and their feedback was crucial in shaping discussions on the day and actions following the event. In preparation for the event the children and young people were asked to discuss these topics with other students from their school and feedback their views at the conference so that the Safeguarding Children Partnerships could hear the views from as many children and young people as possible.

**What did children and young people tell us?** Alfie (@shinealightwithalfie) presented his Anti Bullying & Mental Health Campaign. Alfie shared his own experience of bullying in Year 5 and has been campaigning for the last 2.5 years. His campaign has received support from a wide range of organisations and key people including the Children's Commissioner, Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Dr Alex Holmes OBE, Jack Grealish, Declan Rice, Luton Town footballers and many more! He recently created a documentary with CBBC regarding his campaign where he had the chance to discuss anti bullying with Jack Grealish and Declan Rice. Alfie is a Anti Bullying Ambassador for the Diana Award and at his school. His documentary is available on IPLAYER [‘My Life -I was bullied’](#)

Four young people who had utilised services from CAMHS attended the event to share their stories of being bullied and how they are addressing this through their Anti Bullying project. Their key messages included the following.

- There is no one definition of bullying, it can take a lot of different forms and there can be a lot of different methods.
- A lot of the resources available for schools, parents and young people do not reflect this, they are outdated and sometimes unhelpful.
- The biggest piece of advice is to share it with a trusted adult.
- People bullying is a reflection of them, not of you.

The following was shared by Jeevan, a Young Healthwatch volunteer who wrote about his attendance at the Voice of the Children Conference.

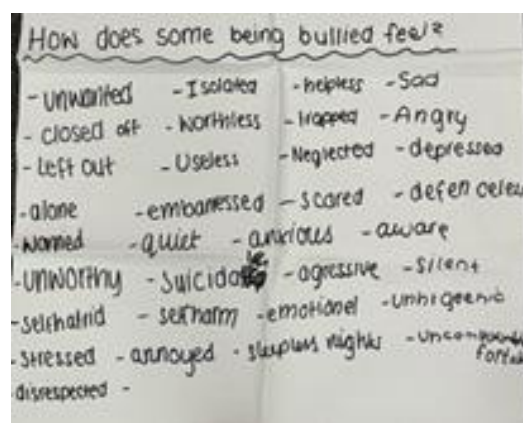
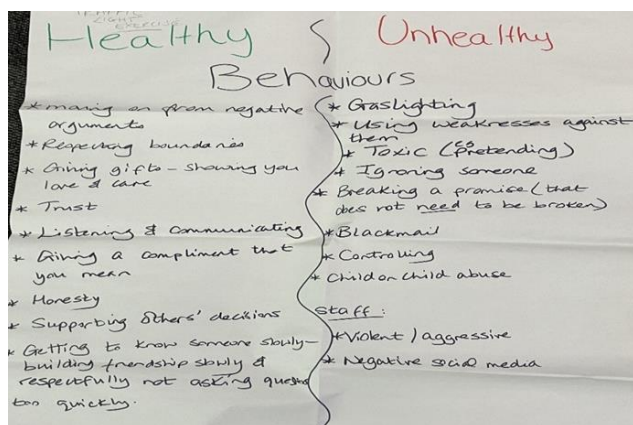
***“Attending the Voice of the Child Conference was an enjoyable and eye-opening experience; evidently, focusing on providing children the courage to speak up and stand up to bullying and unhealthy relationships. As someone interested in pursuing a career in Paediatrics, gaining an insight in how children’s services want to empower and allow young people to have a voice in how they’re supported, gave me exposure to a vast array of paediatric services and support programmes.***

***The conference consisted of students, from many different schools, and different ages. Facilitators sat with the pupils and discussed the various topics presented, and many staff members representing various children’s services, including NSPCC and CAMHS. The primary topics discussed were regarding bullying and, how to differentiate and identify, healthy and unhealthy relationships.***

***I was able to work with one of the facilitators who managed Bedford and Luton & Dunstable Hospital paediatric services. We assisted with various activities from categorising if a scenario belonged to a healthy or unhealthy relationship, to questions like, ‘what would you if you saw someone was bullied’? Students wrote down and verbally gave their feedback regarding the topics; furthermore, all the various stations of: NSPCC, CAMHS, Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and the Police, gave a wealth of information on the support that young people can access.***

**Overall, the conference was successful in providing young people a voice that they knew would be heard. Also, the conference empowered all the students to understand that their opinion matters and there would be action based on their discussions and ideas."**

**What did we learn about children and young people's worries?** Here are some examples of what children and young people said about Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships and Bullying.



**What will the Safeguarding Children Partnerships do in response to the Voice of the Child Conference?** They will assure themselves that all local schools and colleges are meeting their key statutory safeguarding obligations in protecting and keeping safe children and young people by working with the Pan Beds Safeguarding Education group to support the three Local Authorities in their annual S157/175 audit of these statutory obligations. To include the following

- Children and young people with special educational needs, disabilities or health issues are more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children.
- Schools/college staff, their Governing bodies and proprietors need to know and should be aware of systems within their establishments which support safeguarding, and these should be explained to them as part of their induction.
- This should include a behaviour policy (which should include measures to prevent bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying).
- Schools/colleges should have a clear set of values and standards, upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school/college life. There should be planned programme of evidence based RSHE which is fully inclusive and developed to be age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering the needs of children with SEND and other vulnerabilities).
- Will raise awareness of the Government's [Guidance for schools on preventing and responding to bullying.](#)

**Bedfordshire Police** continue to develop the voice of children and young people within their service.

Ongoing meetings held with parents through 'living your life' charity. This allows for honest discussion on areas of concern, positive and developmental in respect of how they and their children have been treated/safeguarded and supported through the investigation. As part of our work, we support a lot of young people who are victims of crime and through our support and engagement we are often told we have made that individual feel more positive about things. Some of the team's work is driven by the SHUE (School's Health and Wellbeing) surveys.

**Bedfordshire Luton Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board** gains assurance from the providers it commissions services from that the voice of Children, young people and their families are an integral part of contract arrangements and service provision. Commissioned services gather feedback via questionnaires, online surveys and face to face contact. These are shared with the ICB to understand how commissioned services are meeting the needs of the population including children.

When Children attend for health assessments their views and feelings are assessed using picture charts rather than text. The complaints procedure is child orientated and was adapted to meet their needs and understanding. BLMK ICB has a culture of listening too and engaging with service users and Children seeking their views in decision making and development of service and policies such as co-production work with service users around LGBTQ issues.

**Cambridgeshire Community Services** CCS takes a co-production approach to the design, development, and delivery of all services as evidenced in the Trust Objectives, Quality Strategy and our People, Participation and Involvement Strategy. CCS employs a co-production team to support services with this approach and the Trust People Participation and Equalities Committee (sub- board level) provides monitoring and oversight. Further Information can be found on our webpage here: <https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.ukBedfordshire/services/co-production>

CCS utilises the Family and Friends Test (FFT) within the CHI-ESQ (Childrens Experience of Service Questionnaire) to gather feedback from all service users following any contact with our service, including children and families who have received safeguarding interventions. As an example of the data collated via the CHI-ESQ questionnaire, for the Bedfordshire and Luton Children in Care Team - 96% of respondents gave a positive satisfaction score in answer to the question 'Overall, how was your experience of our service' between May 2023 to May 2024. An example of feedback includes *'[the practitioner was] very accommodating, always gave up to date and correct information. Very understanding of a child's psychology and show's high level of compassion. I felt I could trust my child's care team'* (Parent/Carer, February 2024)

An example of a co-production project with children who have received safeguarding interventions includes a research project has been completed by a community paediatrician regarding children in care and their experiences of annual health review assessments. To gather the views of children direct feedback was taken from them. This will change the way in which health reviews are completed and seek to involve children more in their health plans.



Leaflets explaining the review have also been co-designed with Children in Care. Yearly training will also be given to paediatricians to support the involvement of children in their assessments. Co-production continues to be a priority for the Trust and support is offered to staff in CCS from the co-production team to facilitate this priority.

CCS has a patient experience team whose aim is to gather feedback from service users and their families and carers, this might be survey feedback, complaints and compliments or through patient stories and consider how this can influence service delivery and design. In addition, appointing managers are required to consider if it would be appropriate for service users, families and carers to be included staff recruitment and service users have been included in both stakeholder and interview panels.

**East London Foundation Trust** CAMHS has a comprehensive people participation strategy which is very well established – the workforce establishment consists of senior leads, parents / carers and young people who are all part of our CAMHS workforce. The team members are actively involved in a variety of service development opportunities / initiatives to ensure the voice of young people and families is considered at all stages of the planning and mobilisation. The team are fully integrated into the service with representatives at the senior manager meetings. The people participation team, work with a range of young people who access services to ensure all needs are considered when planning services Children from a diverse range of ethnicities and backgrounds, children with special needs and vulnerable young children are represented within the people participation. Our people participation team and members are involved in the local and Trust wide equalities networks and work stream and have shaped services based on suggestions (i.e.: LGBTQI training / record keeping on RiO). We receive outcome measures from young people and families and have an active service user participation group who contribute to service feedback and development.

The safeguarding children team promote the use of a “day in my life tool” to capture the lived experience and voice of the children. CAMHS has a SEND lead and a learning disability team who are able to give support and advice to practitioners around adapting communication methods to gather the views and experiences of service users with additional needs. CAMHS use routine outcome measures including Children Experience Service Questionnaire (ChiESQ) as a form of feedback.

**Luton Borough Council – Children’s Social Care** Participation and direct work with children in care and care leavers focussed on the following:

Advocacy - Our strengths:

- NYAS deliver three services that strengthen the voice of children and young people by providing an Independent Visitor (IV) Service, Advocacy support for children looked after, care leavers, those on child protection plans and return home interviews for young people in care.
- IROs are prioritising children and young people to have opportunity to be supported by an independent advocate as part of Child Protection Conference process.



Areas for development and our priorities for the next 12 months:

- The IRO service currently reviewing the Advocacy support to children and young people subject to a Child Protection Plan as take up of this is low. As a result of low uptake of CYP engagement and participating in the conference process the IRO service are raising the NYAS referral when the service has been notified of cases that require Child Protection intervention.
- Create Parent Forums as part of the pathfinder programme. To ensure that families help build our services.

**Luton Borough Council – Safeguarding in Education** Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023) requires school to:

- encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, and in any measures the school or college may put in place to protect them, and,
- understand the difficulties that children may have in approaching staff about their circumstances and consider how to build trusted relationships which facilitate communication.

Schools gather this directly through their own work streams internally supported by the Safeguarding in Education Team.

**Luton Borough Council – Youth Offending Service** as a Service working with the most vulnerable cohorts of children in Luton, we are comprehensively invested in promoting the vision of a Child First youth justice service and delivering the vision to make Luton a child-friendly town. The creation of our contextual safeguarding response through the Youth Partnership Service (YPS) puts children first and aligns with measurable outcomes of the strategy. Significantly, the key priority areas of the Strategic Management Board (specialist early intervention, health and education) place children and their needs at the centre of the specialist interventions we deliver.

As a Service we prioritise gathering the thoughts, feelings and views of children entering the Service at the earliest opportunity. Whether this is at the point of sentence when we are assessing their initial concerns or at the point of allocation when we are considering whether a particular worker or Case Manager would be a good fit for supervising the children throughout their time with the Service.

Staff take an active role in producing assessments and intervention plans with the thoughts, feelings and views of the children considered. Therefore, in terms of the 'child first' vision, it is essential that as a Service we do not create a hierarchical, overly consequential blame culture. We aim to create an environment of working together with children and their families with assessments and intervention plans based firmly around the factors for and against desistance, ensuring children feel empowered to achieve the aims that are being set for them. When children are actively involved in the creation of their plans, motivation and compliance with intervention are more likely to be successful.

Co-production means working together to develop services with children involved in the Service. Our children are actively encouraged to be part of focus groups and the various consultation processes, whether linked to pan Bedfordshire strategies or local corporate policy such as the creation of the Equality Diversity Inclusion agenda. Our children have been involved in the co-production of a Stop and Search panel following focus groups with police partners and our children were part of the consultation, development and creation of the Tapp Out interactive app, even starring in the filmed scenarios. Our widescale serious violence youth consultation undertaken after the September incidents led to a number of co-produced initiatives discussed later in this plan.

Whether it is simple non-verbal tools deployed in the Service such as the smiley face arrow pointer near the interview rooms to indicate how children are feeling on any given day or empowering children to contribute to the processes and methods to keep them safe or issues that affect them in local government, we are committed to listening to the voice of children when making decisions that directly affect them.

As part of the Children, Families and Education Directorate Participation and Engagement Strategy, the YPS co-ordinate the Luton Youth Council and are in the process of co-producing a Youth Leadership Programme with the Youth Council which will see senior elected members and senior council officers mentor youth councillors. The second iteration of the Youth Council consisting of 14 children from high schools around Luton were elected in September 2022 and their role is to promote the voice of children in the decisions of the council and ensure these decisions consider the impact on them.

As part of their role, the youth councillors have chosen three areas they feel are important to children and young people and the environment in which they live. Within these areas, the youth councillors will plan projects and events to benefit Luton and its community.

The committees chosen within this cohort are:

- Poverty
- Inclusive Sports Facilities
- Opportunities for children and young people

In the wake of the serious incidents in 2023, the Service undertook a number of consultations with children in Luton and participated in a number of round table community meetings to help alleviate concern and lower tension. The culmination of these community meetings was a showcase of Service innovations and community partner intervention programmes in March 2024 chaired by the Youth Council with over 100 members of the community present. This was a fantastic achievement by the Youth Council and a solid endorsement of the positivity of involving the voice of children at every step of Service development.

From 1 April 2023 the Pan Bedfordshire Voice of Child Group was stood down and the remit of the group became a golden thread Pan Bedfordshire safeguarding children partnership structure, ensuring the voice of the child is embedded in all work. An *'annual conversation'*

was held in April 2024 to review, and evidence, how the voice of the child has remained a key theme in our work.

## THE PROVISION OF HIGH QUALITY MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING TRAINING



Training has been commissioned in collaboration with the other two safeguarding partnerships in Bedfordshire for the last six years under the banner of [Safeguarding Bedfordshire Training](#). It provides a multi-agency programme to meet the priorities of the three local safeguarding partnerships (Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, and Luton).

Safeguarding Bedfordshire is the multi-agency training provider for the Safeguarding Children Partnerships in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton. Training is aimed at those working or volunteering with children and young people. Our multi-agency approach ensures a shared understanding of the priorities held by each of the Partnerships and promotes partnership working in order to safeguard children and young people with the ambition that they will lead safe, happy and healthy lives, with opportunities to learn, develop and fulfil their potential. Luton SCP received quarterly reports throughout 2023/2024 which demonstrated:

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### IMPACT OF ACTIVITY -TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

#### Key messages and data

- Safeguarding Bedfordshire delivered **58** training courses in 2023/24; with a significant attendance increase compared to 2022/23. This rise is partly attributed to a new offer of free places on Working Together for our Partners Agencies.
- Satisfaction rates remain high and were **100% in Q4**. Attendees commonly report the following benefits of attending our training:
  - increased confidence in own safeguarding practice/ responsibilities, importance of capturing the voice/ lived experience of the child/ young person,
  - confidence to share information and challenge/ escalate where practice is not effective, networking opportunities and knowledge of other agencies, local resources/ procedures.
- There has been a **reduction in cancelled courses**, and non-attendance or late cancellation has been monitored and will be a focus area for 2024/25.
- **eLearning uptake** has also risen beyond that predicted. We have focused on improving completions rates (now **87%**, up from 72%) and will continue to increase this in the coming year. The high demand has placed pressure on remaining licences, meaning

we will need to review the offer and agree purchase of additional licences to see us through to Sept 2025 (end of contract).

- Continuing our close working relationship with Bedfordshire Against Violence & Exploitation (BAVEX), we supported with the delivery of a series of exploitation themed events including 'Mind your Language: Exploitation and Victim Blaming' and 'Child Exploitation & Home Office Toolkit' webinars (funded by BAVEX).
- Our first practitioner conference since 2019 was held in February 2024 and focused on Neglect and had a number of keynote speakers including Jenny Malloy the author of 'Hackney Child'. **148** practitioners attended with excellent feedback.

Safeguarding Bedfordshire Training 2023/24	Q1		Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL 2023/24	TOTAL 2022/23
Courses delivered	14		6	19	19	58	56
Delegates booked (inc. non-attendance)	168 (17)		98 (3)	350 (35)	470 (84)	1086 (139)	733
Places Filled % (based on 20 per course)	60%		82%	92%	124%	94%	86%
Satisfaction %	95%		99%	98%	100%	98%	99%
Cancelled	3		2	1	0	6	11
eLearning Registrations	3101		4805	3289	4315	15,510	12,784
eLearning Completions	2525		4315	2890	3783	13,513	9,264
Completion rate %	81%		90%	88%	88%	87%	72%

### Working Together to Safeguard Children: Impact of attending training

Working Together (Free places summary)	Attended	Non-Attended	Places Used
Bedford Borough Council	40	13	53/60
Central Bedfordshire Council	41	11	52/60
Luton Borough Council	54	6	60/60
Bedfordshire Police	32	9	41/60
BLMK ICB	8	4	12/60

As shown in the Table above practitioner attendance by Luton staff on the *Working Together* course has exceeded all expectations, with the all free courses available taken up and the

LSCP paying for additional paid places. Practitioner feedback demonstrates how they have experienced this course and how it will impact on their practice with the following feedback:

‘I feel this training was very useful in my role, we daily deal with young vulnerable missing children that need safeguarding. It was interesting to **know what all other agencies do when we raise referrals** & all the different models they work from. I can **pass on the knowledge** to the rest of my team.’ *Bedfordshire Police*

‘The course helped me to build upon my current safeguarding practice, enabling me to **be clear about what is required** to keep children safe. It was very useful to be reminded of the safeguarding systems in place in Bedfordshire. I have been **well equipped with tools to use** when I work with children to make sure their **voice is heard and to understand their lived experience**. It was good to **learn of the new legislation** in place.’ *Social Care, Luton*

‘The information .... really **helped me to distinguish between early help and what that involves, as opposed to child protection**. The different scenarios helped me consider what my next steps would be in a safeguarding role and **will directly have a positive impact on the children I work with**. The **viewpoint of a police officer and social worker** in our training group was also useful and the course facilitator really used these people to help explain some of the more technical aspects of child protection.’ *Education, Luton*

‘Knowing exactly **how to make a safeguarding referral** and what support I can obtain from who and where when making decisions regarding the process and level of concern being raised. This will **empower our service to better serve** high risk and vulnerable YPs.’ *Drug & Alcohol Services, Pan Beds*

‘The training and scenarios given were very good and clear and actually shows how **important effective communication** is in safeguarding. Will apply all the aspects of effective communication in my work as we work as a hub with Care homes, social worker, and different local authorities.’ *Independent, Pan Beds*

The ‘Working Together’ classroom course was revised and refreshed in 2023/24 and heavily promoted with staff in Luton across all partners. In **Q4**, high demand for ‘Working Together’ was accommodated through extra capacity in online sessions, demand was due to requests from Partner Agencies and in **Q3** there were **63** places given to Luton staff, however **98** places were taken up with the LSCP paying for the additional courses. Attendance by Luton staff on Working Together courses has been consistently higher for two years.

### **Pan Bedfordshire Reflections on 2023/24**

#### **Achievements:**

- Increased attendance across agencies
- Increased Partner attendance on Working Together training
- ‘Understanding Neglect’ training pool is running well
- Increased eLearning completions

- Income generation funded Neglect Conference & co-funded 'Mind Your Language' webinars
- Budget carry forward for 2024/25 to fund annual conference and extra licences
- Strong links with Safeguarding Education Teams in Bedford, Central and Luton-attendance of DSL Forums, regular information sharing. Developing links with Early Years Teams.
- Engagement with 16+ provider forum event (Bedford/ Central)
- Working with local authority Community Safety Teams to coordinate Pan Beds MA Form briefings
- Working with Pan Beds Exploitation Lead to coordinate Exploitation themed briefings (funded by BAVEX)
- Pan Beds SCP/ SAB website
- Themed Resource lists

#### Even better if:

- eLearning uptake converted into training attendance
- Improve uptake of Bedfordshire ICB allocation of free Working Together places
- Improve training engagement with Early Years practitioners and Independent Provision (Alternative Provision, Residential Care Homes, CIC, etc)
- Connect with Luton 16+ Providers Forum
- Increase opportunities for face-to-face training
- Bite size webinars on key themes from CSPR's
- Increase dip sampling for impact case studies
- Improve eLearning completion rates to 90%+
- Launch eLearning evaluations (Virtual College)
- Explore opportunities to engage with Adults' workforce

#### Impact Reports 2023/ 24 *Copies available on request*

- **Quarterly Training Reports** presented at Pan Beds Co-ordinating Group and Luton placed based Joint Delivery Group and Joint Quality Assurance & Learning Meetings
- **Neglect Conference Report** & follow up **Impact Report** presented at Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group
- **Neglect themed training Report** presented at Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group
- **Exploitation Training Report** presented at Pan Beds Exploitation Group
- **'Transitions to the Max' Report** (SAB Learning Event)
- **Brook Traffic Light Toolkit Report** presented to Pan Beds Safeguarding Education Group

## PARTNERSHIP SELF EVALUATION – OUR ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE PLANS

The Partnership's core objective is to coordinate and hold partners to account to make sure they are protecting children and young people in Luton who might be or are at risk, and to ensure that timely learning from serious child safeguarding incidents is identified and

implemented. The LSCP has continued to work collaboratively with our two neighbouring Safeguarding Children Partnerships in Central Bedfordshire and Bedford to ensure there is a more joined up approach to safeguarding. This is particularly important where agencies deliver services across and are represented on several Partnerships. In agreeing a common approach and response to specific safeguarding and child protection issues such as child exploitation, neglect for example Pan Bedfordshire groups operate across the three Partnerships.

The three statutory partners of the three safeguarding children partnerships meet via a **Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leadership Children Group** that meets bi-monthly to discuss key issues, demands and to prioritise areas of work to be taken in regard to the safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children. The [LSCP Strategic Business Plan 2024-26](#) sets out the partnership priorities and how it measures impact through audit, performance data and the voice of the child. This model has worked well with actions delegated to the appropriate lead safeguarding Partnership or subgroup and monitored via action plans held by the **Pan Beds Coordination Group** with regular highlight reports from the sub-groups, and progress reported back to the **LSCP Strategic Board**.

In order to reduce pressures and demand in the system, Pan Bedfordshire activity especially around audits is coordinated by the **Pan Beds Coordinating Group**, which means that the partners were able to participate in the wider audit programme. It was also able to gather evidence of good practice in the system and benchmark against the neighbouring SCPs. LSCP is unique in the county in that it also has joint arrangements with the Luton Safeguarding Adults Board and their joint work is overseen by **Joint Executive Group** who report into each Strategic Board and ensure that their vision and strategic direction takes account of cross cutting priorities and a shared Risk Register ensures that each Board is alert to system risks. There has been significant joint work including via a cross cutting section on development day and examples within operational practice where the relationships established at strategic level have supported innovative practice. An example of this has been joint Board oversight of an after action review plan regarding a modern slavery and international recruitment irregularities operation which identified safeguarding concerns for both adults and children.

A key focus for the LSCP has been responding to Working Together 2023 which now underpins all of the activity of Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership. The LSCP has worked hard to respond to the new joint functions of lead safeguarding partners to:

- **Set the strategic direction, vision, and culture** of the local safeguarding arrangements, including agreeing and reviewing shared priorities and the resource required to deliver services effectively.
- **Lead their organisation's individual contribution** to the shared priorities, ensuring strong governance, accountability, and reporting mechanisms to hold their delegates to account for the delivery of agency commitments.
- **Review and sign off key partnership documents:** published multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including plans for independent scrutiny, shared annual budget, yearly report, and local threshold document.



- **Provide shared oversight of learning** from independent scrutiny, serious incidents, local child safeguarding practice reviews, and national reviews, ensuring recommendations are implemented and have a demonstrable impact on practice (as set out in the yearly report).
- **Ensure multi-agency arrangements** have the necessary level of business support, including intelligence and analytical functions, such as an agreed data set providing oversight and a robust understanding of practice.
- **Ensure all relevant agencies, including education settings,** are clear on their role and contribution to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.”

The LSCP was in a strong position to respond to this responsibility as it already had an existing quarterly meeting Chaired by the LBC Chief Executive and lead safeguarding partner. This group quickly took ownership of the functions above and were clear in their responsibilities and those of the delegated safeguarding partners who head up the LSCP Strategic Board.

The partnership has established strong leadership and constructive, critical challenge of practice with the three statutory partners meeting monthly to provide greater oversight, drive on priorities and to evaluate risk, resource and capacity in the system. The wider partnership meetings have good representation from both statutory and voluntary organisations, including schools and have retained lay membership. Relevant agencies have demonstrated their commitment to safeguarding by contributing across a range of meetings and subgroups many of which are across Pan Bedfordshire.

There are good working relationships with the Safeguarding Adults Partnership, as we share an Independent Chair/Scrutineer to ensure that where possible we address activities together. There is more focus and join up on the whole system response to some of the issues that affect each group such as domestic abuse, exploitation and substance misuse, and mental health. A wider protocol for joint working has been developed with shared Subgroups, development sessions and joint development covering cross cutting themes.

Having a shared Joint Quality Assurance and Learning Group has supported the connectivity across services and helped to identify possible gaps in domestic abuse, drug and alcohol use, legal literacy, preparing for adulthood - transitional safeguarding and cultural competence to name a few of the themes it has worked on together.

Key assurance has been sought and evidenced around the priorities and how they have made a difference to outcomes for children and young people. The voices and lived experiences of children and young have had more of a focus as evidenced in the work evolved through the Pan Beds Neglect Group on neglect and poverty. The Strategic Board recognised that currently **46%** of the primary reasons for child protection plans in Luton is neglect. It also fed into its plans that in terms of domestic abuse and neglect, when neglect becomes very substantial, neglect becomes the primary focus and domestic abuse has a lesser focus, this needs to be further explored.

As highlighted in the partnership safeguarding snapshot and through the report there has been scrutiny of both single and multi-agency performance and assurance information. There have been several audits presented to the LSCP that provide a window into the multiagency safeguarding system. The LSCP has also participated in the Pan Bedfordshire section 11 self-assessment and provided challenge to partners and relevant agencies regarding their evidence against the safeguarding standards set with a focus on Neglect practice.

Assurance around systems, structures, processes and governance was collated with oversight by the Pan Beds Strategic Leaders Group. Two new subgroups were agreed as part of the Pan Beds structure, '*Safeguarding in Education*' as a core group and '*Cultural Competence*' as a golden thread. This alongside a review of our MASA arrangements in September 2023 has ensured that both the structure, form and function are the best fit for ensuring effectiveness of decision making and making best use of limited resources.

The LSCP has yet to review its partnership funding for its business support this financial year. There remains additional pressure for the partnership in the light of the Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme delivery, and in their shared business support function with LSAB who have also seen increasing volumes of impact of review work as well as subgroups and task and finish groups. However, due to an agreement reached between all partners across both LSCP and LSCB in 2018 the funding level for partners has remained static with the Local Authority remaining the largest financial and in kind contributor to the arrangements. This remains a priority, especially in order to comply with the Working Together 2023 funding requirement for equitable and proportionate funding from the three statutory partners.

Luton has a strong commitment to our community and we work closely with all anchor organisations across the town and the wider BLMK region to ensure that we are all working towards providing the best possible start and environment for our children and Young People. We have a number of initiatives that exemplify this the first is the Fairness taskforce that involves organisations and businesses from across Luton working together to meet our goal of a town built on fairness and social justice.

Luton Council are delivering on our the '*Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme*' and the '*Child Friendly Luton*' strategy and we are engaging with our young people to understand what they would like to see delivered as part of this. Partnership pledges from all key partners have given a clear commitment to delivering on both these initiatives.

Examples of LBC innovation and 'doing things differently' can be summarised as follows:

- As members of the FFC Wave 2 Pathfinder we have the opportunity to test new delivery models for Family Help, Child protection, Family networks and Multi Agency safeguarding arrangements, sharing learning with the DfE prior to the national roll out of the social care reforms, as set out in Stable homes built on love.
- Luton have partnered with UNICEF to promote the goal of becoming a Child Friendly town. We have held a school conference to seek the views of children and young people, which will continue to be held annually.

- Protected Characteristic - The on-going development of the Luton Promise (our care leaver offer) and the engagement with Members and the development of our Champion model to support our care leavers with access to opportunities for leisure, learning and employment. We have also created a “my things matter pledge” to ensure that all our children and young people are able to maintain their belongings and when moving are supported to do so with dignity.
- Family Hubs Build back better hubs – delivering a support group for SGO carers and supporting universal services in the community with access to additional training and development opportunities that strengthen the Luton universal offer; Solihull parenting training, LGBTIQ, Domestic Abuse awareness.
- Luton are engaging in a regional implementation of Mockingbird to strengthen the support and retention of our foster carers in Luton.
- Luton are part of Foster East, the new regional Fostering hub supporting the recruitment of potential foster carers and strengthening the marketing approach and responses that are provided for initial enquiries to fostering.
- Family Partnership Service are going to be linking with Community Leaders to take on the lead professional role in level 2 cases, prior to FPS involvement. FPS continue to support schools to also manage cases at this level.
- FPS are collaboratively reviewing and updating the Early Help Plan with partner involvement and community engagement.
- FPS are linking with schools, with a worker spending half a day a week in the school supporting them with focused issues and strengthening the relationships with schools and FPS to promote healthy communication.
- FPS are providing targeted sessions within the community to address key issues and factors, recently they held a session focusing on the cost of living crisis and providing support to the community.
- FPS are providing a comprehensive parenting offer at a variety of stages, one targets children pre-diagnosed with SEND, second is teenage brain and Solihull and the third is a video interactive guidance, supporting the family in the home recording interactions and watches this back and provides support and advice.
- Solihull parenting training offer has been extended to care leavers team, nurseries, Primary schools and additional front line social workers are being skilled in this also.
- Luton have completed learning sessions with schools to hand back tasks that were previously managed by school attendance team, following the reorganisation of this service to meet the new DFE guidelines, and promoting the statutory offer to schools.
- Early identification tool at risk of Serious Youth Violence
- Embedding of the Return to social work programme and Social Work Academy
- Before implementation of Working Together guidance, LSCP had been working with Education as 4<sup>th</sup> Safeguarding Partner and made strides to secure relationships

#### **Key Improvements from April 2023 to March 2024**

- Continued Improvement Activity, scrutinised by the Children’s Improvement Board, which Luton decided to continue to run following DFE’s decision to end formal intervention in our services.

- Collaborative engagement with partners to complete the SEND SEF.
- Reviewed the Practice Model to align with the new Families First for Children Pathfinder test and trial period, commencing on 1st July 2024. This has been collaboratively reviewed with Partners, Management, front line staff and families.
- Permanent social worker recruitment in our front line teams is continuing to improve and is supported through our Workforce Strategy, Social Work Academy and the Temp to Perm conversion programme. We have seen a significant increase to the number of Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) positions supported in the service. We have developed a Social Work apprenticeship model and have a cohort of 10 apprentices throughout the service.
- Our agency rate is currently 27.7%, compared to 36% September 2022; Our aim is to reduce our agency usage to 20% by the end of 2025.
- We have seen a small reduction in staff turnover and an increase in the numbers of permanent Social Workers joining the service, due to our strengthened recruitment campaign, induction processes and staff development programme.
- Together with our Eastern Region partners we have developed a new Social Worker recruitment microsite.
- The introduction and further consolidation of our Collaborative Audit process has strengthened the local authority's approach to auditing, which is enabling social workers to develop greater understanding of the audit process, how it can help their practice and allow real time practice development for workers.
- Recent audit activity evidences the impact of our work to improve outcomes for children and families.
- Management oversight strengthened. Achieved through an extensive programme of bespoke support, including the addition of QA practice development officers into key services.
- Regular practice weeks continue to support professional development and practice improvements.
- The Safeguarding in Education practice is well embedded across the education sector and continues to provide safeguarding support, challenge and intervention as required.
- The Edge of Care Service is well embedded within our Social Care model and continues to provide intensive whole family support to enable children to remain within their family network, utilising our multi-disciplinary approach.
- Regular multi-agency meetings for young people going missing and at risk of exploitation continues; this is providing positive interventions through strengthened safety planning, shared intelligence and the development of targeted disruption plans.
- Our strengthened Contextual Safeguarding offer has further developed our understanding and response to young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families, building on the positive work and footprint of our Edge of Care team, MAGPan and our MACE panel chaired by an IRO.
- Work underway for new SEMH residential unit (Horizon House) due to complete and open in June 2024.

### **Our priorities for the next 12 months**

- We continue to focus on the “Magnificent Seven” as set out in our practice framework.
- To meet the key objectives of the Wave 2 Pathfinder for Families First for Children and embed the social care reforms in our practice.
- Review and embedding the updated Practice Framework to strengthen the service provided to children and families, aligning with the new Families First for Children.
- A reviewed and strengthened Education strategy will be finalised and embedded within the service and schools. This has been collaboratively reviewed and updated to capture the entire service and delivery.
- A review of the Effective Support threshold document, to align with PAN Beds, Practice Framework and the new approach being offered from Luton social care through Families First for Children.
- Mockingbird and hubs implementation.
- Strengthening Youth Participation groups
- Holistic assessments that address the individual needs of all children in the family, ensure that the voices of children are captured and inform future planning, and clearly demonstrate analysis of information using a sound evidence base.
- Robust plans addressing identified risks and needs, with clear and concise actions and interventions that have named owners and timescales that ensure children’s needs are effectively met in a timely manner, and with well described contingency plans should risks increase or needs not be met.
- Effective and meaningful direct work and visit recording that fully evidences that children are being safely cared for, thriving, supported and their voices are heard. This ensures their lived experience directly influences our support and service planning.
  - To maintain the improvements made regarding our Initial Health Assessment timeliness.
  - To maintain the continued focus on the quality and consistency of management oversight and case supervision
- Ongoing recruitment of a permanent workforce to ensure that any changes of social workers are minimal thus enabling children and young people to develop positive relationships with their social workers.
- Continue to work in collaboration with health partners to deliver Family Hubs in local communities.
- All cases graded as requiring improvement or Inadequate, will have a robust SMART plan to improve the quality of the outcomes, with each audit being robustly re-audited to ensure progress

The BLMK ICB has sought to work closely with partners, for support with early intervention and good outcomes for children and their families. The front door audit has been useful for recognising those areas where improvement is needed in collaborative working particularly in the early stages when a family presents to services, needing help and support. The ICB has supported primary care colleagues and health providers to update their safeguarding policies in their respective organisations so that their work is guided by current legislation. Audits completed by health provider organisations demonstrate to the ICB how they recognise when

children need to be safeguarded and how they subsequently work to support children and families.

This is also evident in key performance indicators submitted to the BLMK ICB, demonstrating outcomes, and any gaps in pathways, as well as through the serious incident reporting process. The impact of this work is also evident through supervision sessions with individual staff members.

There is good ICB representation at boards both Pan Beds and Luton to understand emerging themes that are impacting our service users. The ICB uses this information to support our commissioned services and gain assurances about how our population is being safeguarded through contract monitoring work and development of organisational policies.

Our provider services have reported feeling more confident to recognise potential safeguarding issues and refer users into support services, because of the ICB support provided.

There remain challenges about the quality of referrals into services- need to be made more robust, and more professionals need to be more confident to refer into services. Communication between agencies also need to be strengthened to support better safeguarding practice for the coming year.

The ICB has participated in the multi-agency partnership neglect audit, as well as multi agency quality assurance audit around referrals into the MASH

This has helped with more effective partnership working, as gaps and challenges in practice were identified and steps put in place to support practitioners. These included disseminating guidance around the effective support and threshold documents, as well as strengthening organisation policies to support staff and improve information sharing across agencies.

The ICB has also circulated outcomes of CSPRs and learning reviews to support partnership arrangements.

For Bedfordshire Police, achievement of improved Training and development force wide which has included, force control room, patrol functions, student officer hub, investigation teams, crime bureau and crime recording teams to improve understanding of the following.

- Voice of the child, Child Neglect, Child Safeguarding options, referral mechanisms, domestic abuse and how to engage with children, Clare's Law, International child protection certificates.
- Specific tailored CP training to those officers in relevant investigative units focussing on Child Neglect, Child sexual abuse, child exploitation, investigation standards.
- Continuation of Op Encompass – improving the sharing of information in a timely manner with those partner agencies engaging with children.
- Significant reduction in the timeliness of referrals to partner agencies meaning information shared and action taken to safeguard more effectively.

- Daily discussions in MASH to talk through CP referrals, improving the quality and necessity of referrals, minimising duplication and ensuring focus. Conversion rate is not possible to measure across pan beds approach.

There has also been ongoing attendance at all statutory multi-agency meetings and also at non-statutory meetings such as CEM and meetings that fall out of the statutory meetings. A key contribution is our participating in discussions in respect of the pathfinder bid and also shaping of the delivery plan which will bring about the system innovations required by Dfe.

In terms of our future plans, we will work to our Strategic Business Plan and Strategies to:

- Ensure that we **implement and embed the revisions from Working Together** in our MASA including funding, the role of education in the partnership and how we deliver and test our priority areas of focus through effective structures and processes
- **Support the delivery of the Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme** through a test and learn approach that ensures we have the right thresholds, multi-agency case management and information sharing processes to ensure families receive early support and a lead practitioner throughout their involvement with services
- **Ensure our dataset is thematic, that it gives a clear overview of safeguarding both in Luton and across Pan Bedfordshire** that demonstrates impact and helps us determine our areas of focus and priority.
- **Make multi-agency systemic improvement into practice** around neglect, domestic abuse, preparing for adulthood, serious youth violence and, whole family approaches
- **Continue to learn from audit, rapid reviews and CSPRs** demonstrating improvements in practice and impact for children and families
- **Further inclusion of the voice of the child** and explore the role of young scrutineers as well as the requirements of the Luton Child Friendly Town 2040 Vision and Strategy.

In order to be fully compliant with Working Together to Safeguarding 2023 revisions the LSCP will publish and implement its revised **MASA arrangements** on 16 December 2024. The impact of these revisions will be reported on in its next yearly report in September 2025.

## INDEPENDENT CHAIR'S SCRUTINY OF THE PARTNERSHIP

*“Independent scrutiny should drive continuous improvement and provide assurance that arrangements are working effectively for children, families, and practitioners. It should also consider learning from local child safeguarding practice reviews, national reviews and thematic reports. The independent scrutineer or scrutiny group should be able to demonstrate knowledge, skills and expertise in the area being scrutinised and consequently add value to the work of local agencies.” – Working Together 2023*

Luton safeguarding partners as part of their arrangements to safeguard children and promote their welfare are required to demonstrate how they address these requirements. The LSCP Independent Scrutineer is *Alan Caton OBE*, who is responsible for ensuring the LSCP is compliant with statutory guidance, meeting their objectives and priorities, raising any



challenges, reviewing processes and procedures, and liaising on a national level with other partnerships and key external stakeholders. Alan details his approach to scrutiny below.

I have held the role of independent chair since 2020 and was appointed to offer independent scrutiny of Luton's multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and this is my assessment of how effective these arrangements have been in practice over the past 12 months. I will highlight where I feel the arrangements are performing well and where I consider further development is required.

As an independent scrutineer it is my role to review the yearly report for the Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership for evidence of safeguarding effectiveness and areas for further improvement. This report highlights the improvement work carried out by the partnership, reflecting its commitment to the safety, wellbeing and development of children and young people in Luton. It also gives good evidence of progress against priorities as well as providing evidence of impact resulting in positive outcomes for children and young people.

The Luton safeguarding children arrangements comply with their statutory responsibilities. The arrangements are clear and have recently been redrafted to ensure compliance with Working Together 2023 and have been published in accordance with statutory guidance.

Overall, I have found that good relationships have been built between partners, both statutory and non-statutory and that there is a real willingness for the safeguarding partners to work together to seek out vulnerable children and to provide them with the best possible services.

Working together 2023 clearly outlines that the LSP should agree the level of funding needed to deliver effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, which should include the consideration of business and analytical support, independent scrutiny, infrastructure and core functions including CSPRs, multi-agency training and learning events. It goes on to say that funding contributions from the statutory safeguarding partners should be 'equitable'. In Luton the funding arrangements have not been reviewed and fall disproportionately on the local authority. I would like to see the matter of funding being reviewed by the safeguarding partners as a matter of urgency.

There has been a real focus on improving services since the 2022 ILACS inspection to improve early identification of need and safeguarding of children. The detail of this work is highlighted on page 10 of this report, however it has been particularly pleasing to see improvements in the quality and impact of supervision and management oversight on decision making. It has also been pleasing to see improvements in the quality and analysis of assessments of children.

The partnership has successfully prioritized the voice of children, actively involving them in decision-making processes and leveraging their insights to improve co-ordinated service delivery. By placing children at the heart of their work, the partnership has demonstrated its dedication to understanding and addressing their unique needs.

This report highlights the priority issue of 'neglect'. Neglect continues to be the most common form of child abuse across the UK, which reflects the position in Luton. It is vital that as a partnership, there is early recognition of neglect to ensure a consistent and timely response.

The Pan Bedfordshire partnership has adopted a single countywide child neglect assessment tool, called the Graded Care Profile (GCP2). GCP2 has been adopted by all partners, however, as I mentioned last year, returns using this tool were low. Whilst we have seen an increase in its use, by local authority staff, the numbers completed from the wider partnership are still disappointingly low. I will continue to challenge agencies to use GCP2 to identify children at risk of neglect and hope to see further increases in returns and an early intervention to improve the lives of children who are at risk of neglect.

The partnership in Luton has displayed real vigour when it comes to learning from serious cases. The purpose of reviews of serious child safeguarding cases, at both local and national level, is to identify improvements to be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Such reviews should seek to prevent or reduce the risk of recurrence of similar incidents. It is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Partners to identify serious safeguarding incidents at a local level and then to review them as appropriate so that improvements can be made.

This report includes highlights the details of the Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews that were undertaken during this reporting period on page 21.

Following last year's safeguarding adult review of 'Max', an area of focus of the partnership this year has been transitional safeguarding, ensuring a smooth and coherent journey for young people as they navigate the complexities of adolescence and transition to adulthood. The collaboration between agencies is improving in this area, creating a strong safety net for these vulnerable young individuals. This continues to be complex and challenging work, particularly for those children who have been experiencing abuse and exploitation. As they reach 18, the services available to them are limited. Abuse and exploitation doesn't end at 18 years of age and yet many services for adults are designed only to support those people with ongoing care and support needs. This important work needs to continue to enable the partnership to develop effective 'Transitional Safeguarding' arrangements.

Luton's Safeguarding Partners have a well organised group of multi-agency professionals that oversee reviews and ensure there is a culture of learning and continuous improvement. The group are very keen to see that the recommendations from reviews improve outcomes for children and that lessons learned are embedded into practice. Furthermore, the partners have created a robust audit regime which ensures that the learning is revisited and embedded. I will closely monitor the audit process to confirm that learning is indeed embedded, and practice is improved.

In conclusion, there are, in my view, many strengths to the safeguarding arrangements for Luton's children. I have found a strong partnership that is open to scrutiny and challenge and one that strives to continually learn and improve practice.

There is strong leadership from the both the LSPs and DSPs and a clear sense of joint and equal responsibility from the three safeguarding partners. The partnership is one that is built on high support, high challenge and where difficult conversations are encouraged.

The attendance at partnership Boards and associated subgroups is good and has good representation from the wider partnership. There is excellent engagement from leaders across the partnership who set a culture which drives improvement activity. There is a clear structure and good links between the children's and adult's partnership arrangements.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to thank all of the organisations and individuals in the public, voluntary and private sectors who work tirelessly across Luton to improve the safety and quality of life of our children, young people, and families.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alan Caton'.

**Alan Caton OBE**

**Independent Chair and Scrutineer Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership**