

TOWER HAMLETS SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

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Introduction

The Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership (THSCP) is fully established under the Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2023 Arrangements and has developed over the last years into a responsive and agile system.

The Working Together Arrangements state that:

A statutory 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) an integrated care board 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 partners have a joint and equal duty

In Tower Hamlets there is a rotational chairing agreement between the three jointly responsible agencies.



Steve Reddy
Children's Services

Steve Reddy is the Interim Statutory Director of Children's Services for Tower Hamlets with lead responsibility for children's safeguarding as well as for the delivery of a range of social care, education, early help, and commissioned services.

Steve works closely with partners to ensure the most vulnerable children and young people in the borough are safeguarded from harm



Korkor Ceasar
Integrated Care Board

Korkor is the Associate Director for Safeguarding Children, NHS North East London Clinical Commissioning Group. She leads on the implementation of all safeguarding statutory duties for children safeguarding and Looked after Children, ensuring all risks are escalated through the appropriate governance. She is responsible for providing expert advice and guidance to the Partnership Boards via Chief Nurse and other colleagues on all safeguarding functions, aspects and responsibilities; with a particular focus on ensuring the strategic needs are met. Korkor is also responsible for ensuring that safeguarding is effectively managed across the health system, engaging local providers in a robust partnership approach to commissioning and provision of health services.



James Conway
Metropolitan Police

Detective Chief Superintendent Conway is the senior police officer responsible for the strategic and operational oversight for the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Hackney. The Superintendent works closely with both internal and external partners in order to safeguard the vulnerable, tackle crime and continue to build on trust and confidence in policing amongst the community it serves.

Working Together 2023

Working Together to Safeguard Children is statutory guidance produced by the government that outlines how practitioners working with children, young people and families should work together to ensure that children and young people remain safe from harm Working Together 2023 underpins all of the activity of the Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Joint functions of lead safeguarding partners

- 1.** Set the strategic direction, vision, and culture of the local safeguarding arrangements, including agreeing and reviewing shared priorities and the resource required to deliver services effectively.
- 2.** Lead their organisation’s individual contribution to the shared priorities, ensuring strong governance, accountability, and reporting mechanisms to hold their delegates to account for the delivery of agency commitments.
- 3.** Review and sign off key partnership documents: published multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including plans for independent scrutiny, shared annual budget, yearly report, and local threshold document.
- 4.** Provide shared oversight of learning from independent scrutiny, serious incidents, local child safeguarding practice reviews, and national reviews, ensuring recommendations are implemented and have a demonstrable impact on practice (as set out in the yearly report).
- 5.** Ensure multi-agency arrangements have the necessary level of business support, including intelligence and analytical functions, such as an agreed data set providing oversight and a robust understanding of practice.
- 6.** Ensure all relevant agencies, including education settings, are clear on their role and contribution to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.”



HM Government

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

A guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children

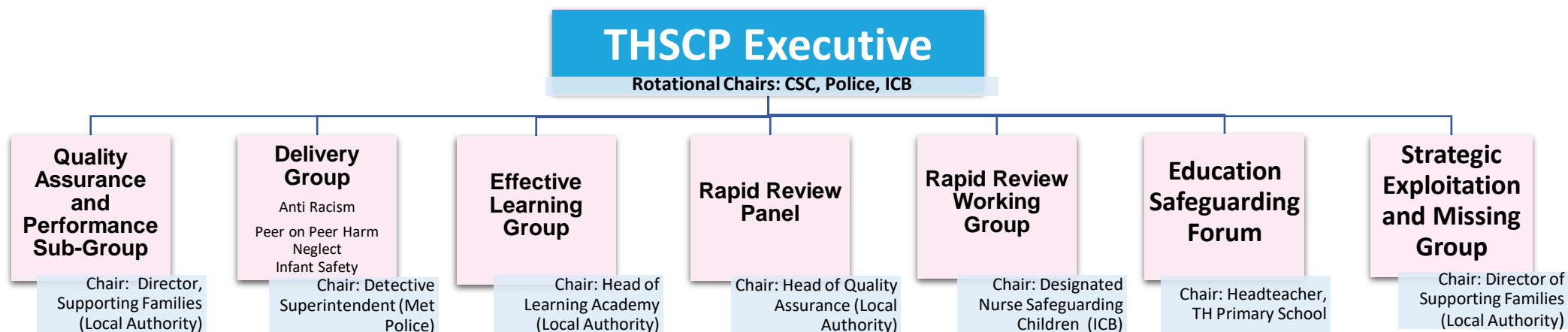
December 2023

Overview of key changes in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

2023 saw significant changes in the Working Together Guidance, the THSCP is currently reviewing how the partnership can be strengthened through further compliance with the guidance. The headline areas for change are:

	Multi-agency expectations for all partners		Further inclusion of the voluntary sector
	Working with parents/guardians and families		Strengthening accountability, data and reporting
	Changes to SCP's strategic leadership and funding		Tackling harm outside the home
	Strengthening Scrutiny functions		Support for children with disabilities
	Ensuring interdependencies with other boards		Role of education and childcare providers

Governance and Structure



The Groups Explained:

- The Executive Group oversees the THSCP which aims to continue to promote and support multi-agency working across all areas of Safeguarding. The local Police, Integrated Care Board and Local Authority are equally responsible for the Partnership and its outcomes.
- The Quality Assurance and Performance Group oversees the business part of the partnership which includes (but is not limited to), reviewing multi-agency data, audits and action plans that arise from statutory reviews.
- The Delivery Group oversees four multi-agency improvement projects which have been set up to focus a lens on an area that has arisen as a challenge within the borough.
- The Effective Learning group joins up training and awareness programmes across the borough.
- The Rapid Review Panel has been established to respond quickly to serious incidents when a child has been significantly harmed or died from abuse or neglect. The group reviews the cases, draws out any immediate learning and makes recommendations to the Executive on what level of Statutory Review is required.
- The Rapid Review Working Group has the responsibility of implementing the learning from statutory reviews.
- The Education Safeguarding Forum is a space for Education Providers to raise thematic and strategic safeguarding concerns.

Membership

“Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider are required to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children. A list of organisations that meet the criteria to be included as a relevant agency is set out in regulations. Strong, effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements should be responsive to local circumstances and engage the right people in a collaborative way. This approach requires flexibility from all relevant agencies, to enable joint identification and response to existing and emerging needs, and to agree priorities to improve outcomes for children.” – Working Together 2023 T

he partnership has been made stronger this year through key agencies taking the lead in many areas including shaping and leading the work in our priority areas. The infographic shows a snapshot of members, but the membership is made up of over 200 professionals from various agencies and teams across Tower Hamlets. Partners include: Almost any organisation that works with children and young people in Tower Hamlets but to name a few...

Met Police	Department for Education	Integrated Care Board
Barts Health	GP Care Group	ELFT
Education Providers	Cafcass	Voluntary Sector
Probation	Childrens Services	Early Help
Exploitation Team	Ofsted	The National Panel



Independent Scrutiny

“Independent scrutiny should drive continuous improvement and provide assurance that arrangements are working effectively for children, families, and practitioners. It should also consider learning from local child safeguarding practice reviews, national reviews and thematic reports. The independent scrutineer or scrutiny group should be able to demonstrate knowledge, skills and expertise in the area being scrutinised and consequently add value to the work of local agencies.” – Working Together 2023 The THSCP Independent Scrutineer is Laurelle Brown who is responsible for ensuring the THSCP is compliant, raising any challenges, reviewing processes and procedures, and liaising on a national level with other partnerships and key external stakeholders. Laurelle is a JNC qualified Youth and Community Worker with experience in a range of cross-sector frontline, research, strategy, and leadership roles. Her background includes work in further education, violence reduction, children's social care, youth offending, and children's charities. Laurelle’s work focuses on tackling complex inequalities and challenges across systems for children. She is a Lay Member on a local SCP, Co-Founder of a community for Black safeguarding professionals and a primary school Governor, helping her stay attuned to safeguarding from different perspectives. She is deeply invested in improving the lives of children.

Scrutineer's Annual Reflections



“This is my second contribution to a THSCP Annual Report since joining as Independent Scrutineer in October 2022. The Annual Report provides an overview of the progress made by the THSCP between April 2023 and March 2024. Despite numerous ongoing pressures and challenges, partner efforts have supported continuous improvement in key areas, such as the rapid review process. The implementation of three-way serious incident decision-making in 2022/23 has positively impacted this year in reinforcing joint responsibility among statutory partners and strengthening multidisciplinary rigour and learning opportunities. Learning from rapid reviews has also informed training delivery across multiple agencies, the identification of new Partnership priorities, and the development of Partnership protocols.

At the beginning of the year, I conducted a scrutiny exercise in collaboration with the Young Scrutineers, using the [Six Steps Framework](#). While some recommendations from the scrutiny report are still under review, several positive changes have been implemented across the Partnership, in alignment with the recommendations, including:

- Refreshed Partnership arrangements, including the establishment of a Delivery Sub-Group and an Effective Learning Sub-Group.*
- Migration of the Partnership's website to the Tower Hamlet Council website, facilitating access to information for partners, families, and children whilst a new THSCP website is planned.*
- Introduction of webinars to facilitate the dissemination of rapid review learning across the partnership.*
- Facilitation of the first Anti-Racism conference, contributing to enhanced awareness and practice among partners and agencies.*
- Strengthening of the Quality and Assurance Sub-group, with increased collaboration and constructive dialogue among partners.*
- Formation of an Independent Scrutineer-led Task and Finish group to update the Partnership's data dashboard.*

This year, significant attention has been drawn to institutional discrimination and the handling of child exploitation by the Met police through the publication of the [Baroness Casey Review](#) and an [HMIC inspection report](#). The Partnership has since identified ‘Anti-racism’ as a 2-year priority and confirmed exploitation as the focus of a scrutiny deep dive at the start of next year.

While progress has been made in establishing effective Partnership structures and processes this year, there are areas acknowledged as requiring further attention, including local child safeguarding practice reviews, performance and assurance approach and impact, feedback from children and families, health representation and information governance, and strategic oversight and leadership.

Finally, the past year also presented various changes and challenges, including notable workforce changes, impacting the effectiveness and continuity of the partnership, and the Executive. The dedication of individuals covering vacant roles and supporting colleagues has been invaluable in maintaining the Partnership's core work at what remains a challenging time. It has been a privilege to continue collaborating with the Partnership this year. I extend my sincere gratitude to practitioners and managers across all agencies for their tireless efforts in safeguarding children. Special thanks to the Young Scrutineers for their exceptional dedication and contributions, even with demanding academic schedules!” – Laurelle Brown

Young Scrutineers



The THSCP are proud to have introduced 'Young Scrutineers' into the THSCP which was the result of an innovative bid to the Department for Education and means we can involve young people in the work of the Partnership. They are paid at an adult living wage hourly rate, and who work up to 4 hours a week. The contract is flexible to work around their educational needs. The Scrutineers started the role at ages 16 and 17 and work alongside our Adult Scrutineer. Their role is to give their views, share their and peers' experiences, and review policies and projects to ensure we have the voice of the child at the centre of the work. Tower Hamlets are 1 of only 5 safeguarding partnerships with paid young scrutineers across the UK. Our young scrutineers have been with us for almost 2 years and as their contracts come to an end in June. We originally had 3 young scrutineers but last year Mia-Ly left us to study medicine.

During their time in the THSCP they have completed and been involved with the following activities:

- 1:1 meetings with over 15 senior managers and directors
- Gave initial feedback on priority areas and project plans, which resulted in the amendment of project plans to reflect the opinion of children and young people
- Took part in tours of police stations, The Royal London and Town Hall
- Benchmarked the THSCP website and gave feedback on how parts of the website should be accessible for children and young people when they wish to seek information on safeguarding
- Completed a jargon-busting exercise that breaks down commonly used terminology into a young person-friendly guide
- Helped facilitate a scrutiny workshop when the THSCP had a changeover in Independent Scrutineer
- Are working alongside the Independent Scrutineer on the Six Steps of Scrutiny project to highlight improvements to the THSCP
- Presented feedback to priority task and finish groups
- Presentations at Every Chance for Every Child Forum
- Helped analyse and feedback a survey regarding online safety which was sent out to schools
- Gave feedback on how to make the Thresholds document more accessible for children and young people and are now working on a guide for young people and children to navigate a thresholds document.
- Engaged other groups of children and young people to help set the THSCP new priorities
- Are currently working on a survey to capture more views of children and young people around the priority areas
- Conducted research into anti-racism and reviewed media articles
- Attended national feedback meetings with other young scrutineers
- Collected feedback from peers and family members to support the community language programme run by Tower Hamlets Local Authority
- Review anonymized social care case extracts to give feedback on the language used by professionals when documenting children and young people in case files

Young Scrutineers in Their Own Words

Imaana

"I started working as a young scrutineer at sixteen during 2022. Domestic abuse was originally my priority area and my goal was to give the council a new perspective on domestic abuse from the view of a young person. I wanted to improve the help that victims received and ensure that the voice of the child was heard. Additionally, I gave ideas on how to make sure victims feel safe and comfortable enough to seek help. Since working here my confidence and public speaking skills have grown, which was something I found challenging when I first started. I am now eighteen, and we have joint priority areas of peer-on-peer harm, racism, infant safety and neglect. Again, I think it is extremely useful for the safeguarding children partnership to have the perspectives of young people living in the borough. Recently we have been given research tasks on racism which was beneficial as we have highlighted all different types of racism and not just the obvious.

We also had a webinar with King's College London and other young scrutineers from different boroughs. This was useful as we saw what other young people were doing in their councils and we told them what we were doing, which they took advice from. We found that not many other councils employ their young scrutineers, unlike Tower Hamlets, and they're instead just volunteers.

Since working here we have met and spoken with young people in the borough to get their views on what it is like in Tower Hamlets. This included the CAMHS participation group, Barts Health young people's engagement group, spotlight and young carers. After getting their views we have looked at what we, as a partnership, need to do to make sure that children and young people's voices are heard. Hence our new priority areas this year, which came from young people and practitioners themselves. Throughout this role we have constantly communicated how important the voice of children and young people is. The best part about being a young scrutineer for Tower Hamlets was being heard and feeling like we made a difference." – Imaana

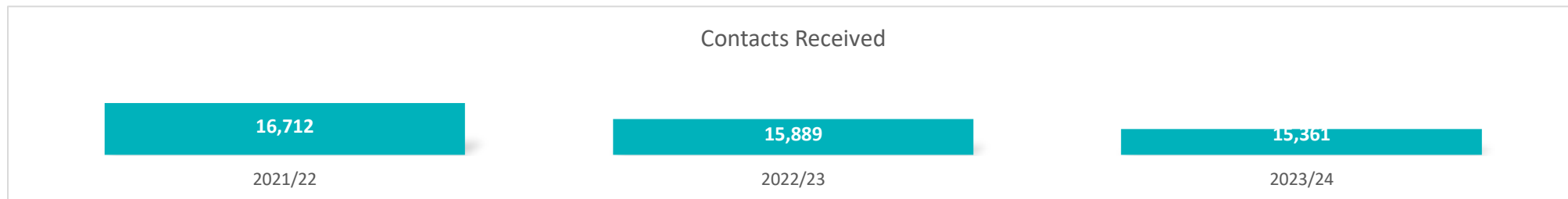
Imtiyaz

"I am currently in my final year of A levels and embarked on my journey as a young scrutineer from April 2022. I was assigned to one of three priority areas at the time, with me being sat on the online safety area, I was able to put forward my input and offer my opinions on current policies and work revolving around online safety. I wanted to ensure that the council were up to date with the upgrade in technology that has surpassed over the coming years and highly believed that keeping up to date with and being aware of such amendments in technology would help the partnership in being able to offer the right and effective amount of support needed for both parents, young people, and children. From this role, I have developed several skills, such skills that I know have very much benefit me now and will in the future. I have been able to grow as a person and expand knowledge and experience of working within a professional environment. Being able to work with a wide range of people from very diverse backgrounds has given me an interesting insight into the different lives we all live and how I can myself develop on learning from different cultures. Our new priority areas which consist around anti-racism, peer-on-peer harm, infant safety and neglect are areas of concern that was very much highlighted by several individuals and interactions during my first year as a scrutineer and seeing these being recognised and considered as an area that is important by the council and partnership has me hopeful in the work we carry out being heard and seen by the council and partnership. Since my statement in the last review, I am happy to be able to include a variety of new work I have been to complete and take part in which includes meeting with the CAHMS participation group and being able to listen to their feedback directly from young people who have had to make major sacrifices within their lives and setting out the contents and structure for a questionnaire that revolves around racism and collecting data on the effects individuals may have undergone as a result. The most enjoyed part of my role was being able to work with many unique individuals and have been able to establish professional networks with them as well as being able to make a difference to improve the lives of children and young people within the borough and being heard and having it considered as well as implemented." – Imtiyaz

Data regarding Children and Young People in Tower Hamlets

Contacts Received

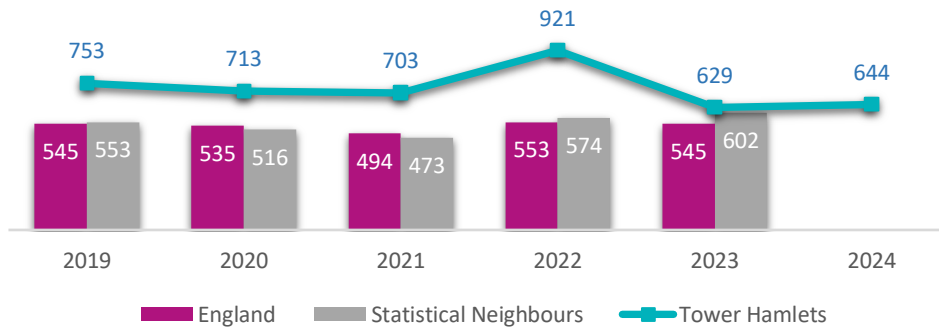
The number of contacts received into the Multi-Agency Safety Team (MAST) has fallen by 3.3%, from 15,889 contacts in 2022/23 to 15,361 contacts in 2023/24. Following the pandemic, the number of contacts received has fallen year on year, returning to levels pre-pandemic. *Data Source: LBTH RP_036 Contacts Report, April 2024*



Police continue to be the largest source of contacts followed by health services, schools and LA services.

Contact Source	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
a) Individual	3%	3%	4%
b) Schools	16%	13%	14%
c) Education services	1%	2%	2%
d) Health services	18%	18%	19%
e) Housing	1%	1%	1%
f) LA services	9%	11%	13%
g) Police	39%	41%	37%
h) Other legal agency	8%	8%	9%
i) Other	3%	2%	0%
j) Anonymous	0%	0%	0%
k) Unknown	0%	0%	0%

Rate of Referrals Received per 10,000

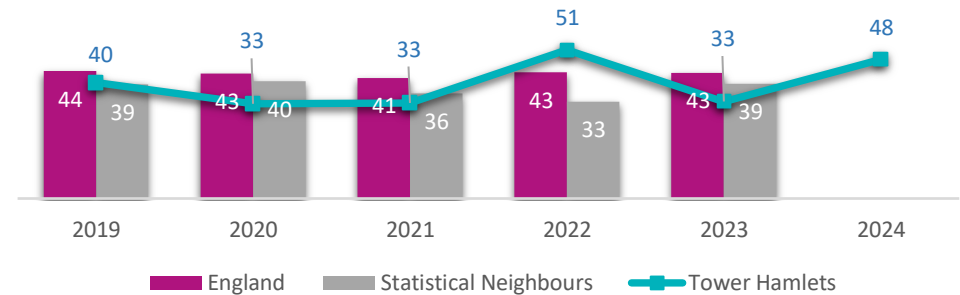


Referrals Received The rate of referrals received per 10,000 children has fallen in the past two reporting years, to rates below 700. The rate of 629 in 2022/23 was the lowest rate recorded in the past five years and closer to the National and statistical neighbour rates. The rate of 921 in 2021/22 was the highest recorded rate and highlighted the increase in demand for Children’s Social Care Services during the pandemic. For 2023/24, the referral rate is 644, slightly higher than the rate in the previous year. The increase in the demand for Children’s Social Care services reflects the pressures faced on families in the borough following the pandemic and the ongoing cost of living crisis. *Data Source: Local Authority Interactive Tool and LBTH MI March Scorecard, April*

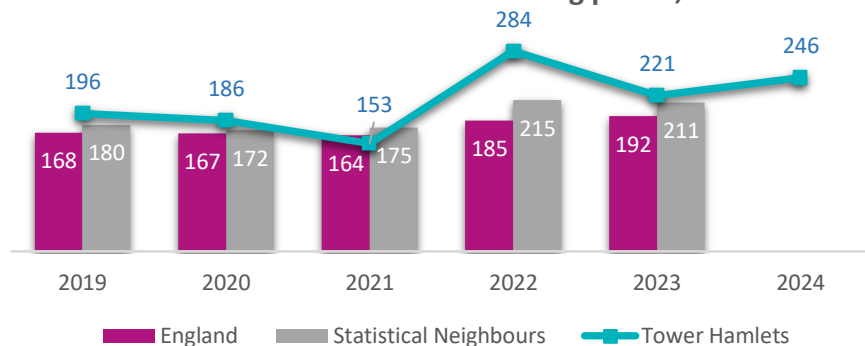
Children in Need The rate of Children in Need per 10,000 at the end of each March shows a slight increase from 33 in 2022/23 to a rate of 48 in 2023/24.

In three of the last six years, the rate has been 33, below the England average and statistical neighbour averages. The increase in 2023/24 remains slightly lower than the highest rate of 51 recorded in March 2022, however higher than all other years. The increase highlights more children are requiring support and services from Children’s Social Care. *Data Source: Local Authority Interactive Tool and LBTH MI March Scorecard, April 2024*

Rate of Children in Need per 10,000



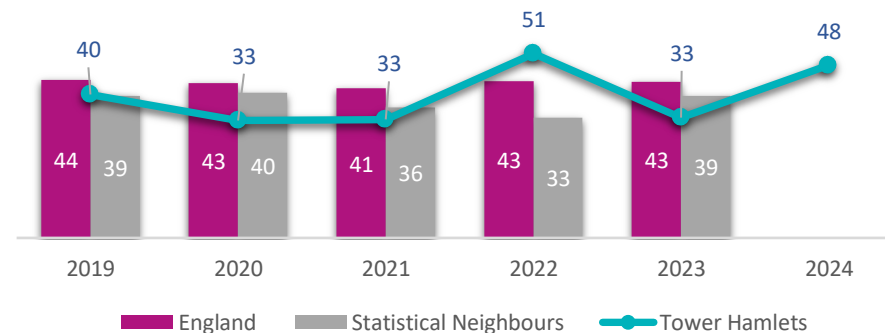
Rate of Section 47s Commencing per 10,000



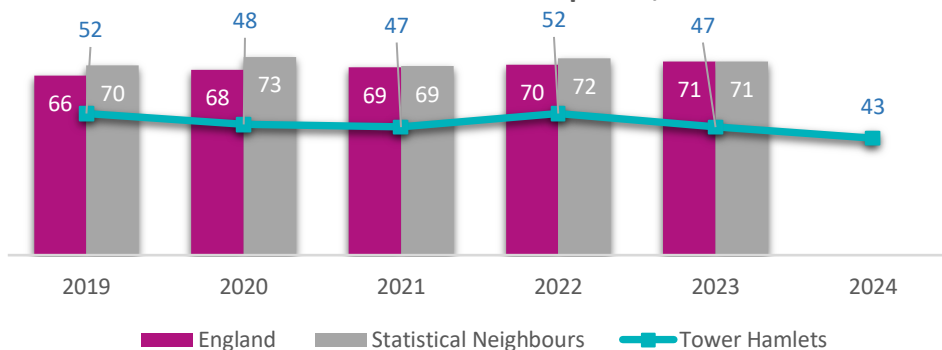
Section 47 Enquiries The rate of Section 47 enquiries commencing per 10,000 children has remained high following the pandemic. The highest rate of 284 in 2021/22 was higher than National and statistical neighbours, however in 2022/23, the rate fell to 221, closer to the National average of 192 and the statistical neighbour average of 211. *Data Source: Local Authority Interactive Tool and LBTH MI March Scorecard, April 2024*

Child Protection The rate of children subject to a Child Protection Plan at the end of March each year shows that other than 2021/22, this has been below the National rate. The highest rate of 51 was recorded at the end of March 2022, higher than the National rate of 43 and the statistical neighbour average of 33. This high rate indicates the increase in safeguarding concerns for children from the restrictions placed on children and families in the pandemic. At the end of March 2023, the rate fell to 33, below the National rate of 43 and the statistical neighbour rate of 39. *Data Source: Local Authority Interactive Tool and LBTH MI March Scorecard, April 2024*

Rate of Children Subject to Child Protection Plans per 10,000



Rate of Children in Care per 10,000

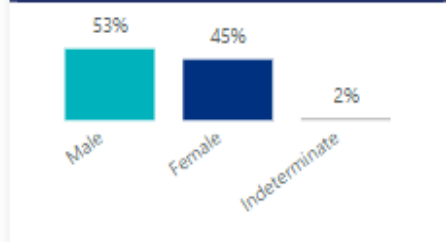


Children Looked After The rate of children looked after per 10,000 children remains stable, consistently below the National and statistical neighbour rates for the past five years. The lower rates of children in care at the end of each March demonstrates the strong services in supporting children at the edge of care with effective and tailored support enabling children and families to continue to be unified. *Data Source: Local Authority Interactive Tool and LBTH MI March Scorecard, April 2024*

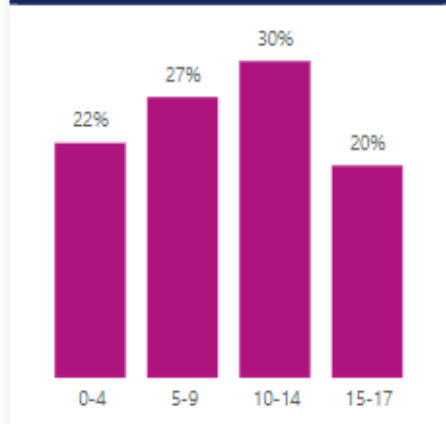
Demographic Information at the end of March 2024

Child In Need

Gender

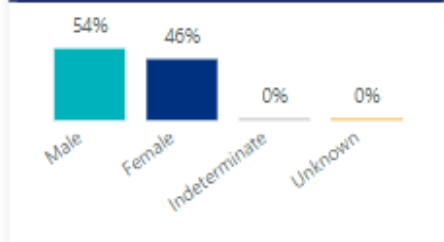


Age of Cohort

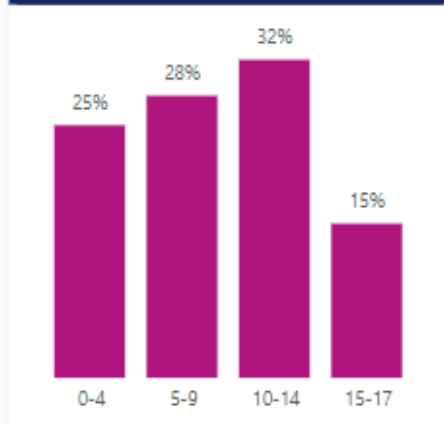


Child Protection

Gender

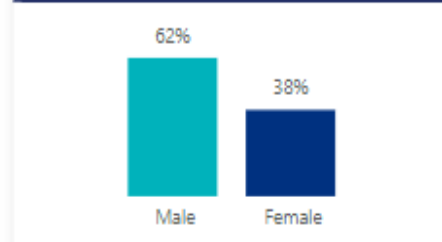


Age of Cohort

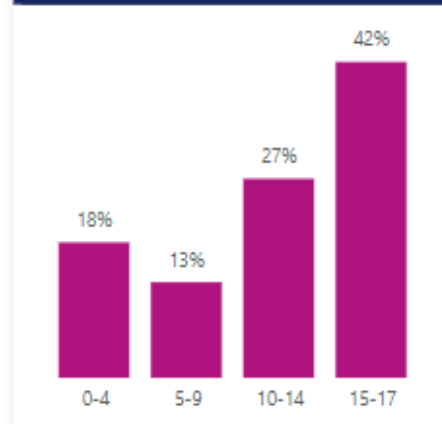


Children Looked After

Gender



Age of Cohort



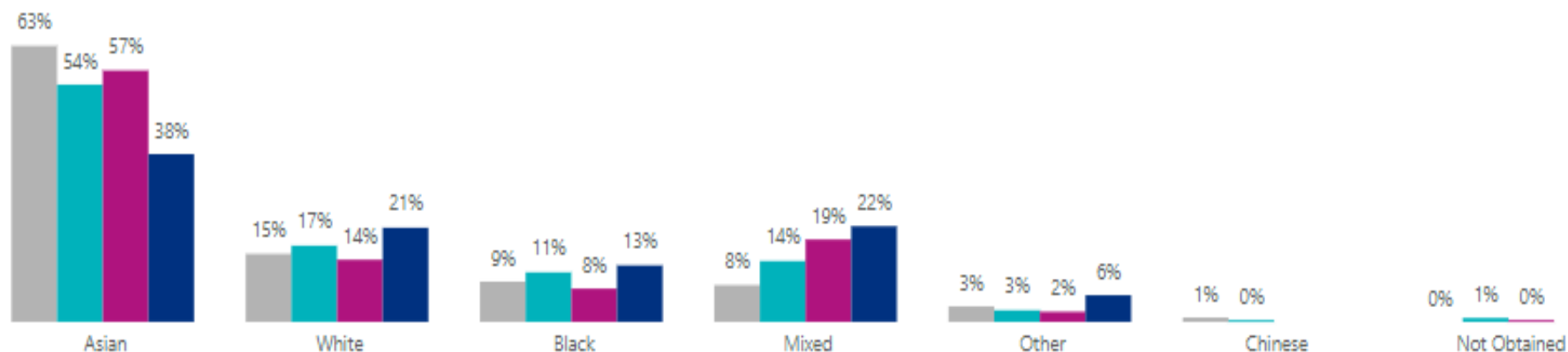
Data Source: LBTH MI March Scorecard, April 2024

At the end of March 2024, 53% of boys had an open referral (excluding care experienced adults) compared to 45% of girls. This is similar to children subject to a Child Protection Plan where 54% were male and 46% were female. In contrast, there was less parity between males and females for those in care with 62% males and 38% females.

For age distribution, all children with an open referral (excluding care experienced adults) and children subject to a Child Protection Plan had the 10-14 age group as the largest proportion of the cohort. However, for children looked after, 42% of the cohort were in the 15-17 age group and there was a greater number of children aged 0 to 4 years old in care compared to those in the 5 to 9 year old age group.

Ethnicity - Over or Under Represented

● % ONS ● % Child in Need ● % Child Protection ● % Child Looked After



Data Source: LBTH MI March Scorecard, April 2024

For ethnicity grouping, 54% of children with an open referral to Children’s Social Care and 57% of children subject to a CP Plan were from an Asian ethnic group. Both proportions are slightly lower, 9% and 6% lower respectively, than the Tower Hamlets 0-17 population for Asian ethnicities at 63%. For children looked after, 38% of children were from as Asian ethnic group, 25% lower than the Tower Hamlets child population.

However, children looked after from a white ethnic group (21%), black ethnic group (13%), mixed ethnic group (22%) and other ethnic groups (6%) all had higher proportions than the Tower Hamlets child population for these ethnicities.

For children subject to child protection, the ethnic grouping of this cohort at the end of March was closer to the 0-17 Tower Hamlets population. There was a 1% difference for white ethnicities, 1% difference for black ethnicities and 1% difference for other ethnic groups.

One theme across all the children’s social care cohorts is the greater proportion of children from mixed ethnic groups receiving a service compared to the Tower Hamlets child population. Children with an open referral was 6% higher, children subject to a Child Protection Plan was 11% higher and children looked after was 14% higher when compared to the 8% of the child population from mixed ethnicities.

Funding the Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership















“The LSP should agree on the level of funding needed to deliver the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. This includes consideration of business and analytical support, independent scrutiny, infrastructure, and core functions including local children safeguarding practice reviews, multi-agency training and learning events. It is the responsibility of the LSP to ensure that adequate funding is allocated and spent in line with agreed priorities. **Funding contributions from the statutory safeguarding partners should be equitable** and agreed by the LSP. Funding for the arrangements should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that they can meet the financial needs of the arrangements.” – Working Together 2023

Funding is agreed at the beginning of the year with the partners and is used to fulfil the function of the partnership. It is noted that many organisations face financial challenges each year. The partners will often give their time and resources in kind to support the functioning of the partnership. This includes, chairing and participating in sub/task and finish groups, conducting reviews, audits, leading and attending workshops and analysing and submitting data.

Income		Expenditure	
Local Authority	£145,916	Business Unit Salaries and oncosts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • THSCP Manager • THSCP Coordinator • THSCP Apprentice • Young Scrutineers x2 	£173,333
Integrated Care Board	£50,000	Independent Scrutineer	£18,931
Police	£5,000	Website Hosting	£1,800
East London Foundation Trust	£2,500	Training - NSPCC	£12,600
DfE Grant (One-off)	£47,300	Venues	£862
		CSRP Cost	£5,400
Total	£250,716	Total	£212,927

In this financial year the Department for Education gave all local safeguarding partnerships a one-off grant of £47300 to help implement the new iterations of working together. This grant stipulated it was required to be used against the 23-24 financial year but didn't reach partnerships until the last quarter. This grant was used for training, and salaries of the apprentice and scrutineer. The THSCP will be carrying over £30,000 from the Integrated Care Board grant for the year 24-25, which will cover the deficit initially predicted.

About Tower Hamlets

	<p>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.</p>		<p>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.</p>
	<p>Tower Hamlets has a similar proportion of young people aged 0-19 to England and London. There are an estimated 78,000 children and young people aged 0-19 resident in Tower Hamlets, a quarter of all residents.</p>		<p>Tower Hamlets has a high proportion of children in need when compared with 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.</p>
	<p>There are 45,000 pupils in primary and secondary schools in the borough. Most pupils want to attend university/higher education.</p>		<p>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.</p>
	<p>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.</p>		<p>Crime in Tower Hamlets has risen in recent years but less rapidly than in London as a whole. In December 2019 there were 35,118 notifiable offences, a 4.2 per cent increase since 2016, compared to the 16. per cent increase in the London as a whole. Recorded youth crime in the borough has fallen, as it has elsewhere.</p>
	<p>During 2016-19, around two thirds of Tower Hamlets working age population were in employment (67%).</p>		<p>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</p>
	<p>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 as a whole.</p>		<p>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.</p>

Key Achievements and The Impact- Snapshot

Overview	Impact
Publication of new arrangements	The THSCP <u>Arrangements</u> were updated to reflect current practice. This has demonstrated the development of the partnership since arrangements were last updated in 2019. This allows transparency of the arrangements with all partners and the public.
Delivery of safeguarding month	During Safeguarding Month, the THSCP delivered an Anti- Racism conference which featured speakers from the Independent Scrutineer, feedback from children and young people, Children’s Social Care, and the Met Police. The conference brought together professionals across Tower Hamlets, which helped build relationships and improve practice. In addition to the conference, weekly bulletins were sent out with key information on Safeguarding areas including safe sleep for infants.
Set new priorities	Every 2 years the THSCP sets priority areas which are multi-agency improvement projects into those topical areas. This year new priorities were set, and a new agile methodology was implemented. The THSCP Executive reviewed data, audits, feedback from children and young people, learning from CSPRs/ Rapid Reviews, and feedback from a workshop with partners and reviewed survey feedback from partners to set four priority areas which are, anti-racism, neglect, infant safety and peer on peer harm. This ensures that the capacity within the partnership has focused on the most critical areas to make improvements.
Improvements to the rapid review working group	The Rapid Review Working Group was set up in 22-23 with the sole purpose of implementing learning from CSPRs and Rapid Reviews, this group meets every other month and works through a ‘statutory review action plan’ - (which combines all actions from all reviews to ensure they are thematic and to reduce duplication). As a partnership, we have strong evidence of the implementation of recommendations. In the last year, the Chair introduced ‘spotlight items’, where agencies bring presentations of evidence of the recommendations they have implemented and the impact in their area. This area was also audited and received very positive results, the audit outlined the learning from reviews as ‘a sound system of governance and risk control’.
Implementation of 30 minute webinars for rapid reviews	Learning from all reviews have been a priority of the THSCP in the last year. This year the THSCP implemented 30-minute webinars after each Rapid Review to share the key learning and themes from the cases. This information is highly anonymised to protect identities. 3 sessions have been held with attendee numbers ranging from 88 – 130. These sessions put areas of key concerns and themes on the radar of a broad range of professionals.
Improvements to meetings	Improvement of governance arrangements has been an ongoing focus in the last 4 years and is continuously under review for improvement. This year a shared risk register was introduced to highlight strategic safeguarding concerns across the borough and allocate Executive Members for risk mitigation.

Overview	Impact
New webpage	The THSCP moved from its own website to a local authority webpage. This has made the information more accessible to partners and the public and has saved over £3k per year.
3-way serious incident notifications Set up of 'effective learning group'	<p>In Tower Hamlets, the decision to take a case to Rapid Review is now jointly made between the local authority, health and the police. This ensures further rigor of the decision-making processes, promotes appropriate challenge between agencies and encourages information sharing.</p> <p>The budget is limited for training in the THSCP, the effective learning group aims to bring together training offers from various agencies, jointly plan awareness sessions, and jointly deliver multi-agency audits and implement the learning from them.</p>
Development of strategic exploitation group	A partnership strategic group has been set up to support MACE (an operational exploitation group), this group reviews any multi-agency strategies, protocols, and policies regarding children at risk of exploitation and missing. The group also reviews themes and arising concerns that come out of MACE. This allows professionals to focus on the individual children at MACE and separates the strategic work for professional focus.
Strengthened scrutiny arrangements	The Independent Scrutineer delivered a review named the 'six steps of scrutiny' which highlighted several areas for the partnership to improve and become further compliant with the Working Together Arrangements. This allows the partnership to take on a critical friend perspective of the partnership as a whole and focus attention on key areas for improvement.
Strengthened audit	Although the partnership has conducted multi-agency audits hosted by the business unit, capacity and participation were key issues. The learning academy in the local authority are supporting with audit activity and recently conducted an audit of the MASH.
Review of multi-agency dataset	The THSCP hosts a dataset that is collected quarterly from 10 different teams and agencies, attention has been focused on this area to improve the dataset. This is to support improved line of sight to practice, comparative analysis and understanding of impact for children.
CSPR 1 year on session	The THSCP hold a learning event for all partners when CSPRs are finalized. This year the THSCP introduced 'Year on' events and held 2 in person learning conferences for CSPRs published in the last 2 years, to revisit the themes of the review and discuss how practice has changed.

Key Challenges and The Impact – Snapshot

Overview	Impact
Workforce – THSCP business unit	The THSCP Business Unit consists of 3 employees, Manager, Co-ordinator, and Apprentice. At the end of 2023, two posts in the team became vacant. The local authorities' processes affected the timely recruitment. The business unit went from 3 members of staff to 1 for 2 months and is still currently recruiting for the 3 rd post. This affected delivery within the THSCP as the Business Unit supports all THSCP activity.
Budget	The THSCP budget is shared between the three statutory partners, at present the budget just covers staffing, scrutiny, statutory reviews, and minimal training. The local authority contributes the largest slice of funding followed by the ICB. Across London safeguarding partnerships only receive £5000 from the Met Police which is centralised by MOPAC. The Safeguarding Partnerships should have a strong multi-agency training offer but with the current budget, it is not possible.
Leadership changes	The THSCP Executive Group is led by key directors across the three statutory partners, there have been changeovers in personnel in the Local Authority and at various levels in the Met Police. The Local Authority had interim DCS measures for approx. 4 months.
Priority areas implementation	With a Business Unit under-resourced in the final quarter of 2023-24, the priority areas under the delivery group have not received as much support as they would on a business-as-usual basis, in addition, participation from partners has been low. Although the priority area of Infant Safety has made significant process, other areas have not progressed in line with the forecast.
Partnership capacity	The partnership as a whole have reported capacity issues within their agencies, and this affected their input to the THSCP. Capacity issues are due to an increase in demand of services and savings/ budget cuts in agencies.
Publication of a CSPP	A thematic CSPP into infant safety and overcrowding was commissioned and completed in partnership with all agencies involved. There have been delays in the publication of the report due to various reasons, including concerns from families, and potential risks to families. The Executive are weighing up various routes of publication, so the learning is embedded but the families are protected.

Overview of Priorities

The THSCP Executive set the priorities for 2 years. The following activities took place to influence the decision:

- Workshop open to all partners
- Questionnaire sent out to all partners
- Consultation with young people
- Review of data
- Review of CSPRs and rapid reviews
- Reflections of the 6 Steps of scrutiny report
- Review of other partnership board

The Executive also reviewed lessons learned in a partnership-wide workshop, which influenced the decision to implement a new agile methodology, a 'delivery group' was set to oversee the 4 new priority areas and each area has an allocated lead, it is down to the lead to establish how the actions and improvements to those areas are complete with partners involved. The 4 priority areas have established action plans with some of the following activities to be completed in the next 18 months.

Anti-Racism Led by the Police	Peer-on-Peer Harm Led by Education	Neglect Led by Local Authority	Infant Safety Led by Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver an anti-racism conference. • Review CSPRs with themes of anti-racism. • Review adultification training. • Review multi-agency data set to show disproportionality. • Develop a framework for the development of accountability towards addressing racism, discrimination, and inequality across the system. • Launch a statement signed by THSCP leaders of anti-racism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current escalation policies. • Complete a partnership escalation protocol for children and young people. • Audit ensuring schools have anti-bullying policies. • Audit Looked After Children health assessments to ensure they include factors around peer-on-peer harm. • Review findings from everyone's invited website. • Consultation with children and young people regarding their experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and embed a multi-agency tool kit. • Multi-agency audit into 'was not brought policies'. • Review of adolescents missing out on education • Consultation with children and young people about the language used regarding neglect. • Partnership guidance to be published regarding language used around neglect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference on sudden unexpected death in infancy • Map out the current offer of safer sleep and review if multi-agency guidance is required. • Safer sleep strategy • Infant safety themes/ workshops throughout child safety week. • Identify infant safety training and any gaps. • Review local thresholds in line with infant safety, • Review learning from CSPRs

IMPACT: This allows the THSCP to focus its resources on the areas that require the most attention in safeguarding across Tower Hamlets

Quality Assurance & Data

Over the last year Quality Assurance of Safeguarding Across Tower Hamlets has improved. A Quality Assurance and Performance Board (QA&P) meets quarterly which reviews multi-agency data, single and multi-agency audits, training compliance, updates on key agencies and areas of concern to the partnership.

This year the QA&P group introduced annual report sessions giving opportunities to all agencies to review the reports including reports from:



The QA&P Group has also reviewed the following procedures and processes over 23-24:

- Step down guidance
- Thresholds guidance
- Neglect tool kit (local authority and multi-agency)
- Multi-agency audits
- Impact of Working Together 2023
- Guidance on police protection
- Multi-agency training and awareness events
- Sharing of single agency audits
- Learning from multi-agency audits
- Troubleshooting any arising safeguarding matters in the borough.
- Review of multi-agency dataset

Impact: Quality Assurance Activity is a core function of the Partnership, to monitor the quality of the work undertaken to safeguard children; and to understand the impact of this work in terms of its effectiveness in improving outcomes and keeping children safe from harm. Keeping protocols and policies up to date ensures all agencies receive the same guidance and give a consistent approach. They also promote agencies working together. The sharing of the annual report ensures full transparency across agencies and encourages agencies to work together to resolve repeating challenges.

Multi-Agency Data Arrangements

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

23-24 Improvements to the data:

- The data now includes returns from the missing service
- Improved consistency returns from the police and the data now includes strip search activity involving under 18s
- The Children's Services returns developed this year to show annual trends and disproportionality.

The Independent Scrutineer is running 3 task groups with key senior managers and analysis to improve the dataset overall.

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

- Additional demand was increased for the GP care group due to the increase of refugee and asylum-seeking families, the QA&P group were given assurance that there was a specialist health visitor for these families.
- During mid-year 23, there was an increase to MASH as police as the main referrer this was thought to be due to the cost of living crisis and housing concerns.
- Non-recent abuse cases have been a continuous theme from the East London Foundation Trust, the QA&P group ensured the non-recent abuse protocol was redistributed among partners.
- There was a focus on the timeliness of progress from the Strategy meeting to ICPC. There has been an audit completed of all out-of-time cases which was presented to Children's social care Improvement Board. Quoracy at ICPC has improved.



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

Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

“The purpose of serious child safeguarding case reviews, at local and national level, is to identify improvements that can be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Learning is relevant locally but has a wider importance for all practitioners working with children and families and for the government and policymakers. Understanding whether there are systemic issues, and whether and how policy and practice need to change, is critical to the system being dynamic and self-improving.” – Working Together 2023

A Rapid Review will consider a serious child safeguarding cases for learning and decide whether this case will go to a Child Safeguarding Practice Review. The criteria for a case to be classified as ‘a serious child safeguarding case’ is as followed:

“Serious child safeguarding cases are those in which:

- abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected
- the child has died or been seriously harmed” – Working Together 2023

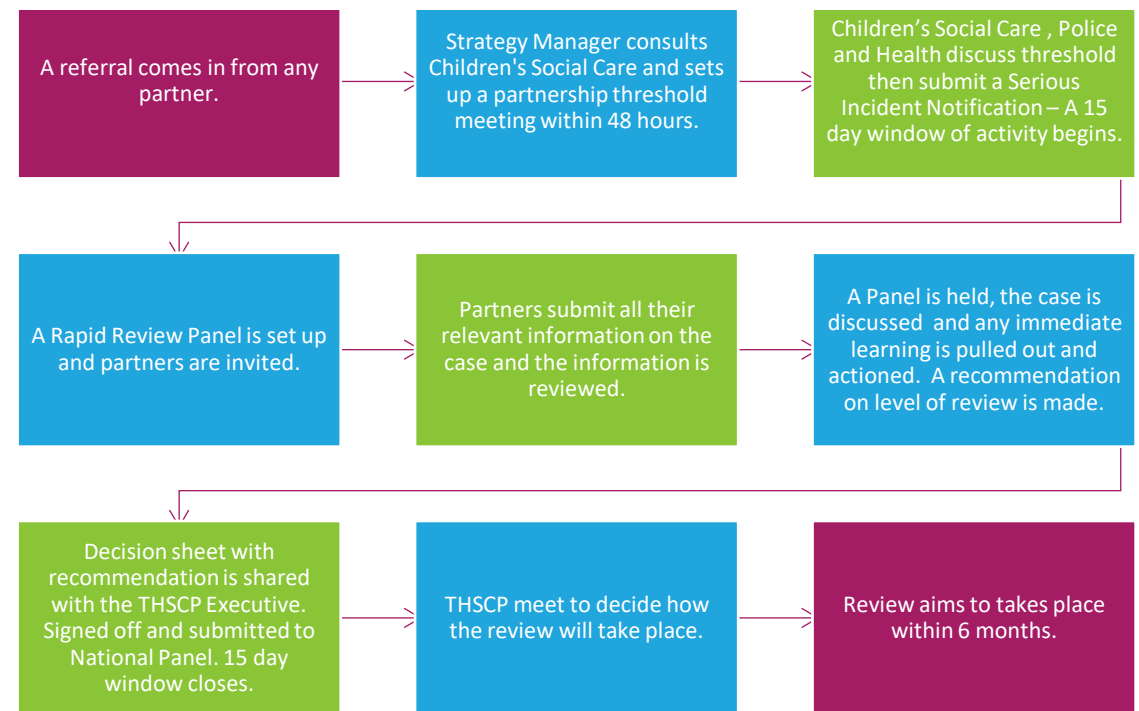
In Tower Hamlets, improvements over the years have been undertaken to fully strengthen the Rapid Review process and ensure the learning is embedded.

The initial Rapid Review Panel is a key part of the reviews, the panel itself is a workshop that takes on any immediate action required. Over the past year a lot of energy has gone into improving the process of the Rapid Review, which has included further rigour and quality assurance on partnership returns, setting thematic agendas, focusing the reviews on system improvements. Each Rapid Review Panel is approximately 2.5 hours (per case) the operational and strategic findings and activity in each case.

Previously each case was allocated its own action plan, actions that come out of Rapid Review Panels and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews are now collated into one action plan. This ensures that there is no duplication and additional themes can be picked up from reviewing actions side by side. This action plan is held by the Rapid Review Working Group, which ensures the recommendations are implemented.

An agency commissioned by the local authority carried out an audit into how the THSCP run and implement learning from Rapid Reviews and CSPRs, the audit described the CSPR and Learning Cycle as a “a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place.” Auditors received ‘reasonable assurance over the governance, risk management and controls in operation’

Figure 1 THSCP Rapid Review Process



Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

In 23-23 **4** of Rapid Reviews took place and **1** Child Safeguarding Practice Review.

The key themes of these reviews were:

- **Infant Safety**
- **Overcrowding and accommodation issues**
- **Safe sleeping**
- **Think Family**
- **Adultification**
- **Professional Curiosity**
- **Parental Capacity**
- **Families with multiple health needs**
- **Domestic Abuse**
- **Neglect**
- **Gender Identity**
- **Honor based violence**
- **Information sharing**
- **Interagency working**

Regardless of level of review each review had a set of recommendations to implement improvements to these areas, these recommendations are worked on by the 'Rapid Review Working Group' which is a multi-agency group of senior professionals.

A Child Safeguarding Practice Review was finalised in 23-24 and briefing to be published. This Review was named 'Infant Safety in the Most Densely populated borough in the UK'. The Review looked at 2 cases with infant safety trigger incidents, and notably the second CSPR published into infant safety in the last 3 years. The five themes identified in this review are:

- 1. Overcrowding**
- 2. Neglect**
- 3. Domestic Abuse**
- 4. Joint Decision Making**
- 5. Unsafe Sleep**

All practitioners involved in the case have taken part in a workshop to review the case and consider the learning. It has been important to the THSCP to ensure that reviews are reflective and promoting a culture of learning rather than blame.

Below is some of their feedback:

- *"Thank you for inviting our Service to the meeting. It was an extremely useful and reflective experience"*
- *"Agreed (with above quote) -Thank you, I really took a lot away from this meeting"*
- *"I just wanted to say thank you very much for inviting me to attend the meeting. It was informative and a good learning experience"*
- *"Thank you. It was very informative and reflective"*
- *"Thank you for this and chairing it in a way that was helpful"*

Multi-Agency Training and Awareness Events

16 Awareness and Training Sessions were facilitated and co-ordinated by the THSCP in 23-24. The THSCP uses a mix of commissioned training and linking in with other local and national partners to open training and share with partners. A calendar is provided through the E-Bulletin (which are sent out twice per month on various key safeguarding topics as well as training/events) and at Quality Assurance and Performance Meetings. Below is a snapshot of the training and awareness sessions provided or facilitated by the THSCP. The THSCP often shares the London Safeguarding Children Partnership training courses as well which have a high volume of Tower Hamlets attendees.

Safeguarding Month – Anti Racism Conference	FGM Awareness Event	Rapid Review 30 Minute Sessions
<p>The annual event theme was Anti-Racism, where the THSCP had speakers from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Scrutineer • Met Police • Childrens Social Care • Hate Crime Team <p>The event covered topics such as Child Q, intersectionality, disproportionality, impact of racism on childhood and culture in practice.</p>	<p>An online awareness session was held by children’s social care on FGM where all partners were invited.</p> <p>The session covered the key areas such as legislation, spotting the signs of FGM, impact of FGM and how to refer when concerned.</p>	<p>The THSCP have trialled a new awareness session of holding 30minute Rapid Review sessions after each Rapid Review, these are highly anonymised sessions to cover the main themes, learning and recommendations of Rapid Reviews, three sessions have been held this year with attendance averaging out at 90 attendees per session.</p>
CSPR Learning Event	Local Level of Needs Training Events	Child Sexual Abuse Training – Sun Rise Hub
<p>Once a CSPR has been finalised an event was held for all practitioners by the report author, themes in the event covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcrowding • Neglect • Domestic Abuse • Joint Decision Making • Unsafe Sleep 	<p>Since moving to the Pan-London Level of Needs, 2 local events were held to familiarise the partnership with the new the Level of Needs, and 3 more sessions are planned in 24-25, this is alongside the Pan-London Level of Needs training.</p>	<p>In partnership with the North East London Sun Rise Hub, a session on Child Sexual Abuse was held. Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spotting Signs • Types of abuse • Pathways and how to refer
Designated Lead Training - NSPCC	Introduction to Safeguarding -NSPCC	1 Year on CSPR Reflection Sessions
<p>4 sessions of 2 day courses of Designated Lead Training, which is mainly has the voluntary sector key attendees. This is a more advanced safeguarding course than the introduction package.</p>	<p>4 sessions of half day courses were held, which covers the key areas of safeguarding and gives an overview of spotting signs and a basic understanding of safeguarding.</p>	<p>After each CSPR is published a year on reflections conference is held. As this is a new strand of work to further imbed learning from reviews a session was held on the CSPR Asif published in 2021 and a session on CSPR Julie published in 2022.</p>

Strategic Boards and Partnerships linked to the THSCP

Safeguarding Adults Board:

The Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Adults Board is a statutory multi-agency board that is committed to protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It has overall responsibility for co-coordinating safeguarding adult matters and ensuring that partner agencies carry out safeguarding adults work.

Children's and Families Executive:

The Children and Families Executive has delegated responsibility to lead on the partnership decision making in relation to children, young people and families in Tower Hamlets. It sets the strategic partnership direction for children and families' services through the Children and Families Strategy, advocates for the voice and needs of local children, young people and families in strategic decision-making, and agrees key policies and approaches that cut across services for children, young people and families.

The Health and Wellbeing Board :

Having a Health and Wellbeing Board is a statutory requirement for local authorities. The board brings together the NHS, the local authority and Health Watch to jointly plan how best to meet local health and care needs, to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population, reduce health inequalities and commission services accordingly.

Community Safety Partnership Board:

The Community Safety Partnership Board is required by law to conduct and consult on an annual strategic assessment of crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse and re-offending within the borough and the findings are then used to produce the partnership's Community Safety Plan.

Strategic plan for the year ahead

