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**TOWER HAMLETS SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP**

**(THSCP)**

**ARRANGEMENTS**

September 2023

Contact: THSCP@towerhamlets.gov.uk

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# **Introduction and Background**

The core objectives of the Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership (THSCP) are to coordinate local work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to ensure the effectiveness of what the member organisations do individually and together. The Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership is fully established under the Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2018 Arrangements and has developed into a responsive and agile system.

The purpose of these local arrangements is to support and enable local organisations and agencies to work together in a system where:

* Children are safeguarded, and their welfare is promoted.
* Partner organisations and agencies collaborate, share and co-own the vision for improving outcomes for vulnerable children.
* Organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively.
* There is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats.
* Learning is promoted and embedded so that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice.
* Information is shared effectively to facilitate more accurate and timely decision-making for children and families.

# **Membership of THSCP**

The Working Together Arrangements state that:

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

(a) the local authority

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

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

The three named partners in Tower Hamlets are:

* London Borough of Tower Hamlets – Director of Children's Services
* Integrated Care Board – Associate Director for Safeguarding Children, North East London ICB
* Metropolitan Police – Detective Chief Superintendent, Commander, Central East BCU

The three named partners are accountable for safeguarding across Tower Hamlets, therefore overseeing all THSCP activity.

The three statutory agencies have representation at every THSCP meeting.

The THSCP comprises a wide range of relevant agencies that contribute to all areas. These agencies include but are not limited to:

* Local Authority including:
  + Childrens Social Care
  + Early Help
  + Early Years
  + Exploitation
  + Housing
  + Education Safeguarding
  + Public Health
  + Young People’s Service
  + Adult’s Services
* Health Services including:
  + Integrated Care Board - North East London Health and Care Partnership
  + Primary Care Providers
  + Barts Health, including Midwifery
  + East London Foundation Trust
  + GP Care Group
* Metropolitan Police Service
* Education Providers
  + Early Years Providers
  + Post 16 Providers
  + Secondary
  + Primary
  + Special
  + Faith
* Voluntary & Community Organisations
* Probations
* CAFCASS

# **Tower Hamlets Context and Demographics**

Key Demographic Data for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets:

* Tower Hamlets continues to have one of the fastest-growing populations nationally and now has an estimated population of **324,745**. The latest population estimates published by ONS show that Tower Hamlets continues to have one of the youngest populations in the country, with a median age of **31.6.**
* The council has the **7th** highest housing waiting list nationally. There are **18,808** households on the council's housing waiting list. BME households account for 78% of all households on the housing register. In March 2019, there were **2,529** households in temporary accommodation, of which half are placed in accommodation outside of the borough.
* Tower Hamlets has a similar proportion of young people aged 0-19 in England and London. An estimated **78,000** children and young people aged 0-19 reside in Tower Hamlets, a quarter of all residents.
* Tower Hamlets has a high proportion of children in need compared to England and London. The number of children identified as being in need has risen considerably since 2017. Neglect is the most common form of abuse for children in receipt of a child protection plan.
* There are **45,000** pupils in primary and secondary schools in the borough. Most pupils want to attend university/higher education.
* In 2016-18, life expectancy for men in Tower Hamlets was the same as in the UK, while for women, it was slightly higher than the UK average. Babies in Tower Hamlets were more likely to be born with a low birth weight than in England or London, but mothers were less likely to be smokers. The infant mortality rate was higher than the national or regional average.
* Tower Hamlets economic output in 2017 was **£29.7bn** – more than Birmingham or the City of Manchester. The economy grew by **49%** between 2008 and 2017.
* Crime in Tower Hamlets has risen in recent years but less rapidly than in London. In December 2019, there were **35,118** notifiable offences, a **4.2%** increase since 2016, compared to the **16%** increase in London. Recorded youth crime in the borough has fallen, as it has elsewhere.
* During 2016-19, around two thirds of Tower Hamlets working age population were in employment **(67%).**
* The borough has a rich and historical environment, with more than **200** parks and open spaces. CO2 emissions have fallen but not sufficiently quickly, so Tower Hamlets declared a climate emergency in March 2019
* Tower Hamlets became significantly less deprived between the 2015 and the 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, moving from **10th** to **50th** on the rank nationally, but **60%** of the borough are still within the **30%** most deprived parts of England. Deprivation among children and older people is much higher than deprivation.
* Tower Hamlets has an extensive transport network with 7 Overground stations and 9 underground stations, the busiest of which is Canary Wharf station. The borough is also served by 17 DLR stations and 26 daytime bus routes.

# **Geographical Area of the Partnership**

As with the majority of Safeguarding Partnerships, the THSCP is set on the Local Authority's geographical footprint, whereas the two other local statutory agencies cover a wider local footprint.

Metropolitan Police Basic Command Unit covers two local authority areas: Tower Hamlets and Hackney.

Integrated Care Board North East London Health and Care Partnership covers eight local authority areas: Barking & Dagenham, City of London, Hackney, Havering, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest.

# **Principles**

The THSCP has three principles which underpin all aspects of the partnership.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Child Protection** | **Assurance** | **Learning** |
| Working Together 2018 defines safeguarding as:  •Protecting children from maltreatment  •Preventing impairment of children's health or development  •Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care  •Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes  Ultimately, all of these involve a focus on the protection of children; the THSCP has adopted an all-encompassing definition of Child Protection to ensure all safeguarding agendas refine their focus and impact to support the overall child protection offer in the borough. | The THSCP oversees agencies' compliance with the broader safeguarding agenda and ensures the voice of the child is captured in all areas of work.  Building upon Ofsted, CQC and JTAI recommendations, the partnership has developed into a dynamic approach to assurance. Which includes a programme of:   * Clear lines of governance and scrutiny * Audit activity * Reviews * Using data to inform practice. * Assurance reports * Engagement activities * Annual Report | Learning and supporting partners is critical to ensure children are safeguarded, and lessons learnt from statutory reviews are disseminated, implemented, and embedded.  The THSCP ensures that partner agencies take on board recommendations from reviews and audits.  The THSCP has a ‘whole system approach’ to learning.  The THSCP supplies a small amount of training but brings partners together to open training courses for other agencies, run awareness events, conferences, and update on key safeguarding topics via an e-bulletin. |

# **Independent Scrutiny**

“The role of independent scrutiny is to provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area, including arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases” and “The independent scrutineer should consider how effectively the arrangements are working for children and families as well as for practitioners, and how well the safeguarding partners are providing strong leadership and agree with the safeguarding partners how this will be reported.” – Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

The THSCP employs an Independent Scrutineer for two days a month. The Independent Scrutineer attends the THSCP Executive and Quality Assurance and Performance Group. Their role is to ensure the THSCP is compliant, act as a critical friend and support the continuous improvement and development of the partnership. The Independent Scrutineer routinely meets with partners via 1:1’s, focus groups and workshops. The Independent Scrutineer submits a 'reflections report' to the Executive Group each quarter.

# **Young Scrutineers and the Voice of the Child**

In addition to the Independent Scrutineer, the THSCP hosts two Young Scrutineers aged 16 or 17 and work to ensure that the voice of the child is present in all the partnership work. They link with other pre-established young people's engagement groups to include a range of voices. They have a pivotal role in setting priority improvement projects, reviewing new policies and procedures and creating their own documentation for the THSCP. They work up to 4 hours a week and are paid employees. They also present findings back to key THSCP groups. The contracts last two years, giving a wide range of children and young people in Tower Hamlets opportunities for the roles.

# **Governance and Structure**

The THSCP has a small executive group comprising the three named statutory partners and links with topical multi-agency groups to deliver outcomes. The Executive Group is accountable for ensuring the THSCP upholds its statutory responsibilities and duties and holds agencies to account for their works. Each member of the Executive Group acts as a sponsor to its subsequent sub-groups. Partners are responsible for chairing, engaging, contributing, and carrying out actions within all the THSCP groups. Each group has its own terms of reference and objectives.

See structure diagram above

## **THSCP Executive**

**Purpose:** The Executive Group oversees the THSCP, which aims to continue to promote and support multi-agency working across all areas of safeguarding. Fixed agenda items include a quarterly performance update report on all sub-groups and key business, Independent Scrutineer reflections, multi-agency data dashboard, escalations, and Rapid Reviews and CSPRs updates. The Executive members each sponsor sub-groups to ensure the delivery of the programmes.

**Chair:** Rotational Chair: The chair rotates between the three statutory agencies every six months. **The individual who chairs is ultimately responsible for the THSCP and signs off on all decisions within six months of governance.**

* Director of Children’s Services for Tower Hamlets
* Associate Director for Safeguarding Children, NHS North East London Health and Care Partnership
* Detective Chief Superintendent, Metropolitan Police

**Membership**: Local Authority, Police, Health - (Leads and Deputies), Independent Scrutineer, Strategy and partnership Manager, THSCP Co-ordinator or THSCP Apprentice for minute taking.

**Meeting Frequency:** The group meets up to eight times a year with at least quarterly meetings and has one ‘away day’ per year.

**Business Support:** Full minutes a trackers.

## **Quality Assurance and Performance Sub-Group:**

**Purpose:** The Quality Assurance and Performance Group oversees the business part of the partnership, which includes (but is not limited to) reviewing multi-agency data, new policies and procedures, audits and action plans that arise from statutory reviews.

**Chair:** Director, Supporting Families – Local Authority

**Membership:** Local Authority Representatives from Education Safeguarding, MASH, Quality Assurance, Youth Services, Exploitation Team, Learning Academy, Community Safety. Health Representatives from: Barts Health, GP Care Group, East London Foundation Trust, Designated Dr, Designated Nurse, Public Health. Police, Community and Voluntary Sector, THSCP Manager and THSCP Apprentice for note taking. Membership is subject to change depending on agendas and forward plans.

**Meeting Frequency:** Quarterly, with extraordinary sessions.

**Business Support:** Actions notes and trackers.

## **THSCP Delivery Group**

**Purpose:** The THSCP Delivery Group delivers improvement projects into priority areas. The priorities are refreshed every two years.

**Chair:** Police

**Membership:** tbc THSCP Manager and THSCP Apprentice for note-taking. *The delivery Group is a new approach to delivering improvement projects which is being set up in September 2023.*

**Meeting Frequency:** Bi-Monthly

**Business Support:** Action Notes and Trackers

## **The Effective Learning Group**

**Purpose:** To ensure join-up across the multi-agency training and awareness programme and deliver and implement learning from multi-agency audits.

**Chair:** Principle Social Worker and TBC *The Effective Learning Group is an additional new group to strengthen the training and audit offer, the set up date is in October 2023.*

**Membership:** tbc THSCP Co-ordinator

**Meeting Frequency:** Quarterly

**Business Support:** Action Notes

## **Rapid Review Panel**

**Purpose:** The purpose of the Rapid Review is to respond to 'Serious Incidents', identify and act upon immediate learning, and consider if additional learning could be identified through a more comprehensive Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR).

**Chair:** Head of Service Safeguarding and Quality Assurance- Local Authority **Deputy Chair**: Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children – Health

**Membership:** Off-line senior managers from Local Authority Representatives:Quality Assurance, Supporting Families, MASH. Health Representatives from: GP Care Group, Designated Dr, Designated Nurse, Education Safeguarding, Barts Health inc Midwifery. THSCP Manager and THSCP Co-ordinator for minute taking. Police and, in addition, any agency involved in the case will be invited, such as the East London Foundation Trust and Exploitation Team.

**Meeting Frequency:** Ad hoc, the panel is set up when ‘Serious Incidents’ occur.

**Business Support:** Full Minutes and Decision Sheet.

## **Rapid Review Working Group**

**Purpose:** To implement recommendations and learning from Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

**Chair:** Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children – Health **Deputy Chair:** Head of Service Safeguarding and Quality Assurance- Local Authority

**Membership:** Local Authority Representatives: Quality Assurance, Supporting Families, MASH. Health Representatives from: GP Care Group, Designated Dr, Designated Nurse, Education Safeguarding, Barts Health inc Midwifery. Police and membership are subject to change depending on recommendations**.**

**Meeting Frequency:** Bi-Monthly

## **Education Safeguarding Sub-Group**

**Purpose:** For Education Providers to meet to discuss on-the-ground Safeguarding issues and link with other teams.

**Chair: Headteacher – Primary School**

**Membership**: Headteachers from Secondary, Special, Primary and Post-16 – Schools and Colleges, Education Safeguarding Representative, Strategy and partnership Manager and Safeguarding Partnership Apprentice for note taking.

**Meeting Frequency:** Termly (3x a year)

**Business Support:** Action Notes

# **Business Unit and Support Service**

The THSCP is supported by a business unit which consists of:

* Strategy and Partnership Manager
* Safeguarding Children Partnership Co-ordinator
* Safeguarding Partnership Administration Apprentice

The Business Unit are responsible for:

* Administration, including setting up all meetings and boards, minutes, papers, action trackers and agendas.
* Annual Report
* Audits
* Briefings
* Collation of data dashboard
* Commissioning CSPR authors/ support for authors
* Communications, including website and bi-monthly bulletins.
* Compliance
* Escalations
* Finance/ budget
* Forward plans
* Membership and support for partners
* Performance and update reports
* Programme/ project plans
* Rapid review support and decision sheets
* Strategy and policy
* Training, awareness, and engagement events
* Young Scrutineers

The business unit is hosted and supported by the Local Authority.

# **Financial Arrangements**

The Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership share a shared budget to further its objectives. Partner agencies agree on contributions at the end of the calendar year for the following financial year. There are significant differences between the Statutory Partners regarding remit and available resources to support the funding partnership system. The local policing budget is determined by the Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime (MOPAC), and discussion of the available budget for local safeguarding is held at the Pan London level. The THSCP is working towards an equal funding model. The expenditure of the partnership funds the following:

* THSCP Business Salaries
* Independent Scrutineer
* Young Scrutineers
* Training & Awareness Programme
* Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
* Events – Venues, etc.
* Targeted Improvement Programmes

# **Priority Setting Cycle**

The priority projects work on a 2-year cycle, aiming to improve multi-agency practice in targeted areas. Every two years, the Executive will have an extraordinary meeting to set priority areas. For the decision-making, a consultation is held; they are invited to workshops or wide-scale events, and a survey is sent out. Pre-established children’s and young people’s groups are consulted alongside the Young Scrutineers.

The Executive is supplied with the following for decision-making:

* Feedback from partnership consultation events
* Feedback from children and young people’s groups
* Survey analysis
* The most recent data dashboard
* Overview of audits from the last two years
* Overview of themes from Rapid Reviews and CSPRs from the previous two years
* Summary of priorities from other boards

Once the priorities are decided, an event is held with partners for feedback. Priorities are set in early summer and established in September.

The priorities fall under the 'Delivery Group', which oversees all the improvement activity into the priority areas.

When the lifespan of the prorates ends, a ‘reflections session’ is held with partners involved to review ‘what went well’ and ‘what could be improved’ to carry learning on to the next phase of projects.

# **Reporting and Data**

* A Business Management Report is supplied to the THSCP Executive each quarter outlining key activity of the partnership, subgroups, Rapid Reviews, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, budget position and horizon scanning of national updates to note.
* An Independent Scrutineer Reflections Report is supplied to the THSCP Executive each quarter, outlining key scrutiny activity and key challenges.
* Forward Plans are supplied for each group.
* An annual report with partners' contributions is written to cover all activity of the THSCP; the THSCP Executive signs off the Report and goes via the Local Authority democratic processes for Cabinet and Member oversight and information. The Report is published in July/August of Each Year.
* A Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children Data Set is supplied to the Quality Assurance and Performance Group, where it is analysed in detail with key partners presenting; the analysis is added in annotation to the dashboard and then supplied to the THSCP Executive for consideration. All data is anonymised. The following partner agencies/ teams feed into the dashboard:
  + Childrens Social Care
  + Exploitation Service
  + Early Help
  + Young People’s Service
  + GP Care Group
  + East London Foundation Trust
  + Metropolitan Police
  + Integrated Care Board
  + Child Death Overview Panel
  + THSCP Business Unit – CSPRs, Rapid Reviews and Training Compliance.
* On an annual basis, the Quality, Assurance and Performance Group reviews all annual reports from key safeguarding agencies, including but not limited to Child Protection, Local Authority Designated Officer, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, Integrated Care Board, and Barts Health.
* A bi-annually, a full Multi-Agency Training Compliance Report is supplied to the Quality, Assurance and Performance Group.

# **Information Sharing**

Transparency and appropriate and timely sharing of information underpins the entire safeguarding partnership. The [Pan-London Information Sharing Procedures](https://www.londonsafeguardingchildrenprocedures.co.uk/info_sharing.html) are adopted in Tower Hamlets, which gives guidance and a framework to all agencies involved with safeguarding children.

Agencies share information on operational levels to continue supporting and safeguarding children when necessary, proportionate, and justified to do so. In addition, anonymised data is shared for the multi-agency data dashboard, and case-level information is shared for Rapid Reviews, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Multi-Agency Audits, compliant with Working Together 2018. Partner agencies are expected to contribute data to these key areas to support the continuous improvement of safeguarding for children.

# **Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Rapid Reviews**

The THSCP Rapid Review Protocol is a guidance that gives all partners practical advice on reviews and outlines the processes. This protocol is continuously updated when any changes to the procedures are made.

The overall aims of Rapid Reviews are Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR) are:

* To improve safeguarding children and young people where possible within Tower Hamlets through a review of local processes, procedures and cases.
* To support the delivery of high-quality services by identifying areas for improvement.
* To strengthen the safeguarding partnership through proportionate candour and constructive challenge to deliver an integrated and comprehensive offer for children and young people.

Rapid Review Panel is a multi-agency partnership group of the THSCP tasked with considering cases that have hit a Serious Incident Notification Threshold. The THSCP will conduct a CSPR when a child is seriously harmed or dies because of abuse or neglect and the Threshold is met. However, meeting the criteria does not mean safeguarding partners must automatically carry out a CSPR, which will be considered if an open or recent CSPR contains similar themes.

When the criteria for a CSPR is not met, but there are possible learning / key issues arising from the case, actions for agencies will be added to the 'Statutory Review Action Plan', where all actions from Rapid Reviews or CSPRs are kept and monitored. The Action Plan sits under a parallel group called the Rapid Review Working Group, which is responsible for ensuring actions are completed and embedded.

When the criteria for a CSPR is met, the THSCP Executive will recommend the methodology, which will be decided on a case-by-case base.

The final decision about conducting a CSPR lies with the THSCP Executive Group, which consists of the three named statutory partners. The National Panel is notified of the THSCP's final decision.

Each Child Safeguarding Practice Review is conducted in partnership with all agencies involved in the case; as detailed above, a bespoke approach is taken for each case, which could include external or internal authors. The THSCP aims to ensure the reviews are thematic and may incorporate more than one case. Reviews aim to be complete within six months of the Rapid Review. They are anonymised and published.

The family/ support system around the child will always be consulted and asked to feed into the process if appropriate. They are notified at the beginning of the process and will see draft reports before publication, where their views will be considered if appropriate.

A high-level overview of the 15-day Rapid Review process

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## **Learning Cycle**

The most crucial part of Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews is embedding the learning. In addition to actioning all the recommendations via the Rapid Review Working Group, the THSCP delivers the following:

* One month after each Rapid Review, a 30-minute online session open to all THSCP partners is held to give anonymised learning from the case discussed at the panel.
* An anonymised log is kept with all Rapid Review and Child Safeguarding Practice Review Themes. A separate anonymised record is also kept for themes from cases considered at Serious Incident Notification, used in management meetings across agencies.
* The Rapid Review Chair, THSCP Manager and Co-ordinator visits agencies to present the key themes and findings from reviews.
* THSCP holds a conference each November, Safeguarding Month, on the Rapid Review Process and case themes.
* After each CSPR, a half-day learning workshop is held with all partners at the publication stage.
* Bulletins with key learning from cases are sent out to all partners.
* A half-day partnership workshop is held one year after a CSPR is published to review the implementation of learning and raise awareness of key themes.

# **Audits**

To ensure the THSCP has a complete overview of safeguarding, multi-agency audits are held into topical areas. The THSCP aims to hold at least two multi-agency audits per year. Agencies rotate in chairing the audits. Cases are requested from all agencies, 6 cases are chosen to audit, all agencies submit an analysis of their involvement, and a half-day workshop is held to highlight good practices and areas for improvement. The Effective Learning Group picks up the outcomes of the audits.

# **Training, Awareness and Communications**

The THSCP commissions a small amount of training, covering the basics of safeguarding and more advanced safeguarding courses. In addition, the THSCP liaises with key charities, national and local partnerships to open training for the partners , the THSCP ensures the Pan-London Training Offer is also advertised. This is compiled into a Training Calander and sent to sub-groups via an e-bulletin and within papers.

The THSCP hosts awareness sessions throughout November 'Safeguarding Month', which consists of a large-scale conference and smaller online workshops in priority areas. Additional awareness sessions may take place throughout the year.

The THSCP delivers e-bulletins to the partnership distribution list at least twice a month containing information on:

* + Training courses
  + Advice on safeguarding topics
  + Updates on priority areas
  + CSPR Recommendations
  + Request for feedback such as workshops and surveys.
  + National updates on safeguarding

# **Child Death Review System Links**

The Local Authority and Clinical Commissioning Group hold the Child Death review system. The geographical footprint covers City and Hackney, Waltham Forest, Newham, and Tower Hamlets. The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) is responsible for reviewing the death of every child in the local area and carrying out themes review meetings for high volume or high complexity deaths. The CDOP feeds into Rapid Reviews when required via the Named Nurse for Safeguarding, and the Effective Learning Group reviews learning; in addition, learning is disseminated and shared via the THSCP e-bulletin.

# **Thresholds**

The THSCP have adopted the Pan-London Thresholds to ensure consistency with neighbouring boroughs and families who may move across London are supported. Thresholds training is set up to occur at least 3x per year for all partners.

# **Escalations & Dispute Resolution**

The THSCP has published an escalation and dispute resolution policy with named individuals in each agency; this can be used for immediate operational or strategic escalations. Partner agencies can escalate to the THSCP Executive Group/ the three named partners within any sub-group via an escalation tracker utilised for more long-term strategic escalations directly related to the partnership.