

Strategic Plan

2024 - 2026



Kent Safeguarding Children
multi-agency partnership

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Introduction

Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-agency Partnership is committed to ensuring the protection of the wellbeing of children and young people, recognition of risk and harm to children and young people and their recovery from harm.

The Partnership is comprised of three statutory safeguarding partners: Kent and Medway NHS ICB, Kent County Council and Kent Police, alongside the range of named relevant agencies, including education, health providers, district and borough councils, probation, fire & rescue, additional social care providers, and CAF/CASS. Where this plan refers to the Partnership, it is the collective of these agencies which is meant. The Partnership and the Executive Board are supported by a Business Team, who coordinate a range of activity on behalf of the Partnership but are not ultimately accountable for the delivery of services to children, young people and their families.

This strategic plan sets out the agreed Partnership priorities for 2024-26 and how progress and change will be sought and understood. This plan should act as a golden thread which runs through the activity of the Partnership and its sub-groups. The priority themes outlined here are not to the exclusion of all other matters which affect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in Kent.

It is also important to recognise that safeguarding children is not a static landscape, emerging risks and themes develop over time, and whilst this plan will act as a golden thread, the Partnership will remain reflexive and responsive to developing need across the system. The plan lists activities that the Executive have committed to at the time of writing, however these may be subject to change as we learn more about the issues through our activities.

The priorities have been developed in consultation with our partners. An initial survey was conducted in March and April 2023 which sought views of partners on what the Partnership's priorities should be. The findings of this survey were shared with and refined by the KSCMP Executive to shortlist the potential themes. Consultative workshops were held on the shortlisted priorities with key partner representatives to understand both preference for the priorities, but also what change and activity would be needed. This was drawn together for consideration by the KSCMP Executive to determine the agreed priorities and this plan.

KSCMP priorities 2024-26

- **Mental Health of Children and Young People:** Children to be supported in their social and emotional wellbeing and attunement and receive early intervention in line with their needs.
- **Impact of Parent Mental Health:** Children not to be unsafe due to parent mental health needs.
- **Effective Multi-agency Working:** Professionals to be courageous and confident in multi-agency working, being able to share information and risk effectively.
- **Online Safety:** Children to be supported to be safe online and be able to access advice and support when needed.



Structure of this plan

Each priority theme has a dedicated section in this plan, which consists of:

- **Why?:** Sets out the motivating factors leading to the theme being selected as a KSCMP priority for 2024-26. Considerations included the contributions of partners via the consultation processes, as well as information and evidence from KSCMP practice reviews and multi-agency audits.
- **What we will do:** Sets out the activities that the Partnership is committed to delivering over the life of this plan. We recognise that many of our priorities represent system challenges which we may not be able to address purely through this plan and Partnership lens, however we have tried to identify activities that may enable impactful incremental change to benefit children and young people in Kent.
- **How we will monitor progress and change:** Sets out the range of data that is shared with the Partnership and will be considered in relation to each priority theme, as well as other sources of information that may help us understand progress and change.

Governance

This plan will come into effect from January 2024 for a period of two years. Over that period progress in each of the areas will be considered by understanding activity of partners and KSCMP sub-groups and monitoring a range of data sources.

The data measures listed for each priority will be developed into a Partnership performance dashboard. This dashboard will be considered at the quarterly Scrutiny & Challenge Group, with key trends or concerns escalated to the Executive Board for strategic consideration and shared with other sub-groups where relevant to their remit.

Progress against the activities listed for each priority will also be reported to the Scrutiny & Challenge Group quarterly, as well as a standing overview report being shared with the Executive Board. KSCMP sub-groups will be asked to report on activity relevant to each priority on a quarterly basis. Where barriers or challenges are identified to the delivery of activity, or in making system improvements, these will be reported to the Executive Board.

To understand the effectiveness of this strategic plan, and in view of a commitment to flexibility to emerging need and insight, a 12-month 'check-in' will be undertaken in early 2025. This will consolidate activity undertaken, challenges experienced, and insights from data monitoring to understand whether the plan is making a difference to the priority themes, and whether the plan remains fit for purpose. This 'check-in' will be reported both to the Executive Board and Scrutiny & Challenge Group.



Priority: Mental Health of Children and Young People

Children to be supported in their social and emotional wellbeing and attunement and receive early intervention in line with their needs.



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Why?

The mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people is an important cornerstone in their development and overall wellbeing.

Mental health needs and services for children and young people was the most suggested priority in the initial consultation survey and ranked first in both consultative partner workshops.

Schools and education settings have shared anecdotal feedback that increasing safeguarding concerns are being noted regarding student mental health. An increase is reported in students needing support and schools not being able to adequately safeguard children who do not have access to support.

Learning from KSCMP practice reviews highlights themes relating to:

- 'high-risk' mental health assessments not being shared and considered in assessments by other agencies,
- a lack of information sharing regarding self-harm and suicidal ideation,
- children's views on the support they want not being sought,
- a lack of appreciation of the impact of a child's learning disability on their mental health issues, and vice versa,
- individual incidents not being viewed in context of other known information, and,
- safety plans not being shared with other relevant professionals.

What we will do

The Partnership will:

- Ensure that children and young people with learning disabilities who also have mental health concerns are supported with the impact of their diagnosed condition on their mental health, are appropriately recognised and responded to, and vice versa, by services.
- Seek assurance that young people aged 15-17 continue to be referred appropriately into learning disability diagnosis pathways and receive support to prevent deterioration of their mental health.
- Require our partners to provide an overview of services that are available across the county to support children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing and mental health, to ensure parity.
- Liaise with organisations responsible for the iThrive framework to understand children and young people's views on services and support.
- Consider the Kent and Medway Suicide Network Annual Report.
- Lobby Government to address system challenges in service provision for children and young people's mental health needs.
- Understand the implications of the transition from Deprivation of Liberty (DoLs) to the Liberty Protection Safeguards.
- Continue to deliver Youth Mental Health First Aid training as part of the KSCMP Learning & Development Programme.
- Develop a children and young people's mental health page on the KSCMP website.

How we will monitor progress and change

Partnership data

- ICB No. A&E/MIU attendances for self-harm aged 10-24
- ICB No. monthly admissions for self-harm age 10-24
- ICB No. A&E/MIU attendances for mental health complaint age 10-24
- KCC No. children and young people open to Children's Social Work Services with concerns about mental health
- KCC No. Requests for Support where the primary reason is mental health, emotional health or wellbeing
- Kent Police No. children detained under s136 Mental Health Act
- NELFT referrals received
- NELFT referrals accepted
- NELFT referrals by source
- NELFT referrals by routine/urgent
- NELFT caseload breakdown by neuro, targeted, crisis and IHT
- NELFT KPI routine assessment completed within 4 weeks of accepted referral

KSCMP data and information

- Delivery of recommendations from related practice review learning themes.



Priority: Impact of Parent Mental Health

Children not to be unsafe due to parent mental health needs.



Why?

Children who have parents or carers with mental health issues may be impacted in several ways. It is important that the needs of children, including any wider implications and risks, are considered for each child in a family. Children may be affected differently depending on the nature and severity of their parents' mental health concern, the child's age, their developmental stage, and other contextual factors.

The impact of parental mental health issues on the safety and wellbeing of children was one of the second most frequently suggested priority themes in the initial survey and ranked second in both consultative partner workshops.

The KSCMP Harm to Under 2s study highlighted:

- maternal mental health was a known factor in 73% of cases considered,
- paternal mental health was a known feature in 50% of the cases considered.

Learning from KSCMP practice reviews highlights themes relating to:

- lack of insight into the impact of parent mental health issues on children,
- insufficient focus on how deteriorating mental health impacts on a parent's capacity to care for children,
- children being viewed as a protective factor for parents experiencing mental health issues or feeling suicidal, and,
- the extent of parent mental health concerns not being fully explored in assessments of risk to children's safety.

What we will do

The Partnership will:

- Develop and launch an awareness campaign to stop children and young people being considered protective factors for their parents or carers mental health concerns.
- Understand whether children are being routinely considered protective factors for their parents or carers mental health concerns through a dip sample of Kent and Medway Partnership Trust (KMPT) and GP case records and assessments, coordinated by Kent and Medway NHS ICB.
- Require our other partner agencies to review if assessment frameworks and guidance documents that practitioners use make references to considering children or young people as protective factors for the mental health of parents and carers.
- Seek to understand the roll-out, impact and review of the ICON programme.
- Work with Kent Community Safety Partnership and the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adult Board to understand learning themes which cross-over to children from Domestic Homicide Reviews and Safeguarding Adult Reviews.
- Host a seminar on the impact parent mental health issues have on the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Pursue the inclusion of a standard question in our services for adults to determine if a person is a parent.

How we will monitor progress and change

Partnership data

- KCC No. children and young people open to Children's Social Work Services where concerns about the mental health of a parent or carer are indicated
- KCC No. children and young people open to Children's Social Work Services where concerns about the mental health of another person in the household is indicated
- KCC No. Request for Support where primary concern is the mental health, emotional health or wellbeing for an adult
- KCC No. Early Help plans with parent mental health concerns noted
- KMPT No. children identified requiring safeguarding by KMPT in regard to mental health

KSCMP data and information

- Data from the KSCMP Harm to Under 2s study

Other data and information

- Domestic Homicide Reviews
- Safeguarding Adult Reviews



Priority: Effective Multi-agency Working

Professionals to be courageous and confident in multi-agency working, being able to share information and risk effectively.



Why?

This priority combines several key themes which were suggested in the initial consultation survey, and which feature frequently in practice reviews:

- multi-agency professionals' confidence to have difficult conversations
- information sharing
- escalation and professional challenge
- professional curiosity.

The KSCMP Support Levels Guidance audit highlighted challenges in practitioners seeking consent from families for referrals to the Kent Children's Social Care Front Door. Evidence suggested it is not always sought before submitting a Request for Support. Exploration suggested that practitioners find seeking consent difficult and sometimes avoid doing so as they are concerned about potentially harming their relationship with the family by discussing making a referral to Children's Social Care.

The KSCMP Harm to Under 2s study identified that practitioners sometimes remain uncomfortable asking difficult questions of parents. A lack of understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities was highlighted as a key challenge in multi-agency working.

The KSCMP Escalation Project phase two shows that there remains a lack of knowledge of the escalation process, that agencies use their own informal processes, and there are challenges in being able to use the policy with some agencies.

What we will do

The Partnership will:

- Act on the findings of the KSCMP Escalation Project phase 2.
- Seek assurance on the progress of the recommendation identified in the KSCMP Harm to Under 2s study regarding the sharing of Early Help assessments and plans with multi-agency partners.
- Undertake the bi-annual Section 11 audit in 2024.
- Monitor learning themes emerging from KSCMP Rapid Reviews and LCSPRs to highlight recurring themes of concern to strategic leaders.
- Promote awareness that KSCMP is part of the Kent and Medway Information Sharing Agreement, to reduce barriers to data and information sharing.
- Develop anonymised good practice examples of multi-agency working to share on the KSCMP website.



How we will monitor progress and change

Partnership data

- KCC No. Requests for Support made with consent from parents sought
- KCC No. Front Door contacts for various primary reasons
- KCC Attendance at strategy meetings, core groups & Initial Child Protection Conferences
- Kent Police attendance at strategy meetings & Initial Child Protection Conferences

KSCMP data and information

- Data from the KSCMP Escalation Project phase 2
- KSCMP sub-group meeting attendance
- KSCMP multi-agency training attendance
- KSCMP multi-agency training feedback
- Section 11 audit data
- Completion of KSCMP Learning & Improvement Group actions
- Triangulation of learning/monitoring of challenges identified in Rapid Reviews and LCSPRs
- KSCMP social media (Twitter) engagement



Priority: Online Safety

Children to be supported to be safe online and be able to access advice and support where needed.



Why?

The internet and online activity is an ever-increasing feature of society, and therefore the lives of children and young people.

Online safety was ranked as the fifth most suggested theme in the initial consultation survey and featured in the top-half of rankings in both consultative partner workshops.

Anecdotally schools have reported a rise in incidents of online safety concerns and highlight concerns that parents are sometimes either unwilling or unable to recognise online risks and therefore support safety measures.

Learning from a KSCMP practice review highlighted themes relating to:

- professionals not appreciating a young person's ability to understand risk that some internet sites could pose, or how to communicate that risk to them,
- lack of understanding and exploration by professionals of the reported support a young person experienced online.

Feedback has also been shared within the Partnership that professionals can be too focused on identifying risks specific to individual platforms and apps, rather than broader principles of online safeguarding. Whilst there may be some online spaces which are inherently less safe for children and young people, there can be risk of abuse and harm in most online spaces.

Conversely there are also clear advantages to digital literacy of children and young people, and they should be supported to use the internet safely. Risks of access to online spaces being removed may prevent children and young people from reporting concerns that they have.

What we will do

The Partnership will:

- Explore, via the Emerging Themes Subgroup, risks to children and young people related to Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology.
- Develop a local Safer Internet Day programme of activity in 2024 and 2025.
- Recognise the national counter terrorism priority concerning online extremism and radicalisation and the risk this poses to children and young people in Kent and support the work of the Kent and Medway Prevent Team in raising awareness with all partners.
- Expand the KSCMP Online Safety webpage to include links to relevant resources and tools for children and young people and their parents and carers.
- Scope and understand single agency training for staff regarding online safeguarding.
- Require partner agencies to feedback how they are disseminating and ensuring use of KSCMP policies and procedures regarding online safeguarding.
- Seek an overview from KCC's Education Safeguarding Service of how the online safety policy toolkit for schools is made available and the take-up of it.
- Scope existing surveys and studies undertaken to capture the views of children and young people regarding their sense of safety and key worries online.

How we will monitor progress and change

Partnership data

- KCC Education Safeguarding Service No. consultations from schools and early years for online safety concerns
- KCC Education Safeguarding Service take-up of online safeguarding training
- Kent Police No. online abuse incidents recorded where child is victim or suspect
- Kent Police No. online abuse incidents where child is victim or suspect by child-on-child, adult-on-child, and contact/non-contact
- Kent Police No. online exploitation by blackmail offences where child is victim or suspect
- Kent and Medway Prevent Team training delivery and attendance numbers
- Kent and Medway Prevent Team prevalence of concerns regarding online activity in Channel cases
- Kent and Medway Prevent Team prevalence of concerns regarding online activity in Prevent Education Officer enquiries

KSCMP data and information

- Attendance at KSCMP Online Safety training
- Visitor numbers for KSCMP Online Safeguarding webpage

Other data and information

- Collation and triangulation of existing surveys and studies undertaken to capture the views of children and young people regarding their sense of safety online.
- Ofcom enforcement data



Glossary

Acronyms, initialisations and key terms, and how they are used in this plan

A&E	Accident & Emergency
CAFCASS	Children and Family Court Advisory Service
CAMHS	Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services
DHR	Domestic Homicide Review
DoLs	Deprivation of Liberty
ICB	Integrated Care Board
ICON	National programme to reduce abusive head trauma to babies.
KCC	Kent County Council
KMPT	Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KSCMP	Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-agency Partnership
LCSPR	Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review
LPS	Liberty Protection Safeguards

MIU	Minor Injury Unit
NELFT	North East London Foundation Trust
Partnership	The three statutory safeguarding partners (KCC, Kent & Medway NHS ICB, & Kent Police), and the named relevant agencies for KSCMP.
RfS	Request for Support – a referral into the KCC Front Door for Children’s Services.
SAR	Safeguarding Adult Review
SECAmb	South East Coast Ambulance Service
SLG	Support Levels Guidance – KCC’s threshold document for Children’s Services.