



# Sandwell Children's **Safeguarding** Partnership

***Our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) 2 years on***

***'Working Together to Keep Children Safe'***

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## **Foreword**

Writing the foreword to this document in 2021 is a very different task to writing it last year. Last year, it was the start of our second year as the Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership. Last year I commented on the honesty and energy of partners to ensure that our safeguarding arrangements were robust and meaningful. Last year I commended the strength of our partnership as a good starting point for our new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, as required by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together 2018. Last year I had no idea what was ahead of us.

The impact of the Covid pandemic has been testament to the supportive, constructive, can-do attitude that all agencies have shown in truly working together to safeguard children during 2020 and into 2021. Our revised governance arrangements have enabled us to continue to move forward our ambitions and plans, but also provided us with the framework for responsive, urgent action to manage the daily emergencies of the pandemic. In a bizarre way, the pandemic has shone a light on our joint work and helped to improve it further. Our Development Day resulted in some changes to the governance as part of an iterative improvement journey.

The guidance in Working Together is very clear about the leadership role to be played by the statutory safeguarding partners – I can confidently state that those partners have risen to that role over the past year. Moreover, our decision to include our voluntary and community sector organisations and our schools in our Partnership has demonstrated that they are a vital part of our safeguarding approach.

During the year we have experienced the challenges of a range of significant incidents and serious child safeguarding cases and we have overseen local child safeguarding practice reviews when appropriate to do so. We have a specific duty to ensure that clear recommendations for action are progressed from these reviews to improve practice and the quality of provision, and that when there may be wider significance, we engage with the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. We have received positive feedback from the national Panel about our approach to these matters.

We appointed an Independent Scrutineer to work with us; looking closely at whatever she felt needed to be scrutinised and presenting us with her findings, an honest and transparent process that helps us to continue to improve the ways in which we can keep our children and young people safe. We have developed an approach to engaging with children, young people and families, so that we can see our work through different lenses and assess our impact through their eyes.

This MASA document provides the structure upon which we hang these intentions, and so its annual refresh, presented here, is a significant product that describes how we operate; read alongside our Annual Report, it describes the difference we have made; and seen in the context of our Annual Business Plan, it reflects the ambitions we have for the future.

**Lesley Hagger**

**Director of Children's Services**

**Chair of Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership (SCSP)**

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## 1. Introduction

Prior to the establishment of Sandwell's Children Safeguarding Partnership (SCSP) in April 2019, the Local Safeguarding Children Board as SSCB through its leadership coordinated and ensured the effectiveness of safeguarding activity in the area. This was supported by strong local partnership working and mechanisms for scrutiny of practice through audit and case reviews and sharing knowledge and learning with the partnership. The final Annual Report of the SSCB in 2018/19 outlined the work undertaken and its impact in safeguarding and improving outcomes for children and young people in Sandwell prior to the abolishment of the Board and the formation of the SCSP.

During the first year of inception, 2019/20 the SCSP has built on the work of the former SSCB and has sought to strengthen arrangements so they are proactive, effective and robust by introducing new ways of working in order to meet the requirements of Working Together 2018. We achieved this by setting out our 2019/20 plans for working together with relevant agencies to identify and respond to the needs of children in Sandwell.

This SCSP MASA Plan 2021 sets out how we will further embed our safeguarding arrangements and ensure through our local threshold arrangements that help and support is offered at the earliest point to enable children, young people and families to have positive outcomes, where they reach their full potential.

In Sandwell, the partners are fully committed to keeping children and young people at the heart of all of our activities and will seek every opportunity to involve them and their families in the decision-making, planning, commissioning, design, development, delivery and evaluation of services that affect their daily lives. This will include our independent scrutiny arrangements in which children and young people's experiences will be fundamental in quality assurance.

## 2. Background, National & Local Context

The 'Working Together 2018' government guidance (resulting from the Children and Social Work Act 2017) specified the three organisations identified as key safeguarding partners as the Local Authorities (LAs), Chief Officers of Police and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). The three organisations became responsible for making arrangements to work together with relevant agencies to safeguard and protect the welfare of children in the area.

Following an inadequate judgement from the 2017 Ofsted inspection for Children's Services, in 2018, Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT) were brought in to provide Children Social Care Services. This adds a fourth statutory partner with equal responsibilities for agreeing the local safeguarding arrangements for us in Sandwell.

The local statutory arrangements therefore require **health, local authorities, the police and SCT** to make clear their leadership responsibility for multi-agency arrangements, to include the identification of a chief officer in each of the agencies to have responsibility and authority for ensuring full collaboration with those statutory arrangements. For Sandwell the four safeguarding partner representatives are:

West Midlands Police – the Chief Superintendent South Bank Divisional Commander

Sandwell's Clinical Commissioning Group – the Director of Quality and Nursing

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council – the Director of Children's Services

Sandwell Children's Trust – Chief Executive

In addition, the Local Authorities via Public Health and Clinical Commissioning Group are identified as child death review partners responsible for setting up child death review arrangements.

The Sandwell Children’s Safeguarding Partnership (SCSP) was established on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019. From this point the four safeguarding partner organisations became responsible for the partnership arrangements for keeping children and young people safe. The local arrangements were developed in full consultation with relevant agencies which is a shared responsibility to ensure children are safeguarded, achieve their best outcomes and for children and families to receive services in a co-ordinated way.

### **3. Statement of Purpose**

The statutory objectives and functions of SCSP are outlined in legislation Children and Social Work Act 2017 and statutory guidance Working Together 2018.

The Safeguarding Partners are required to agree on:

- The coordination of safeguarding services – how work together and with other relevant agencies (relevant agencies are those whose involvement may be required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children’s needs -locally)
- act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others
- implement local and national learning including from serious child safeguarding incidents

Purpose of MASA is to support and enable local organisations in a system that ensures:

1. children are safeguarded, and their welfare promoted
2. partner organisations and agencies collaborate, share and co-own the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children
3. organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively
4. there is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats
5. learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice
6. information is shared effectively to facilitate more accurate and timely decision making for children and families
7. Local data from all agencies is developed strategically and is used to identify and respond to vulnerability and risk to further help and protect children.

### **4. Vision and Values**

#### Shared Vision

One of the first areas agreed under the revised local arrangements by the key and wider relevant partners was the need to have a shared vision and clear value base in which all practitioners across Sandwell’s children’s workforce could identify with, understand and commit to. This was also taken to children for their views which was considered and included in agreeing the name of the partnership as Sandwell Children’s Safeguarding Partnership (SCSP) with the strapline for the vision being ‘Working Together to keep Children Safe’.

#### **Sandwell Children’s Safeguarding Partnership**

*‘Working Together to keep Children Safe’*

In addition to the name change and strapline the Partnership also produced a vision statement and set of values which has become integral to how the Partnership plan, coordinate, provide strategic

leadership, review and implement learning for services to children young people and families. Our vision is as follows:

**“Our vision is for all children to be safe at home and in their communities, where they are loved, cared for and have the stability to grow healthily and to achieve their ambition”.**

Stakeholders agreed that the future arrangements should define the way the Partnership will do things through a set of core values that are understood, embedded and drive the Partnership, organisations/agencies and practitioners, at all levels, that provide services to children and families. The value statements are as follows: -

- a) *We will put children at the heart of what we do*
- b) *Together we will make Sandwell safer for children*
- c) *We will always listen, learn and improve*
- d) *We will have respect for each other and recognise and respond positively to difference*
- e) *We will be positive about the future, and have aspirations for Sandwell’s children, be solution focused, committed and innovative.*
- f) *We are going to make a difference!*

The following is the values with further explanation of their aims, this will become an implicit approach to any culture and practice changes made across Sandwell’s multi-agency safeguarding arrangement.

- a) ***We will put children at the heart of what we do***  
We will listen and value what families tell us, and act to improve their experience of services and the way our staff work families. We know that by listening to children and families and by agencies working together we can identify and respond to those children and families that need help to prevent children being harmed and quickly act when we suspect a child is or may be suffering harm.
- b) ***Together we will make Sandwell safer for children***  
Children have stated that we all need to work together to keep them safe!  
SCSP believes that the welfare and protection of children is the everybody’s responsibility. We will promote the work of the Partnership to all those working with children and the general public. Only by working together with partners and communities can children be safe at home, school and in their communities. We will work with families to provide the right support at the right time, so that children are cared for effectively, where they can grow in stable homes and be healthy, form strong relationships and attachments and feel as though they belong. Children will be protected from avoidable harm and reach their full potential.
- c) ***We will always listen, learn and improve***  
The SCSP will support and engage agencies in developing and improving their safeguarding practices.  
We will ensure that all staff are committed, confident and competent to work with families.  
We will listen and value what our staff tell us and act to improve practice within the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. We will endeavour to develop and promote a learning culture, which seeks to identify areas of vulnerability, and learn lessons in order to pre-empt potential problem. We will develop a safe environment to promote evidence-based learning. We will provide robust scrutiny and challenge to try and keep children safe at all times and promote the best interest of children.

- e) ***We will have respect for each other and recognise and respond positively to difference***  
 We will strive for a culture of respectful, and reflective challenge and scrutiny, whereby we are able to hold each other to account to ensure the best is achieved for the Children and families of Sandwell.  
 We will ensure that everybody has a voice and is treated with respect.  
 We will work with families to understand their circumstances, culture and values.  
 We will talk to families about our plans and will work together to make sure the best support is provided when it is most needed.  
 The Partnership will seek assurance that the ‘Early Help’ offer is meaningful and targeted.
- f) ***We will be positive about the future, and have aspirations for Sandwell’s children, be solution focused, committed and innovative.***  
 We want the best for Sandwell’s children and families. We will be ambitious for them and their future aspirations. We will understand the child’s journey, provide help and support and opportunities to support plans for their future and celebrate in their success.
- g) ***We are going to make a difference!***  
 We will make a difference and will increase in situ public confidence in the legal child protection system by ensuring a proper balance is achieved between intrusion into family life and the necessary protection of children from harm. SCSP will make a difference by being a responsive, learning Partnership that strives continually to improve. The Partnership will continue to develop on mechanisms which monitor its own and partner agencies performance and will use any emerging lessons to improve practices and outcomes for children. Importantly, we will seek the views of children and their families to inform how services can better meet their needs.

## 5. Geographical Area/Boundaries



Sandwell is located to the west of Birmingham and shares its borders with Birmingham, Dudley, Wolverhampton and Walsall. Sandwell is a metropolitan borough with six towns; *Oldbury, Rowley Regis, Smethwick, Tipton, Wednesbury and West Bromwich* and is one of seven local authorities that make up the West Midlands conurbation.

It is a Borough that faces significant challenges. Sandwell has high and widespread deprivation with increasing demands for council services. The Council has faced some difficult issues including significant change to the leadership team, continued austerity and protracted standards cases. The Council acknowledges that Children's social care services have been inadequate for far too long, with insufficient improvement. Despite this context there is an optimism that improvements have been made and our ambitions, opportunities and outlook as a Council to move forward, improve its reputation and build on its strengths and successes is making real progress.



The Council has established a strong vision for the future of the Borough. This is articulated through the recently developed 'Vision 2030'. There are good levels of awareness across the organisation and amongst external partners of the Vision which sets out ten strategic outcomes for the borough. There is now a need to ensure 'Vision 2030' drives and determines the Council's future role and purpose - as well as prioritisation, resource allocation and performance management - to improve outcomes for Sandwell's towns and communities. The Council now needs to progress the thinking, planning and practice at pace with partners in order to capitalise on the awareness, enthusiasm and high expectations it has generated through the stakeholder engagement undertaken to shape the Vision and ambitions.

The SCSP co-exist in the context of Sandwell wider strategic partnership arrangements, a number of which have focused areas of work relating to children young people and families, this includes health and Well-being Board, Safeguarding Adults Board, Sandwell Safer Partnership. The Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Partners will also link or provide representation on safeguarding children, with other partnerships that have a remit to help and protect children and their families i.e. Chanel Panel, Family Justice board and Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements.

### ***Safeguarding in Context***



Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 41% of all children living in the area, compared with 22% in the country as a whole. The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are Indian and Pakistani.

The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is above the national figures with 31% in primary schools and 26% in secondary schools.

This compares with national averages of 19% and 14% respectively.

Sandwell has experienced an increase in economic migrants, with the majority arriving from Poland; this group increased from 208 individuals in 2001 to 5,673 in 2011. In 2011, people born in EU accession countries accounted for 2.6% of the usual resident population of Sandwell. There have also been additions to the established communities, including the number of individuals born in India increasing by 4,556 to 15,190 and in Pakistan increasing by 1,722 to 5,295.



*Contextual Safeguarding*, we know children may be a vulnerable to risk of abuse and exploitation both within and outside of their families. It has become apparent that Sandwell has a cohort of exploited young people who we are not equipped to respond to as fully as we would like. There are a number of young people who we know,

through our close partnership working with the police, are being exploited to run county lines, become involved in gangs, violence and are part of our missing cohort. We have identified those young people who are high risk and are currently open to SCT and we are working with partners to strengthen our offer to this cohort of vulnerable young people.



*Neglect*, has been identified as a a key priority to target improvement, it has been feature in both National and local Serious Case reviews, local learning reviews and multiagency audits undertaken. Neglect may be a factor or a direct cause of death or severe injury in children and young people, and it has been identified as a prevailing or risk factor when there is hidden harm relating to physical and sexual abuse. There is an association between



neglect and damage to the child's lived experience and their physical and emotional wellbeing. It is important that Sandwell practitioners raise their understanding identify and effectively respond to neglect and it is the SCSP intention to drive improvement by implementing the NSPCC Graded Care Profile 2 across the partnership.

**6. Effective Support and Levels of Need** - *arrangements for the safeguarding partners to work together to identify and respond to the needs of children in the area - how the threshold document setting out the local criteria for action aligns with the arrangements.*

**Section 11 of the Children Act 2004**

Places duties on a range of organisations, agencies and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Thresholds

The new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements does not change how partner agencies respond to identified needs and risk of children, young people and their families. All those that work with children and their families or carers are required to work to the multi-agency thresholds document to ensure that children and families get the right support at the right time. The multi-agency thresholds document sets out four levels of need and provides clear guidance to individuals agencies and practitioners the level of need and whether additional support and/or intervention services are required.

1. **Universal Need** – wherever possible this will be met by universal service provision
2. **Universal Plus with additional needs** -
3. **Targeted additional needs** -
4. **Complex and significant needs**

It is acknowledged that children may move up and down from one level to another and that agencies (including universal services) can and will offer support at more than one level of the continuum of need. As soon as any professional is aware that a child has any additional needs he/she will talk to the child and their family and offer advice and support to meet that need.

Levels one and two of the continuum of need suggests that partner agencies should expect to intervene and provide support and advice to the family (including signpost to other providers for additional support) to prevent escalation of support or intervention by specialist services. Levels three and four indicate a point at which Sandwell's Targeted services and Children's Social Care will become involved in families and will carry out assessment to plan effective intervention.

In all circumstance's children and young people, parents and carers will be informed of a practitioner's intention and plans to make a referral for assessment and intervention unless to do so would place a child at risk of harm.

**7. Accountability/Reporting Arrangements**

The SCSP is independent of any single agency and is not subordinate to nor subsumed within any local structures. The Safeguarding Partners are equally and jointly responsible for the implementation and demonstrable success of the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

***“The Safeguarding Partners are equally and jointly responsible,  
and must make arrangements to work together with relevant agencies  
(as they consider appropriate) to safeguard and protect the welfare of children in the area.”***

WT 2018

The SCSP to reflect the joint and equal responsibility will report on the progress on its Business Plan and other related activities being undertaken across the partnerships multi agency safeguarding arrangement to the:

1. Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Scrutiny Committee
2. Sandwell Children's Trust Board
3. Police Crime Commission
4. Clinical Commissioning Group Governing Body

## **8. Independent Scrutiny of the Effectiveness of the MASA**

Working Together 2018 specifies that the SCSP must be subject to an independent scrutiny arrangement, produce and publish an annual report on the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangement in Sandwell. The report will identify weakness, the causes of the weakness and the action taken to address them as well as other proposals for action, recognising achievements made and providing a realistic assessment of the challenges to be overcome.

The SCSP is committed to ensuring that the work is properly planned and reviewed and as such will subject the multiagency safeguarding arrangements to annual independent scrutiny.

### Annual Report

Each year an SCSP Annual Report will be published. It will include

- a) evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families from early help to looked-after children and care leavers
- b) an analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities
- c) a record of decisions and actions taken by the partners in the report's period (or planned to be taken) to implement the recommendations of any local and national child safeguarding practice reviews, including any resulting improvements
- d) ways in which the partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision
- e) Safeguarding partners will be expected to include a review of the use of restraint where applicable within their establishment in their annual report returns.

The annual report will be presented to the Safeguarding Partners own agency governance and accountability bodies namely the Local Authority Overview, Sandwell Children's Trust and Scrutiny Committee, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Clinical Commissioning Group.

The SCSP Annual Report will be made publicly available on the each of the Safeguarding Partners organisation websites.

## **9. Chairing and Leadership**

"The best local safeguarding arrangements are developed from a shared vision and shared values. It is about all agencies involved being ambitious to secure the very best responses to children at risk of harm in their community. Local safeguarding arrangements work well when there is a clear line of sight on both the operational and the strategic response locally. Agencies need to know the quality of their frontline practice. They must understand the direct experiences of children and their families in their local area.

Without good leadership, safeguarding arrangements will fail. This means that each of the 3 lead safeguarding partners must step up to the task in hand: the police, health and the local authority. It

means working together to ensure a joined-up local response to reduce the risk of harm to children. This is about leaders who understand their local context. Children and their families do not live in silos, so it is critical that leaders create an environment in which multi-agency working can flourish.”

Yvette Stanley CC 2018

Strong Leadership is critical to the success of SCSP MASA, and to ensure good collaborative approach with the range of agencies and organisations that provided services to CYPF. The SCSP Chair and the Safeguarding Partners will lead and by example and practice ensure commitment to the work of the SCSP. This will be demonstrable in their own organisational performance in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children both operationally and strategically and how effectively the Partnership can identify and respond to emerging need and risk. The SCSP has full commitment from Chief Officers from the statutory Safeguarding Partner agencies and Relevant Partner agencies, and the Lead member of the SMBC. There is an ambition to improve the quality of services and make a difference to the lives of the children in Sandwell.

The SCSP Chair will have sufficient standing and expertise in the area of child safeguarding to command the respect and support of all partners. The Chair will act objectively and distinguish their role as SCSP Chair from any other employment or interests.

The Chair will ensure that the work of the partnership is aligned with the Vision 2030, Children Young Peoples Plan and Improvement Plan. The Chair will ensure the SCSP has a clear strategic plan and business delivery programme with measurable objectives of which the Partnership will monitor and track its priorities and core business objectives.

## **10. Individual Roles of the Statutory Safeguarding Partners**

### **LOCAL AUTHORITY**

The Local Authority is the body that provide children’s and other types of services, including adult social care services, housing, sport, culture and leisure services, licensing authorities, and children’s social care and youth services via an SLA with Sandwell Children’s Trust.

Sandwell also host Public Health within its Local Authority arrangement. Public health is the lead for the Joint Strategic Needs assessment (JSNA) and reports to HWBB on 0-19 agenda/action plan. Some elements of Public health work are incorporated in key action across commissioned health provider services

### **SANDWELL CHILDREN’S TRUST (SCT)**

Sandwell Children’s Trust have responsibility for the delivery of statutory social work services for children deemed in need, who are at risk of harm or have been harmed.

The Sandwell Children’s Trust has been identified as the fourth Safeguarding Partner due to its relationship with the Local Authority. The Children’s Trust is an independent organisation set up to run children’s services. In Sandwell, the organisation has taken the form of a company owned by the Council. The Local Children’s Trust arrangements are underpinned by the ‘duty to cooperate’ (section 10 of the Children Act 2004).

Sandwell Children’s Trust have responsibility for the delivery of statutory social work services for children deemed in need, who are at risk of harm or have been harmed. The SCT carry out the statutory duties of the Local Authority for children and young people, by assessing their need for services against the agreed threshold to services arrangements.

The Children’s Trust provide services for the following areas of work:

- child protection
- services for children in need and children in care,
- services to children who have left care,
- family support services
- fostering and adoption services
- Youth Offending Services

### **WEST MIDLANDS POLICE (WMP)**

West Midlands Police are one of the statutory 'Safeguarding Partners'.

The local Police and Crime Commissioner has a legal responsibility under section 1(8) (h) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 to "hold the chief constable to account for the exercise of duties in relation to the safeguarding of children and the promotion of child welfare that are imposed on the chief constable by sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004.

The OPCC's Police and Crime Plan contains a range of strategic priorities which encompass the safeguarding of children.

Protecting vulnerable people is at the centre of WMP's vision to prevent crime, protect the public and help those in need. WMP has a dedicated unit in the Public Protection Unit which is responsible for protecting and safeguarding those who are most vulnerable.

The PPU comprises of dedicated teams of Domestic Abuse (DA), Sexual Abuse (SA) and Child Abuse (CA) Investigators across each of the seven Local Authority areas, a dedicated Adults at Risk Team (AAR), a specialist Online Child Sexual Exploitation Team (OCSET) and a Central Referral Unit (CRU).

The safety of children and young people in the Sandwell area is a key priority and WMP continue their commitment to raise standard across the force area of its officers to protect and safeguard children into the new multiagency safeguarding arrangements. Police officers and staff from Neighbourhood Policing Teams across WMP have received training to raise awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Early Trauma. The objective of the training was to educate staff in how individual vulnerabilities can draw people into criminality and how early recognition and intervention by the police can prevent the likelihood of this occurring.

Locally the Safer Sandwell Partnership is working closely with safeguarding partners to identify and respond to emerging trends within the six Towns which make up the Borough of Sandwell. Community Operations Group meetings are held monthly, there is ongoing work to development and robustly manage the information available from partners to enable greater focus on the needs and lived experiences of all children young people and families in the borough.

### **CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP (CCG)**

CCGs was legally established in April 2013 as part of the Government's reforms of the NHS. Clinical Commissioning Groups are clinically led membership organisations made up of general practices. The duties of clinical commissioning groups to commission certain health services. Currently Sandwell CCG are responsible for hospital treatment, rehabilitation services, urgent and emergency care, community health services, mental health and learning disability services. The CCG does not provide these services, it pays organisations to deliver them for patients on its behalf.

The CCG is also responsible for ensuring compliance with safeguarding standards within the CCG and all its commissioned service and is responsible for ensuring there is adequate provision of a Designated Safeguarding Nurse and Doctor.

Children young people and families in Sandwell also receive a range of services health provider agencies. Their responsibilities are varied between commissioned services by the CCG and Public Health.

Public Health host the ‘Best Start in Life’, through services provided by health visitors and school nursing. They work closely with the CCG commissioned services through Sandwell and West Birmingham Trust of Sandwell’s midwives and acute services, the Councils Children’s centres and early help providers. The approach is that of both targeted and prevention strategy relating to children young people and families where there is an assessed need. In order to improve the outcomes for children, young people and their families, the Public Health strategy includes a partnership approach to:

- ✓ healthy pregnancy,
- ✓ school readiness,
- ✓ healthy adults and good emotional and mental well-being,
- ✓ providing the right support at the right time

## 11. Sandwell Children’s Safeguarding Partnership

The SCSP is to be the decision-making body overseeing the multi-agency plan to protect children and safeguard their welfare. The Sandwell Children’ Safeguarding Partnership is led by the 3 named statutory partners, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, West Midlands Police and Sandwell’s Clinical Commissioning Group. Sandwell has a fourth Safeguarding partner in, the Sandwell Children’s Trust.

**The Four Safeguarding Partners and Lead Representatives are as follows:**

Name	Designation	Agency
<b>Lesley Hagger</b>	Director of Children Services	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
<b>Emma Taylor</b>	Chief Executive	Sandwell Children’s Trust
<b>Sally Roberts</b>	Chief Officer –	Black Country Clinical Commissioning Group
<b>Ian Green</b>	Chief Superintendent	West Midlands Police

As set out in Working Together 2018, the lead representatives are able to delegate their functions although they retain accountability for any actions or decisions taken on behalf of their agency. In Sandwell, the respective agencies have identified the following Senior Officers who have been given delegated authority to ensure consistent and full participation with the MASA in the event of lead representative absence.

The Senior Officers have delegated authority to speak on behalf of the Safeguarding Partner they represent, make decisions on behalf of their organisation or agency and commit them on policy, resourcing and practice matters, and hold their own organisation or agency to account on how effectively they participate in and implement the local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

The Senior Officers with delegated authority are:

Senior Officer	Designation	Agency
<b>Steven Jones</b>	Chief Executive	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
<b>Carol Singleton</b>	Director of Quality Assurance & Safeguarding	Sandwell Children’s Trust
<b>Eileen Welch Gene Kelly</b>	Designated Nurse	Sandwell Clinical Commissioning Group
<b>Derek Lambert</b>	Detective Chief Inspector	West Midlands Police

The SCSP will review progress and assess strengths and areas for development in the local safeguarding system. This analysis will inform the priority outcomes as set out in the Vision 2030, Children and Young People Plan and the Sandwell Improvement Plan. The Partnership will contribute to an annual report on

progress on delivering on the related plans which will be published on the SCSP website. The SCSP meetings will be informed by the reflections and improvements identified by the 6 sub-groups within its infrastructure that are tasked to deliver on the scope of the SCSP function, namely the:

1. Quality of Practice Performance & Assurance Group
2. Learning Development & Training Group
3. Learning from Practice Reviews Group
4. Child Exploitation Board
5. Tackling Neglect Group
6. Black Country Child Death Overview Panel

### Partnership meetings

The Partnership will be chaired by the Director of Children Services with business support from the SCSP Business Manager.

The Partnership will meet bi-monthly.

Actions will be agreed at each meeting for Partnership members and the sub-groups, reference groups and strategic priority operations groups to follow-up on between meetings.

After each Partnership meeting, Partnership Members will be expected to pass on any updates to their own organisations.

### Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Agencies

The children Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018 sets out the list of relevant agencies that are required to work under the scope of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

Although Safeguarding partner organisations are not referred to in the regulations it is understood that practitioners from the statutory agencies are subject to Sandwell's multi-agency safeguarding arrangement. Not all agencies are listed in the regulation or within Sandwell's MASA as many services are commissioned and or overseen by a Statutory Partner.

Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the Safeguarding Partners consider is required to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children. For local arrangements to be effective, the Safeguarding partners have engaged organisations and agencies that can work in a collaborative way to protect provide targeted support to help children and families as appropriate. The Safeguarding Partners have agreed its core membership of organisations and agencies it wants to work with and invite onto its Strategic Partnership as 'Relevant Partners' to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. There is an expectation that the arrangement will change over time, if the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangement is to work effectively in identifying and responding to needs and risks for children and families.

### Membership

The SCSP has a core membership, this includes the Director for Education, Designated Nurse for the Sandwell CCG and the Senior Officer from the Voluntary Community Sector. The role of these Senior Officers is key and gives consideration to the SCSP function to 'support and engage', particularly the agencies/organisations that form large organisational networks and are providing safeguarding services to children, young people and their families across Sandwell.

The SCSP has also appointed an Independent Scrutineer, Liz Murphy, who attends all SCSP meetings and the revised 'Chairs Consultation Forum's offering external scrutiny and challenge to the safeguarding partners in all aspect of the multi-agency arrangements.

The SCSP also retains the co-opted role of a lay member on the Partnership as a participant observer.

The Lead Member for SMBC will be a participant observer with no decision-making rights on the SCSP.

Agency	Membership Status	Designation
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	Safeguarding Partner	Director of Children's Services
Sandwell Children's Trust	Safeguarding Partner	Chief Executive
West Midlands Police	Safeguarding Partner	Chief Superintendent
Sandwell Clinical Commissioning Group	Safeguarding Partner	Chief Officer – Quality
Sandwell Clinical Commissioning Group	Relevant Partner	Designated Nurse –Safeguarding
Sandwell Clinical Commissioning Group	Relevant Partner	Designated Doctor
Education Advisory Group Chair	Relevant Partner	Director of Education
Voluntary Community Sector Chair	Relevant Partner	Chief Executive
Sandwell Safeguarding Health Partnership Chair	Relevant Partner	Designated Nurse
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	Participant Observer	Lead Member
Lay Member	Participant Observer	Lay Member
Tackling Neglect Subgroup	Priority Group Co-opt member	Chair /Sponsor/Relevant agency
Strategic Exploitation Board	Priority Group Co-opt member	Chair/Sponsor/Relevant agency
	External Scrutineer	Independent Specialist

The SCSP will be flexible and will co-opt other Relevant Agencies to attend the Partnership Meetings where there is a requirement to give attention to an agenda item or address emerging need and risk.

Relevant Partners are responsible for sending a deputy with delegated authority to SCSP meetings in their absence. Relevant Partners are also responsible for updating the SCSP on any significant changes to personnel and/or operational delivery within their organisation (particularly where this is a direct implication for the multi-agency safeguarding system).

The SCSP has two priorities of which it is driving improvement. The priority groups are responsible for the strategic coordination of the identified strategies for the respective priority areas. The priority groups will report directly to the Chairs Consultation Forum. The chairs of the priority groups, sponsor and or the relevant partner agency(ies) involved in the improvement plan will be deemed as co-opt members and invited to attend SCSP meeting to provide reports on the group or individual agency progress. The SCSP will focus on scrutiny and accountability of the work.

## 12. SCSP Membership Role and Responsibilities

Members of the SCSP are named individuals from relevant organisations, this will enable the partnership to secure the right levels of consistency and accountability in terms of leadership. The members will hold a strategic position within their own organisations and therefore able to:

- a) Consulting with and speaking for their organisation with authority.
- b) Disseminating information and committing their organisation on policy and practice matters.

- c) Hold their organisation to account on the effectiveness of their safeguarding children arrangements
- d) Ensure effective contribution of agency data and quality assurance activity and enable the SCSP assessment of performance to be as objective as possible.
- e) Challenging their own and other agencies and hold them to account on the effectiveness of their safeguarding children arrangements
- f) Recommending or deciding upon the necessary steps to put right any problems.
- g) Strive to pursue excellence in safeguarding children in Sandwell by promoting high standards of safeguarding work and foster a culture of continuous improvement

### **13. SCSP Relationship with other Partnerships**

There are several executive fora and strategic boards that relate directly and indirectly to the work of the SCSP, multi-agency working and are significant in keeping children safe and or link to the strategic priority within the SCSP business plan. Please see the table below. The SCSP

The SCSP's role with other partnerships is to:

- Contribute a safeguarding perspective to the work of that partnership.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of the arrangements made by that partnership to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Identify any crossover issues which can be jointly addressed.

#### **4 Statutory Boards**

A protocol is in place between the SCSP, ***Sandwell Safeguarding Adult Board Health and Well-being Board and Sandwell Safer Partnership***. The protocol sets out clear expectations on the [4 Statutory Boards](#) and how they will work together. This will include agreement of the joint priority to improve synergy and drive improvement on service delivery to CYPF. The accountability and reporting arrangements including arrangements for scrutiny and challenge.

Each of the partnerships/boards are independent of each other but they will ensure that they take a whole family approach when setting priorities and reporting on performance. The respective partnerships business planning recognises this, and shares aims, and objectives linked to safeguarding.

#### **Other Executive Fora/ Strategic Boards**

##### **Local Family Justice Board**

Local Family Justice Boards (LFJB) were established to support the work of the Family Justice Board by bringing together the key local agencies, including decision makers and front-line staff, to achieve significant improvement in the performance of the family justice system in their local areas.

##### **Office Police and crime Commission**

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 links the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner to protecting and promoting the welfare of Children and young people. The Police and Crime Commissioner has a legal responsibility to hold their chief officer to account for their duties in terms of protecting children. Specifically, section 1(8) (h) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 states that: 'The police and crime commissioner must, in particular, hold the chief constable to account for the exercise of duties in relation to the safeguarding of children and the promotion of child welfare that are imposed on the chief constable by sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004.'



**OPCC's** have a legal **responsibility** to hold their chief officers to account for their **duties** in terms of protecting **children** and vulnerable adults. ... The **PCC** works closely with other partner organisations through Local **Safeguarding Children's** Boards to oversee actions in place to improve the well-being of **children**.

### **Young Offender Management Board**

Young Offender Management Board (YOMB) is a multi-agency partnership board comprising of Sandwell Metropolitan Council, Health, Probation and Police and is chaired by Martin Hurcombe, West Midlands Police. The Chief Executive of the SCT is a member of the partnerships and the YOMB functions will be represented by the Chief Executive.

The YOMB is responsible for ensuring that the local partnership fulfils its statutory duties including its safeguarding responsibilities and any lessons arising from serious incidents involving children and young people in the criminal justice system.

### **Role of Youth Offending, Custody Services and Residential Homes** - *how any youth custody and residential homes for children will be included in the safeguarding arrangements*

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council does not operate any residential homes for looked after children, there are a number of Sandwell's children that are in private sector residential care. The SCSP will seek assurance from relevant partners about the arrangements for safeguarding children known to the youth offending service, involved in a custody incident or placed in a residential home within or outside the borough.

### **Corporate Parenting Board**

This forum has a responsibility to monitor and review the quality and effectiveness of services for looked after children and care leavers delivered by Corporate Parents; the council, partner agencies and commissioned services.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 says that when a child or young person comes into the care of the local authority or is under 25 and was looked-after by the authority for at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday, the authority becomes their corporate parent.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time in law the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for looked-after children and young people, and care leavers.

Under the Children Act 2004, local authorities have a duty to promote cooperation between 'relevant partners', including the police, the NHS and education providers, while those partners have a duty to cooperate with the local authority in turn.

Children in care are more likely to go missing than children not in care, child victims of modern day slavery are particularly vulnerable and children in care are disproportionately likely to be at increased risk of sexual exploitation than those not in care.

Council representatives on local multi-agency safeguarding partnerships should make sure there is oversight of arrangements for children in care and monitor how well safeguarding arrangements are being implemented and reviewed.

## 14. Role of Priority and Reference Groups

### Priority Groups

The SCSP has a number of commissioned Priority Groups which will enable the delivery of the SCSP chosen priorities identified within the overarching 2021-2024 Business Plan. Activities are agreed on an annual basis and mandated for delivery through the following subgroups:

1. **Child Exploitation Board** – Coordinating the work to protect children from Child Sexual Exploitation, Criminal Exploitation, Modern Slavery and Missing from home and Education
2. **Tackling Neglect** – To improve the identification and response to neglect, as well as implementing the NSPCC Graded Care Profile assessment tool.

### Reference Groups

Reference groups are defined in the MASA governance and are required to support the SCSP on delivery of its priorities to a network of agencies or organisations deemed as 'Relevant Partners' and contributors to the multi-agency safeguarding children. The Reference Groups will promote the work of the SCSP across its network. They will act to support and engage providers within the network to have clarity with regard to the multi-agency safeguarding system. In addition, the reference groups will proactively support the SCSP communication pathway and have a mechanism to share and seek information to enable an efficient and consistent response to emerging safeguarding matters and inform the SCSP priorities. Reference Groups will also raise awareness on the outcome of child safeguarding practice reviews and support learning opportunities across the network. These groups include:

#### 1. **Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) Group**

*Role of Early Years, Schools and Other Learning Establishments* - how all early years settings, schools (including independent schools, academies and free schools) and other educational establishments will be included in the safeguarding arrangements.

Designated Leads from early years and education settings play an important role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The DSL Group will seek assurance from schools and early years safeguarding practice through the engagement of schools and early years provision in the work of the partnership. School safeguarding issues are discussed across a number of meetings or forums within Sandwell, the DSL Group will coordinate where the SCSP matters are best suited to target specific issues arising from the safeguarding agenda. Education and early years providers will feed in their views via the early years, primary and secondary leads on the established DSL Group. The DSL Group will be the main link to the Partnership and will be responsible for reviewing the impact of any developments from the Partnership meetings to the school's and early years network. It will also continue to seek assurance on school safeguarding practice, review developments regarding compliance and quality in terms of safeguarding work identified within the context of the school's completion of the mandatory S175 audit. The Director for Education is a relevant partner and member of the new strategic partnership.

The DSL Group meets quarterly and schedules its work through an established TOR which is reviewed on an annual basis.

#### 2. **Sandwell Safeguarding Health Partnership SSHP**

The Sandwell Safeguarding Health Partnership is an established group transferring from the former SSCB into the MASA. It will be called upon to represent the views and provide briefings to the SCSP on behalf of the health commission and provider community. The SSHP will be the main link to the SCSP for providers to report on local issues relating to health and healthcare and safeguarding issues relating to CYPF.

The SSHP is a reference group of the Sandwell Children’s Safeguarding Partnership and has shared responsibility from all partners within the health economy in Sandwell.

The subgroup has primary accountability to the SCSP for issues emerging from safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in Sandwell, this includes the interdependency that relates to services to parents and carers. The group will support on effective delivery of the SCSP priorities through promoting the following:

- a) Effective communication across the health economy, to ensure that the work of the SCSP is well publicised, any learning is disseminated, and the voice of children, young people, practitioners and the wider community are able to influence the Partnership’s work.
- b) To ensure effective arrangements are in place for responding to key safeguarding risks (for example early help, CSE, Modern Slavery and domestic abuse) and there is consistency in safeguarding practice across the health economy.
- c) The health economy will have a clear understanding of the safeguarding systems and can evidence how this is used to drive and influence the Boards priorities.
- d) Ensure appropriate mechanisms for measuring impact of learning and training in health organisations and development of a good communication system across subgroups and the board.
- e) Have the “Health Voice” for all providers and commissioners with the ability to escalate and challenge for good safeguarding outcomes.
- f) Have an overview of all health recommendations that come from Statutory and Regulatory Bodies by developing overarching action plans and reporting progress to the SSCB and appropriate Agencies.

A further function is to allow members of the Forum to report back to their respective organisations on a regular basis.

### 3. **Voluntary Community Sector (VCS)**

4.

The VCS has an important role working with children, young people and families. In Sandwell they co-exist and are interdependent with a range of agencies and organisations that provide services to children and families (including statutory providers). The VCS role is well understood and welcomed at various stages of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children young people and families and is integral to the Early Help strategy. The SCSP senior representatives has relevant Senior representation from the VCS as relevant partners and they will be called upon to coordinate two-way communication from the SCSP and the network of its voluntary and community organisations that provide support and services to CYPF. The VCS representation will help the SCSP to ensure its aims are shared, fully understood and inform VCS agency development and practice.

The VCS Forum will provide a platform for the translation of the strategic conversations and plans with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and the operational practice from VCS providers. Its role is particularly relevant in promoting VCS individual agency involvement with the Early Help Partnership which provides a tiered level of endorsement and quality standards to services providing support to children and their families.

## **15. Sub Groups**

In order to assist the Partnership with discharging its wider responsibilities, the following sub-groups have been reviewed and strengthened, and will be carried over from the former SSCB;

## **Chairs Consultation Forum**

The Purpose of the Chairs Consultation Forum will be for the nominated representatives consisting of; Priority Leads, subgroup Chairs, the Independent Scrutineer and Workstream Program leads (Business Officers) to coordinate and arbitrate the work of the SCSP. This forum will be chaired by the Chair of the SCSP and will be the opportunity for the priority leads as statutory partners and sub-group chairs to meet prior to each full partnership meeting to monitor workstream progress and to inform the SCSP agenda and strategic business. The forum will have the flexibility to co-opt other relevant professionals and engage other Strategic Partnership where it is required to coordinate a response to an emerging issue or address a specific agenda item as and when this is appropriate.

The Chairs Consultation Forum is responsible for tracking the success and impact measures for the core business and each priority on the SCSP business plan. The group will also

1. Identify any key safeguarding matters for the partnerships progress
2. determine the agenda and content for the strategic Partnership meetings. There will be the following standing items on the SCSP agenda:
  - a. The Quality of Practice Performance and Assurance Activity
  - b. Serious Incidents resulting in Local or National Learning Reviews
  - c. The impact of Multi agency Learning, Development and Training on practice and outcomes for CYPF
  - d. Learning from Child Death Reviews
  - e. review the outcomes of the partnerships work and progress made on Strategic Priorities
  - f. emerging themes from the reference groups
  - g. Local and regional Policy and Procedures
  - h. Regional, National safeguarding activities

**Quality of Practice Performance and Assurance Group (QPP)** - *how the safeguarding partners will use data and intelligence to assess the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families, including early help*

The Quality of Practice Performance and Assurance Group is the spine to the strength and success of the new Sandwell Children's Strategic Partnership.

The sub-group has responsibility for ensuring that all agencies are safeguarding children effectively by working in partnership. It does this by monitoring performance including carrying out multi-agency audits, interrogating and analysing data from partner agencies. The focus will be on the quality, effectiveness of services and most importantly seek assurance/reassurance that the multi-agency system and service is keeping children safe.

The sub-group will also receive and share information with the Priority Groups and Reference Groups. Reporting progress against the Business Plan will be at the end of July, October, January and April of each year. The Quality of Practice and Assurance Group meetings have been scheduled to make the most of the quarterly data reporting and then report to the Executive Group/ SCSP Meetings in a timely way.

The QPPAG will receive a range of information from across the partnership, from different agencies and organisations and the Partnerships own sub-groups or reference groups on multiagency safeguarding practice. This will be presented in the form of:

- a. Relevant and consistent performance data and quality assurance activity,
- b. views of practitioners and the
- c. voices of children and their families
- d. Evidence from self-assessments including (section 11 and 175 returns), peer challenge

- e. Monitoring reports, single and joint targeted inspection outcomes
- f. Evidence from serious case reviews
- g. Evidence from learning and development
- h. Evidence from LADO
- i. Complaints, compliments

The Group will analyse the information and identify emerging trends relating challenges and the signs of success and make suggestions and recommendations to improve on the multi-agency safeguarding arrangement through development and or commissioning of services.

SCSP have recruited an Independent person to chair the QPP meetings and coordinate the groups delivery function in line with the revised Quality Assurance Framework (QAF), there is also additional responsibilities relating to provide independent scrutiny of the for the effectiveness of the MASA, and to contribute to producing the annual report on behalf of the SCSP.

The QPP will meet bi-monthly.

**Learning Development and Training Group** - *how inter-agency training will be commissioned, delivered and monitored for impact and how they will undertake any multiagency and interagency audits.*

*Learning Improvement Framework – Sustaining the Quality of Safeguarding Practice*

The sub-group has responsibility for ensuring that relevant single-agency and inter-agency training on safeguarding and promoting welfare of children is provided to all staff that work with children and young people. In addition, the Group will recruit and maintain the SCSP Trainer Pool. The learning and development group will gather the information relating

The Learning, Development and Training Group will, coordinate, deliver and commission training and, evaluate the impact of training on multi-agency safeguarding practice.

A training needs analysis will be completed, to ensuring that train remains relevant, and informed by learning from:

- a. Local and National child safeguarding practice reviews.
- b. Statutory and other guidance's
- c. Practitioner views
- d. Local, Regional and National emerging and themed priorities.

The group meets bi-monthly.

**Serious Incidents and Learning from Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews** - *arrangements for commissioning and publishing local child safeguarding practice reviews - the process for undertaking local child safeguarding practice reviews, setting out the arrangements for embedding learning across organisations and agencies*

All practitioners and organisations with the responsibility of safeguarding children need to reflect on the quality of services that are delivered to children and their families and learn from their own practice and that of others. Good practice should be shared so that there is a growing understanding of what works well. But when things do not go as expected, then there needs to be a robust approach to provide objective analysis of what has happened and why so that learning can be gleaned from important lessons, and services can improve or be developed to reduce the risk of future harm to children.

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group has a collective responsibility with the Learning, training and Development Group to drive improvements to multi agency children's safeguarding practice. The

SIRG will inform the development of training and learning from the outcome of case reviews undertaken locally and or nationally.

In discharging the function for commissioning and publishing local child safeguarding practice reviews the CSPR group will continue to oversee all open serious incidents that are subject to review and monitor the progress of the associated action plans. The CSPR group will be responsible for disseminating the learning from all reviews across the Partnerships sub-groups and their associated networks.

The impact of the learning and how this improves the outcome for children will be considered by each group across Partnerships sub-structure as an integral part of each group's delivery/workplan plan. The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group has a fixed core membership drawn from organisations across the safeguarding partnership with the flexibility to co-opt other relevant professionals to discuss certain cases as and when appropriate. The group meets quarterly and is expected to report on its activity to each SCSP meeting. Annually, the CSPR group will contribute a report on

- a. the learning from reviews and how this has improved multi-agency services/safeguarding practice and,
- b. how risk of children experiencing serious harm has reduced

The report will be considered in the framework for independent scrutiny and be included in the SCSPs annual report.

Ofsted has published guidance on how local authorities should report a serious incident of child abuse or neglect, or the death of a child who is looked after. From 29 June 2018, local authorities in England must notify the DfE, Ofsted and The National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel within 5 working days of becoming aware of a serious incident.

The CSPR group has a practice guide for managing individual cases in accordance with statutory guidance Working Together 2018. A Rapid Review Panel is convened comprising of statutory agency representation to consider each case that is referred in to the office to consider whether it meets the criteria to be referred to the National Review Panel or whether an alternative form of multi or single agency case review should be undertaken.

The group process endeavours to have all reviews commissioned completed within 6 months. Early learning from the rapid review and during the local case review process is disseminated as soon as practicable and will not wait until the completion of the case review report. In doing so the Group can optimise impact and the reviewer is able to also consider any organisational changes/developments within the review outcome.

All relevant data is shared when requested and in accordance with the scope of the review. Partner agencies are aware of the information sharing protocol and confidentiality agreement which governs this process.

In addition to serious incidents the group also will hear cases where there has been identified good examples on the multi-agency safeguarding practice so that the practice learning from what has worked well can be understood and shared.

All cases which meet the criteria for Local Safeguarding Practice review will be published.

#### **Child Death Overview Panel – Black Country Strategic Child Death Panel Arrangements**

The purpose of Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) is to undertake comprehensive and multidisciplinary reviews of child deaths in the Sandwell in order to better understand how and why local children die.

Findings are used to take action to prevent other deaths and improve the health and safety of our children.

In 2018 the former Dudley Safeguarding Children Board submitted a joint bid to the Department of Education with Walsall, Wolverhampton and Sandwell for funding to progress a Black Country approach to reviewing the deaths of children across those local authority's areas in line with the changes identified in legislation Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together Transitional Arrangements Guidance. The bid was successful and has enabled the formation the Black Country Strategic Child Death Overview Panel, which brings the four local authority areas together and identify key priorities to take forward for further learning or targeted campaign work.

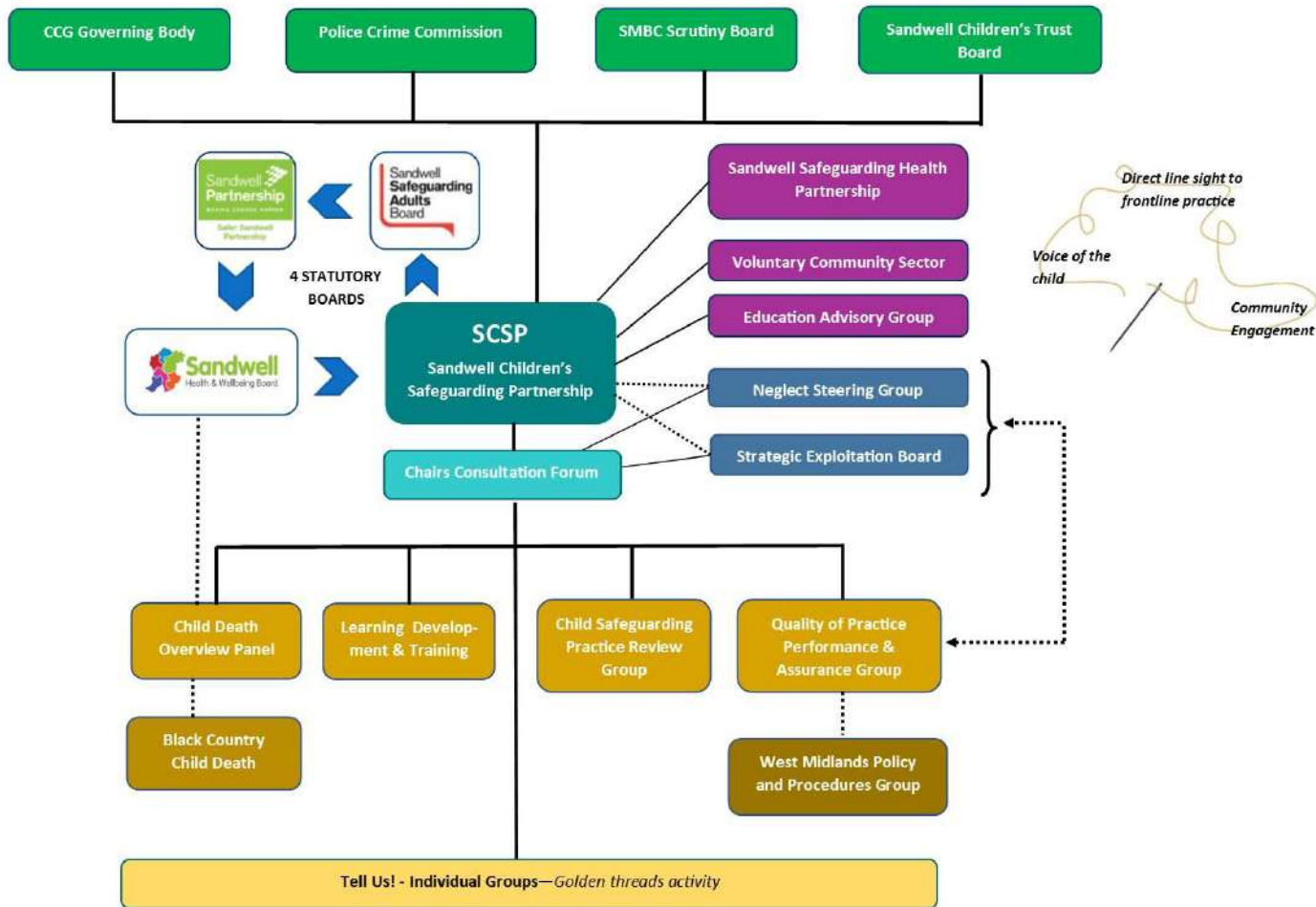
### **Tell Us!**

Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership has defined its participation and engagement with children and families, frontline practitioners and the wider community as a requisite to all work developed and implemented within its governance arrangements.

All sub-groups within the SCSPs governance arrangements will be expected to give consideration to consultation and engagement to obtain the views of CYPF and frontline practitioners and where relevant the wider community on matters of safeguarding children.

The 'Tell Us!' work will be coordinated as part of the reporting arrangement into the partnership and will feature significantly in the quality work commissioned or coordinated through the Quality of Practice, Performance and Assurance Group.

## 16. Governance - The Overarching Governance Arrangements for the Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership



SCSP Governance Structure v2.0 (JR)



## 17. SCSP Strategic/Business Plan and Sub-Group Delivery Plans

The SCSP has ratified an annual Business Plan for 2021/2022. Thereafter the Chairs Consultation Forum will take forward the development, review and implementation of the Partnerships overall strategic objectives and direction.

- a) The SCSP will discharge its key statutory functions to designated sub-groups
- b) All sub-groups will operate in accordance with the SCSP accountability governance and framework.
- c) All sub-groups will present and monitor its information in a deliver plan
- d) The SCSP will ratify the delivery plans for the sub-groups detailed in the partnership structure's terms of reference.
- e) The SCSP have agreed 2 long-term key priorities spanning three years, in addition there will be themes identified for spotlight attention as a result of local needs analysis and /or national developments.
- f) Reference groups will only be set up if deemed they are required by the SCSP.
- g) Where sub-groups are identifying the need for a reference group they should clearly demonstrate to the SCSP how the group supports the SCSP to fulfil its statutory functions and/or are relevant to achieving outcomes in relation to the agreed SCSP priorities.

## 18. The Golden Threads

The *voices of children, direct line sight to frontline practice and community engagement* activity are firmly considered within the context of the SCSP vision and values statements and are a golden thread in SCSP governance and multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

The SCSP want to ensure it has a strategic understanding of its communities, and what it is like for children and families living in Sandwell and working with agencies. It is also important for the Partnership to know from frontline practitioners about their experiences of working within the multi-agency system.

The intention of the SCSP is to strengthen its multi-agency safeguarding arrangements by ensuring that all activity undertaken across the structure focuses on these issues as an intrinsic part of its work. It also will ensure there is raised profile, understanding and responsibility of safeguarding within communities.

There are number of great initiatives within Sandwell to hear the voices of children and their families, partners are committed to engaging with CYPF and bring together the various sources of information to influence the quality of practice and performance within all agencies/organisations working with children and families.

## 19. Sub-group Standards

Each Sub-group is comprised of a multi-agency membership and is chaired by persons with sufficient knowledge and skills relating to safeguarding children within their agency/organisation.

Each member will be inducted into the work of the Partnership

Each sub-group has a working mandate which is set out within their Terms of Reference and a related delivery plan.

SCSP members should ensure there is representation from their agency at all sub-group meetings.

Other task and finish / reference groups may be established from time to time to undertake specific pieces of work on behalf of the Partnership, commissioned directly by the partnership or by the sub-group to drive a specific theme arising from the groups work.

Sub-groups will need to oversee the progression of work that they delegate to task and finish groups and ensure that they operate in line with the SCSP governance arrangements.

## **20. Role of the Chair within the Sub-groups**

Each sub-group chair will be required to attend an induction briefing with the SCSP Business Manager and Business Officer supporting the sub-group. This will provide the new Chair with relevant information to undertake the role:

1. SCSP induction booklet
2. Templates
3. Clarify standards and expectation for progressing the work of the Partnership
4. Reporting schedules, governance and accountability.

The Chair of the sub group can be nominated by a Safeguarding Partner or Relevant Agency or elected from within the sub-group and will drive the progression of the delivery plan in line with the SCSP business plan.

The Chair of each sub-group is expected to attend the Chairs Consultation Forum to report on the progress and delivery of the sub-groups work and support the Chair and Safeguarding Partners to develop and agree the agenda for the Full SCSP meetings.

The sub-group chair is expected to challenge and hold agency members to account where the delivery plan is not being progressed effectively.

The position of Chair and Vice-Chair for sub-groups will be reviewed annually by the SCSP Chair, with new nominations sought where this is required.

## **21. Quoracy/Decision Making**

The SCSP is required to be quorate for the purpose of decision making. For a Full Partnership meeting to be quorate there must be at least one member from each of the key safeguarding partners (SBMC, Health, WMP, SCT) present. The four Statutory Safeguarding Partner representatives must be part of any key actions and decision making.

The same principle is applied to each of the sub-groups or reference groups progressing work on behalf of the Partnership. Decision making for groups carrying out SCSP function will only be quorate if there is representation from the four lead agencies.

All sub-groups are expected to ensure key decisions made in the group that impact on the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and / or service delivery are presented through the line of governance as recommendations for ratification by the SCSP.

## 22. The Timetable for Activity 2020/2021

TO BE INSERTED IF REQUIRED POST APPROVAL	

## 23. SCSP Business Office

The SCSP has a dedicated Business Manager and team of Officers to support the delivery of its work. This team is hosted within the SCT who take contractual responsibility for the support of all such staff. This will include recruitment and selection with Partnership member participation; on-going supervision and support; performance management and all other matters associated with the management and coordination of the Partnership services provided.

The SCSP Business Team will act as aide memoire to the partnership and continue to provide high level policy, procedural, operational and administration support to the SCSP and its core sub-groups. The SCSP Business Manager will be responsible for ensuring the induction process for Chairs and members to the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. The Business team will particularly ensure there is good governance and consistency across the sub-structure in the terms of reference and the development monitoring and reporting on business delivery/workplans plans to the SCSP. They will further assure that the approach of all the sub-groups is integral to the arrangements, the voice of the child and family and have a direct line sight to the views of the frontline practitioner.

## 24. Funding and Financial Accountability - *how the arrangements will be funded*

### *Funding*

The SCSP budget will be set annually (but may be revised throughout the year at the discretion of the partnership) according to the needs of the SCSP to fulfil its functions.

### *Financial Accountability*

The role of the Accountable Body is to ensure that financial probity is established and maintained. Sandwell Children’s Trust will be accountable for all funding received from statutory partners as part

of the core budget of the SCSP. This includes receipt of the funding, and for setting up and monitoring the financial monitoring systems.

The Accountable Body is not by itself responsible for managing the financial operations of the Partnership or for taking decisions regarding allocation of funding. This means that if there is concern about whether funding is being used properly and for the purpose for which it was given, the Accountable Body will have the final decision on a course of action. However, questions about value for money and allocation of resources will be made by the Statutory Safeguarding Partners within the Partnership meetings.

The Sandwell Children’s Trust as the Accountable Body will put in place effective arrangements for safeguarding public money, including establishing a clear line of responsibility and accountability and for the production of a finance report at bi-monthly meeting. Lines of accountability are as follows:

Director of Children’s Services	Accountable Body
Director of Quality Assurance & Safeguarding	Cost Centre Manager
SCSP Business Manager	Day to day management of budget

## 25. Dispute Resolution

Where SCSP members are concerned about agency inaction and the impact on a real-time case the SCSP partner must ensure the escalation process entitled *‘Resolving Practitioner Disagreement and Escalation of Concerns’*, for managing individual cases is followed by its practitioners or managers prior to any escalation between members of the SCSP.

Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint strategic working to safeguard children. It is often a sign of developing thinking within a dynamic process and can indicate a lack of clarity in expectations, approach or procedure.

There must be a robust mechanism to resolve professional difference between partnership members, concerns and disputes before they have significant impact on the delivery of child protection services. Disagreements can arise in a number of areas, but are most likely arise over accountability, roles and responsibilities, poor communication and the need for action.

It is acknowledged that on occasions issues may arise between constituent partners, or concerns about the effectiveness of a partner agency, which if unresolved may act to impede the effectiveness of SCSP.

It is important:

1. To avoid professional disputes that put children at risk or obscure the focus on the child;
2. To resolve difficulties within the SCSP and between SCSP members quickly and openly;
3. To scrutinise and challenge effectively by identifying the problem areas together, agree a consensus view where there is a lack of clarity and to promote resolution via a clear way forward e.g. an agreed action plan.

SCSP Members should try to resolve differences through discussion, and/or meeting within a timescale as specified within the Resolving Practitioner Disagreement and Escalation Protocol which outlines referring unresolved concerns to the SCSP Chair.

It is the responsibility of each agency representative to adopt the highest standard of professional conduct, and to attempt to resolve any issue close to the organisational level where it arose, through means of a dialogue with the person or agency that brought up the matter.

## **26. Amendments to Sandwell's MASA**

This document will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it reflects national and local developments and that it remains relevant.

Any changes to the SCSP multi-agency safeguarding arrangements shall be ratified by the members of the partnership. Any member may request a review of the arrangements by writing their request to the SCSP Chair.

The SCSP Chair on receipt of the request will notify members of the partnership and ensure the matter is placed as an item of the partnerships agenda for full consideration.

The four statutory safeguarding partners will report any updates to the published arrangements in their annual report and the proposed timescale for implementation.