

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 3 June 2019

Wards: All

Subject: Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements

Lead officer: Rachael Wardell, Director of Children Schools and Families

Lead member: Councillor Kelly Braund, Lead Member for Children

Contact officer: Paul Bailey, Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership, Safeguarding Development & Policy Manager

Recommendations:

- A. That Cabinet approve the proposed arrangements for the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership 2019- 2021
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek cabinet approval of revised partnership arrangements for multi-agency working to safeguard Merton children and young people and promote their wellbeing.
- 1.2 Following statutory changes introduced by the Children's and Social Work Act 2017, the Local Authority has been working with statutory partners to make the required changes to arrangements in Merton. In order to operationalise arrangements, Cabinet approval is now required to ensure changes can be implemented within statutory timescales.

2. Details

2.1 Under the Children's Act (2004) the Local Authority – together with statutory partners – has a duty to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children in its area. Until now, the Local Authority has discharged these duties by being part of the Merton Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) which was responsible for co-ordinating and monitoring the effectiveness of these arrangements.

2.2. The passing of the Children's and Social Work Act 2017 has made changes to existing requirements. Statutory guidance specifically states that:

'To achieve the best possible outcomes, children and families should receive targeted services that meet their needs in a co-ordinated way. There is a shared responsibility between organisations and agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area. Many local organisations and agencies have a duty under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to ensure that they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their functions. The responsibility for this join-up locally rests with the three safeguarding partners who have a shared and equal duty to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area'.

2.3 Working Together 2018 defines safeguarding partners as follows:

‘A safeguarding partner in relation to a local authority area in England is defined under the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act, 2017) as:

(a) the local authority

(b) a clinical commissioning group for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area

(c) the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area’

2.4 The Local Authority has been working with its statutory partners to develop revised governance and accountability frameworks in accordance with statutory guidance. These are outlined in the ‘Merton Children Safeguarding Partnership Agreement’ which can be found at Annex 1. This document replaces the existing LSCB Constitution.

2.5 In making the transition from a Local Safeguarding Children’s Board to a Local Safeguarding Partnership, Merton is moving forward from a position of outstanding, as identified by Ofsted in the Inspection in 2017. The new framework therefore builds on the strength of our existing partnerships and our relentless focus on safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. The aim of this partnership agreement is to reflect the kind of partnership that was recognised in the 2017 Ofsted Inspection of the Board, which is also aligned to the new expectations as identified in statutory guidance Working Together 2018

2.6. In accordance with Working Together 2018, the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership recognises that “Schools, colleges and other educational providers have a pivotal role to play in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. Their co-operation and buy-in to the new arrangements will be vital for success.”¹ The Partnership therefore recognises the vital role of schools, colleges and other educational providers by including sector representatives as a primary Relevant Agency.

2.7. In accordance with section 14 of the Children Act 2004, the core purposes of the Partnership are:

(a) to **coordinate** what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area; and

(b) to **ensure the effectiveness** of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.

2.8 This includes ensuring:

- Effective policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children are in place and operating well across the Partnership
- The effective coordination of services and instructing partners to address any concerns or disparities

¹ *Working Together 2018*, chapter 3, paragraph 25, p 77

- Cooperation with neighbouring authorities
- Communicating the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children across Merton Partners and residents
- Appropriate, consistent and impactful safeguarding training is delivered in Merton
- Effective procedures to enable a coordinated response and analysis to unexpected child deaths are in place (this will be led by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG))
- Monitoring the quality and impact of the safeguarding system in Merton
- Undertaking local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1 The development of a Local Safeguarding Partnership is a statutory requirement under the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) as such there are no alternative options.

3.2 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

3.2.1 The Transition Task and Finish Group has undertaken extensive consultation with statutory partners and relevant agencies prior to the Partnership Agreement being approved by the Merton Safeguarding Children Board in March 2019. This was a series of meetings involving representatives from a wide range of bodies including:

- The statutory safeguarding partners (the Local Authority, Health and the Police),
- Education representatives,
- Adults,
- Community and Housing,
- Registered Social Landlords
- National Probation
- Safer Merton
- Public Health

3.3 TIMETABLE

3.3.1 There is an obligation on all local authority areas to publish their arrangements for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare by 29th June 2019 and must implement these arrangements by 29th September 2019.

3.4 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.4.1 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership will have a shared budget to further its objectives. Historically, the Local Authority has contributed the most in terms of finances and resources.
- 3.4.2 The Local Authority (together with statutory partners) will agree contributions each autumn for the following business year. The Statutory Partners will agree the level of funding secured from each partner, which should be equitable and proportionate, and propose any contributions from Relevant Agency, to support the local arrangements.
- 3.4.3 The cost of any local child safeguarding practice review will be borne by additional subscription from the Statutory Partners who have been involved in the case (the Local Authority the Police BCU and the CCG as the lead service commissioners). Statutory Partners may propose contributions from Relevant Agencies and Co-opted members who have been involved in the case. The outline costs of the commissioning of the review, independent author/s, legal advice, media work will be estimated as part of the planning of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review and apportioned according to agency/sector involvement in the case. The cost of dissemination of lessons will be borne as part of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Training Budget.
- 3.4.4 Partner agencies will bear the costs of the attendance and contribution of their representatives to the partnership and will ensure that sufficient time is given to Members to attend meetings and undertake the work of the Partnership

3.5 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.5.1 The development of a Local Safeguarding Partnership is a statutory requirement under the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017)

3.6 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 3.6.1 None

3.7 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 3.7.1 None

3.8 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.8.1 None

3.9 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Appendix 1: Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Agreement

3.10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 3.10.1 None