

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE: Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership – Annual Report 2023-24	
REPORT OF: Executive Director, Children and Learning and Director of Children’s Services	
FOR SUBMISSION TO: Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE: 10 December 2024
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT</p> <p>In response to the Children and Social Work Act 2017, and publication of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, the Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP) replaced the Camden Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB) on 1st July 2019. The statutory guidance set out what is expected of organisations, individually and jointly, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.</p> <p>The CSCP is led by four statutory safeguarding partners who hold equal responsibility for safeguarding children. The statutory safeguarding partners are Camden Council, NHS North Central London Integrated Care Board (ICB), Central North Basic Command Unit of the London Metropolitan Police Service and Camden Learning (delegated safeguarding partner).</p> <p>The annual report 2023-24 analyses the impact of the CSCP in maintaining good governance and strategic oversight of the quality and performance of the local multiagency safeguarding arrangements within Camden. The CSCP has submitted the annual report to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review panel in September as is required and is published on the CSCP website (www.cscp.org.uk).</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Tim Aldridge, Executive Director of Children and Learning, Camden Council 8th Floor, 5 Pancras, London, N1C 4AG Tim.Aldridge@camden.gov.uk</p>	
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>The Children Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Comment on and note the outcomes achieved by the CSCP set out in the 2023-24 Annual Report (Appendix 1) and the CSCP objectives set out in the Business Plan (Appendix 2) 2) Provide feedback to the local statutory safeguarding partners for children. 3) Note the report. 	

Signed: 

Executive Director of Children and Learning and Director of Children's Services,
Camden Council

Date: 26th November 2024

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to offer strategic oversight of the quality and performance of our multiagency safeguarding efforts. It provides a transparent assessment of local service performance and effectiveness, highlighting areas of strength and weakness. Additionally, it outlines how we evaluate the effectiveness of our safeguarding arrangements and details the actions being taken to enhance safeguarding practices, ultimately aiming to improve outcomes for vulnerable children.

2. Key questions for the Committee

- *Are you assured that lead safeguarding partners work collaboratively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children both individually and collectively?*
- *Are you assured of an open and transparent safeguarding culture?*
- *Are you assured that learning analysis findings inform our multi agency safeguarding arrangements to protect children?*

3. Introduction (Annual Report Chapter 1-3)

The CSCP's shared vision is that all children and young people in Camden are **safe, thriving and heard**. Camden is home to approximately 37, 068 children, who make up 17% of the estimated resident population of 218,049. The CSCP annual report is a joint report from lead safeguarding partners which evidences the Partnership's activities and its effectiveness in developing safeguarding practice across the partnership. The report evidences our learning and improvement framework which focuses on multiagency priorities, partnership learning, impact, evidence and improvement. This report provides a summary of the CSCP Annual Report of 2023-24.

4. Background (Annual Report Chapter 1)

In December 2023, the Government published statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023' (WT23), which sets out what is expected of organisations, individually and jointly, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. WT23 states that Safeguarding partners should be transparent in how they co-ordinate, deliver and fund services for children and families locally. There are two requirements of safeguarding partnerships as part of the reporting on service delivery and leadership which include the publication of working arrangements and the yearly partnership report. WT23 requires that copies of all published yearly reports by safeguarding partnerships should be sent to the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care. The annual report is an important source of learning and the findings from analysis also informs national work

being taken forward to reform multiagency safeguarding arrangements for protecting children.

5. Governance and independent scrutiny and leadership (Annual Report Chapter 2)

Effective safeguarding takes place when cultures are open and transparent, where informed senior leaders are close to and sighted on frontline issues, where those senior leaders are accessible and visible and where risk is owned throughout organisations and the partnership is collaborative. CSCP is jointly led by three Lead Safeguarding Partners, who are joined by Education in key strategic decision-making:

- Executive Director, (DCS) Children and Learning, Camden Council
- Director of Safeguarding, North Central London Integrated Care System
- Chief Superintendent, BCU Commander Central North, Metropolitan Police Service
- Chief Executive Officer, Camden Learning (Strategic Safeguarding Education Lead)

In Camden, there are well-established links between the strategic partnership boards to ensure priorities are aligned and to provide opportunities for effective mutual challenge and assurance between the governance boards. These boards bring staff together to share key learning from practice reviews and audits. They also ensure strategic connectivity of joint goals and plans to improve outcomes for Camden's children. Our governance structures ensure that our safeguarding arrangements provide strong collaboration, scrutiny, assurance, accountability, and drive safeguarding activity, across the whole Partnership.

WT23 states that safeguarding partners should decide locally how to implement a robust system of independent scrutiny. This should drive continuous improvement and provide assurance that arrangements are working effectively for children, families, and practitioners. In Camden, functions of independent scrutiny are carried out by the Independent Scrutineer, Independent Safeguarding Auditors, Independent Safeguarding Reviewers, Independent LCSPR Authors, CSCP Young Advisors, and Lay Members. A culture of mutual challenge and support is encouraged across the whole partnership to support effective multiagency safeguarding practice. A key function of scrutiny is to provide strong support and healthy challenge within the multiagency system to promote a collaborative culture of continuous learning and importantly to amplify the voices and concerns of Children and Families. This continues to be the case for the CSCP, and in January we appointed a new Independent Scrutineer.

6. Key Performance by our Lead Safeguarding Partners (Annual Report Chapter 3)

Health: All Health Trusts in Camden are rated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as 'Good'. The CSCP's Health Subgroup ensures safeguarding assurance across our local health sector and creates a communication network for key safeguarding professionals in Camden's health services to share expertise on safeguarding children. The subgroup monitors the business plan and priorities to ensure that decisions made by the CSCP are implemented by the relevant agencies whilst influencing and advising on health issues.

Camden Council – Children's Services: Camden Council's children's services was rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, in April 2022. The Ofsted Focussed Visit in late 2023,

found that; *most children continuing to benefit from experienced leadership of services, good corporate and political support, a committed, well-trained workforce and resources which helps children to progress.* Ofsted praised commitment from multiagency safeguarding partners, and the strength of strategic leadership and work on areas such as neglect, anti-racist safeguarding practice, and the training and support offer available for the frontline workforce.

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS): The MPS has faced scrutiny in its approach to child protection, as highlighted by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), October 2023. The CSCP has sought assurance on several key findings; the local MPS response to criminal and sexual exploitation, the identification and support for vulnerable children, and the effectiveness of interventions to improve the response to child exploitation. The MPS has recently published the Children's Strategy which introduces a Child First policy which aim to ensure that all Police encounters with children, sees them as children first.

Education: Camden has a diverse range of educational institutions, including primary, secondary, and independent and special schools. 100% of primary and special schools and 90% of secondary schools are currently rated either 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. In 2023, children achieved good levels of educational attainment at Key Stage 2 and 4, with the gap in attainment between disadvantaged students and advantaged students having narrowed. In recognition of the pivotal role of our local schools and education providers, our safeguarding arrangements include the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Forum, co-chaired by Camden Learning and the Local Authority, with regular input from Police and Health. This termly forum provides a network for state and independent education settings to discuss safeguarding challenges, stay updated on policy changes, and reflect on local reviews and learning.

Voluntary, charity, social enterprise (VCSE) organisations (Annual Report pg. 113) Our VCSE organisations and agencies play an important role in safeguarding children and should have appropriate arrangements in place to safeguard children. The CSCP provides multiagency training to enable partners from these sectors to gain a wider understanding of the context of safeguarding themes which impact children in Camden. The CSCP has developed guidance to help organisations develop a safeguarding policy, setting out how to go about this task, what should be in the policy and who to contact for further information. The Partnership works with Voluntary Action Camden to support, encourage and assist all voluntary, supplementary schools and faith groups, delivering services to children in Camden to be confident in their ability to keep them safe.

- 7. The Voice of the Child within safeguarding arrangements** (Annual Report pg. 18) Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership continues to listen, hear, and take into account children's views. This shapes all partnership work and every element of our work, and enables us to understand children's lived experience, and their experience of the safeguarding system. We continue to work with our third cohort of Young Advisors to shape our approach. They strengthen our governance by sharing their lived experiences on emerging safeguarding and wellbeing issues. Throughout the annual report, there are examples of work across the partnership to strengthen the

voices of the children in the communities we work with, some of which are included below:

- The Guardianship Project is a community-led initiative that aims to explore how members of the community can come together to provide a safeguarding role for children and young people in their area.
- There have been 60 peer to peer audits of families open to early help between January 2023 and July 2024.
- 99% of children looked after contributed to their reviews in 2023-24.
- Short Breaks and Preparing for Adulthood monthly drop-ins for families are multi agency and continue to seek feedback from families, to understand impact of work.
- Attendance at Special Parents forum allows for feedback and views of families to be regularly heard and acted on.
- Schools have identified safeguarding and welfare themed issues such as domestic abuse, impact of the cost-of-living crisis, online safety, and mental wellbeing through 'pupil voice' forums.

8. The CSCP objectives

Our refreshed shared objectives are:

- **Objective 1: Prompt and effective multiagency safeguarding response:** Ensure agencies collaborate effectively to safeguard children by providing a prompt, appropriate, and effective response when a child is identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. This includes ensuring that preventative and early help services are provided in a joined-up and effective manner.
- **Objective 2: Collaboration and accountability:** Ensure agencies work together effectively, holding each other accountable and addressing evolving safeguarding challenges and risks.
- **Objective 3: Child first practice:** Enable accurate and timely decision-making by combining the voices of children and families with practitioners' knowledge and data insights to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Objective 4: Learning and improvement:** Promote a learning culture supported by senior leaders, with effective training programs to develop an inclusive and collaborative safeguarding environment.
- **Objective 5: Quality Assurance and Performance Management:** Ensure senior leaders have a good knowledge and understanding about the quality of local practice and its impact on children and families.
- **Objective 6: Data and Intelligence:** Drive effective information sharing and systems across agencies to identify and address new safeguarding risks, issues, and emerging threats.

9. CSCP safeguarding priorities

The report highlights some key areas of achievement of the Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP) in 2023-24 against our (previous) priorities which include:

Relational safeguarding:

- Children's Social Work Practice audits seek assurance on how supervision can be used to reflect on the impact of family's history on their functioning and approach to support.
- Examples of change delivery include Early Help practice model and development of community based 'Family Hubs' welcoming place where families access a range of services with co-located professionals.
- CSCP trainers are required to include scenarios that reflect the local demographics and ensure all courses reflect an understanding of how issues of equality can impact practice.
- New CSCP course developed by multiagency practitioner on anti-racist practice and unconscious bias and co-delivered with service users/young adults in 2023-24.
- Following findings from our health-related behaviour questionnaire with children and young people, the CSCP has commissioned this new training course for 2024 on understanding and safeguarding LGBTQ+ children and young people.
- CSCP training accessed by community partners, highlights our effort to build strong, supportive relationships with our community colleagues in 'Early Help' part of the safeguarding continuum.
- The new Director for Relational Practice, in Children's Services in Camden.
- Embedding the Think Family approach with Camden & Islington NHS Trust through training.
- Camden Housing Services have refreshed service principles to Proactive, Accessible, Caring and Together (PACT) underlining their commitment to relational practice.

Effective Challenge

- CSCP meetings minutes evidence health challenge in multiagency meetings.
- CSCP Escalation Policy has been updated to enable workers to raise professional difference.
- Lay members in the CSCP act as the voice of the community and offer constructive challenge.
- CSCP multiagency audits provide an opportunity to collectively review agency input, share learning and good practice. The CSCP also commissions Independent Reviewers to lead on these audits and LCSPRs to enable a culture of reflection and openness.
- The CSCP commissions an Independent Scrutineer to work closely with us to maintain transparency and openness. The role is to scrutinise performance, offer challenge and encourage a culture of learning and improvement.
- Section 11 safeguarding audit of all Camden state schools completed in Summer 2023. This was followed up by deep dive safeguarding reviews in several primary, secondary and special schools, resulting in recommendations for improvements.

Violence against women and girls

- In early 2023 a Violence Against Women and Girls Board was established. In 2023-24, a Serious Incident Domestic Abuse Review (SIDAR) was conducted. Workshop sessions are organised for 2024 and 2025 to review learning and the wider context of coercive control.
- Camden Independent Domestic Sexual Violence Advisor (IDSVA) service and Camden Safety Net further embedded within Children's Services.

- Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, which is coproduced with survivors, embeds a survivor-led approach to DVA across housing services.
- Developing training to support the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and Clare's law.
- Camden and Islington Police pilot for domestic abuse investigations, adapts the approach for investigating standard risk cases where no violence has been used and where the victim is not wishing to support a prosecution.
- Operation Encompass (for children who have witnessed or are subject of police attended incidents of domestic abuse) is embedded in 56 Camden maintained schools.
- Commissioning of Whisper Me Happy Ever After workshops in primary schools and Tender Healthy Relationships projects for secondary schools.

10. Emerging themes from our local serious incidents and reviews (Annual Report Section 9: Pg 88-93)

The purpose of a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) is for agencies and individuals to learn lessons to improve the way in which they work both individually and collectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Camden Statutory Partners (including Education) meet to discuss and reach consensus on each serious incident notification, rapid review, including jointly reaching a decision on whether to progress with a further Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review or alternative methodology of learning. Camden Council representing the CSCP, submitted six serious incident notifications in the calendar year 2023-24. Below are examples of some key themes shared at a strategic level to advance systemic and practice learning:

- **Intersectional identities:** Ensuring staff are equipped to assess multiple oppressions and disadvantages. This includes developing practitioners' understanding of intersectionality.
- **Supporting Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children:** through building accessible support, education and employment, placement stability and independence.
- **Development of suicide prevention partnership work** to strengthen response for care experienced adults.
- **Understanding safeguarding arrangements** at short term residential summer schools, in Camden, particularly for international students who are staying away from home.
- **The importance of using history** to identify patterns and trends, which helps us understand context and evaluate various forms of oppression and disadvantage.
- **Continued curiosity** on the safety and welfare of infants living in overcrowded housing conditions and the impact this has on family life and infant safety.
- **Contextual safeguarding** involves recognising and addressing the ongoing risks to children, outside of the family home.
- **Transitional safeguarding** considers how trauma, poverty, additional needs, school exclusion, and substance misuse affect behaviour and choices, as children grown into adulthood.

11. Children and Families Contact Service (Annual Report: Chapter 6)

Camden's Children and Families Contact Service is co-located with multiagency partners and is responsible for making decisions on referrals and requests for services

to ensure that children and families receive the most suitable support depending on their level of need. There were 8,202 referrals made to the Children's front door in 2023-24 (17.5% increase from previous year). Children services redesign has incorporated recommendations from the Partnership. This includes an education representative now co-located to provide advice and information and strengthening management oversight, through a dedicated service manager role, to help ensure that *the right decision is made at the right time*.

12. Early Help (Annual Report: Page 23)

There continues to be a high demand for Early Help services in 2023-24. Camden statutory arrangements has enabled significant investment in early intervention and prevention which is embedded within community services through our 'Family Hubs'. Early Help teams across services work to the same core principles, using the Resilient Families Framework as the foundation, providing the right help at the right time to prevent problems escalating and help families become more resilient.

13. Child Protection – Abuse and Neglect (Annual Report: Chapter 7)

At the end of 2023-24, there were a total of 166 children subject to a child protection plan which shows a continuous decline from the spike in 2020-21. The most common reason for children becoming subject to child protection in 2023-24 is neglect followed by emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. These trends have remained stable across previous years. In 2023-24, the percentage of child and family assessments that identified Child Sexual Abuse as an issue remained stable at 4%. The most prevalent social work assessment factor in 2023-24 relates to domestic violence. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises that a child, who sees, hears, or experiences the effects of domestic abuse and is related to the victim or the suspect is regarded as a victim of domestic abuse. This has led to the increase in domestic violence child subject risk factor identified during assessment in 2023-24.

14. Children looked after (Annual Report: Pg 34-35)

There was a slight rise in children becoming looked after in 2023- 24 compared to previous years. 58% of children coming into the care of the Local Authority were aged 13 years and above. Camden has made progress in a series of initiatives to address the sufficiency and increase the availability of local placements. 83% of children looked after were placed within 20 miles of their home address and most of our children are in foster care within Camden. Partners have focused attention on moving young people, especially in less diverse areas back into Camden. 90% of children looked after have an up-to-date health and dental check and 95% of children looked after, aged under 5 have received an up-to-date development check.

15. Vulnerable Adolescents - Risk and Exploitation (Annual Report: Chapter 8)

Extra-familial risks and harm can be defined as risks to the welfare of children that arise within their local community or peer groups. The CSCP Vulnerable Adolescents – Risk and Exploitation Strategy Group oversees and coordinates the multiagency response to the risks facing young people in Camden. The work is across three key areas of exploitation. They include:

- harmful sexual behaviour and child sexual exploitation (CSE);
- youth violence, child criminal exploitation (CCE) including trafficking/ modern slavery.
- radicalisation and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.

The strategy has a pillared approach; Prevent, Identify, Support, Disrupt and Enforce/Prosecute.

16. Child exploitation (Annual Report: Page 72-75)

Online exploitation was the most frequently identified model in 2023-24 for children who had been sexually exploited. For child criminal exploitation, children were most frequently exploited through gangs and youth violence. CSCP continues to commission multiagency training delivered by Barnardo's which focuses on our refreshed approach to responding to exploitation and working with vulnerable young people. Our cross-borough multiagency panel assessing potential child victims of Modern Slavery has positively impacted children by significantly reducing the decision-making time, with lead professionals sharing the child's lived experience.

17. Children going missing (Annual Report: Pg. 76-77)

The correlation between missing young people at risk of CSE and CCE is recognised. In 2023-24, 179 young people were reported missing 778 times with 79% of missing episodes lasting 24 hours or less. To further understand the lived experience of the child, Camden's children missing service offers internal return home interviews to children reported missing. This has resulted in improved relationships with placements and carers, increased information sharing and an increase in successful Return Home Interview (RHI) (82%).

18. Youth violence and knife crime (Annual Report: Pg. 77-80)

Our statutory arrangements allow an understanding of the local contexts of youth violence in Camden which is vital to prevention and support to those affected. The CSCP continues to develop an understanding of the relationship between serious youth violence and criminal exploitation, whilst continuing to identify other underlying causes and triggers. There is a continued overall downward trend of knife crime with injury in Camden compared to the 2018 spike. To monitor the prevalence of gangs in Camden, the multiagency daily gangs risk briefing, and Camden's Gangs Partnership continues. Conflict between peer groups has been identified as an indicator of subsequent risk of youth violence and exploitation.

19. Elective Home Education Independent Multiagency Audit (Annual Report Pg. 42)

Since the pandemic it is recognised nationally and locally, that there has been a significant increase in the number of children being electively home educated. Camden has an established voluntary register of children who are electively home educated. In 2024 we commenced an independent multiagency audit of safeguarding electively home educated children. This resulted in the strengthening of our arrangements to ensure that, within the statutory framework, children who are electively home educated, remain visible and safeguarded.

20. Reflections and priorities for 2024-26

In response to WT23, we have refreshed our CSCP multiagency safeguarding arrangements, which outline how the CSCP provides strategic oversight and governance of multiagency safeguarding efforts for children in Camden. An updated version will be published by the end of 2024, following current consultation. As part of this, our refreshed CSCP values are aligned with the Council's Children and Learning directorate values:

- Be compassionate, trauma informed and anti-racist when supporting children and families who have faced multiple disadvantages.
- Develop a relational approach by making meaningful connections to uphold safeguarding as a joint responsibility, fostering mutual challenge and support among partners.
- Collaborate in partnership to engage in reflection, learning, and continuous improvement.
- Be curious and courageous to make a positive difference to the lives of children, through valuing and involving our diverse community.

The CSCP identifies three safeguarding priority areas to take forward biennially. For 2024-25, our key priorities are (AR Section 3.5):

- Re-engaging vulnerable children in education (including children with Special Education Needs Disabilities)
- Mental Health in the family
- Children Looked After and those that are Care Experienced

21. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Service

The Director of Finance has been consulted on the contents of this report and has no further comment to make.

22. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

The CSCP must prepare and publish a report on what the CSCP have done as a result of the safeguarding arrangements and how effective these arrangements have been (Section 16G of the Children Act 2004). Further detail regarding the contents of this report is set out in the statutory guidance Working Together 2023 at paragraph 107. This report covers these requirements. Such reports are required to be submitted to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review panel each September from 2024.

23. Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications proposed in this report.

24 Appendices

Appendix 1 - CSCP Annual Report 2023-24

Appendix 2 - CSCP Summary Business Plan 2024

REPORT ENDS