

Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-agency Partnership Arrangements

December 2024

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Foreword

This document outlines the revised children's safeguarding partnership arrangements, known as the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-agency Partnership (KSCMP) arrangements. The changes made to these arrangements have been informed by new statutory guidance and requirements, as well as local reflection on the efficacy of our arrangements. We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children who live in Kent. To do this, we endeavour to provide help and support in the best ways possible to meet their needs.

We recognise that one agency working on its own cannot achieve this single-handedly. We believe that by working together across different organisational boundaries and in partnership with other public sector bodies, and voluntary and community sector organisations, we can provide the most effective support. Our vision is **'to protect children from harm and prevent them from the risk of being harmed, support their recovery from harmful situations and improve services through learning'**. Our arrangements, outlined in this document, state how we will arrange our support services to meet the needs of children and families, whilst seeking to continually improve so that we can offer even better levels of support and assistance in future.

The focus of our KSCMP arrangements is to:

- Promote effective multi-agency safeguarding support.
- Take rapid and decisive action to safeguard those at risk of harm or abuse and access the most appropriate support services to keep them safe.
- Make children's safeguarding personal and timely.
- Engage with children and families, helping them strengthen their resilience and provide access to the most appropriate support.
- Drive effective partnership working.
- Provide robust independent scrutiny and assurance to the Partnership in relation to the safeguarding and welfare of children in Kent.

The KSCMP was launched in September 2019, replacing the previous Safeguarding Children Board. This is the second revision of the Partnership arrangements since that launch. The ongoing reflection and review of our Partnership is a clear indication of Kent's intention to take forward a shared and robust set of KSCMP arrangements and to re-affirm our commitment to work collaboratively across local agencies and organisations to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

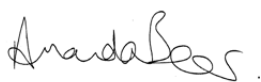
Kent has a well-established record of organisations working in partnership to improve safeguarding. These revised KSCMP arrangements will ensure a strong foundation for the Partnership to work together effectively and in the best way for the children of Kent. It is clear that our partners are committed to our aims of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. We have taken on board lessons from the implementation of the KSCMP arrangements, as well as from other areas approaches to multi-agency local safeguarding arrangements.

As Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Agencies, we commit ourselves to:

- Work collaboratively and creatively in discharging our statutory responsibilities regarding children and families by listening, hearing and responding to their views on the help we give.
- Lead on engaging other agencies to promote collective responsibility for building effective safeguarding systems.
- Further develop and promote the best of what already exists in Kent and think innovatively about multi-agency safeguarding practice to improve outcomes relating to children and families.
- Lead on system learning and change, and work across the wider partnerships landscape to develop and implement improved ways of working as well as identify opportunities to join up services to reduce duplication and improve practice outcomes for children.
- Continue to develop our Scrutiny and Assurance Framework to provide high levels of assurance across the multi-agency safeguarding children’s arrangements.

We will work as Safeguarding Partners and with the broader safeguarding community, to share our understanding of what works, learn from national and local experience, and reflect on our practice. We will critically evaluate our own performance, inviting review and challenge from an independent scrutineer, and endeavour to deliver the best possible multi-agency safeguarding services to the children of Kent.

The amendments described in these revised arrangements will be implemented during 2025 and reviewed annually.



Amanda Beer
Chief Executive,
Kent County Council



Paul Bentley
Chief Executive,
Kent and Medway
NHS Integrated Care Board



Tim Smith
Chief Constable,
Kent Police



Sarah Hammond
Corporate Director, Children,
Young People and Education,
Kent County Council



Paul Lumsdon
Chief Nurse,
Kent and Medway
NHS Integrated Care Board



Simon Wilson
Assistant Chief Constable,
Kent Police

KSCMP arrangements at a glance

Purpose	Safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people	
Partners	Safeguarding Partners: Kent County Council Kent and Medway NHS Integrated Care Board Kent Police	Relevant agencies: Education, health providers, district councils, social care providers, probation, fire & rescue, policing organisations, CAFCASS ¹
Vision	Protect children from harm and from the risk of being harmed; support their recovery from harmful situations and improve our services through learning.	
KSCMP Executive's Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that the legal requirements are met 2. Children are safeguarded and receive the support they require in a timely and appropriate manner 3. All agencies are clear about their responsibilities and staff receive the relevant training 4. The public have confidence in our safeguarding arrangements to keep children safe 5. To learn from instances of serious harm and promote improvements to the safeguarding system 	
Sub-groups	Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group Policy and Procedures Group* Learning and Improvement Group Child Exploitation Oversight Group Education Safeguarding Group District Council Safeguarding Group Health Safeguarding Group	
Executive Board Support	KSCMP Business Team	

* Joint Kent and Medway Group

¹ See Appendix 1

Section 1: Introduction

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children through effective coordination and collaboration is everyone's duty. The goal of our Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-agency Partnership (KSCMP) arrangements is that everyone can recognise, respond and fulfil their responsibilities to children and families by delivering effectual, good quality safeguarding. This can only be achieved through fostering productive working practices across the organisations and agencies who work with children and families, including those who work with carers.

This document describes the updated KSCMP arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, in-line with the requirements of the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) and, the statutory requirements set out in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children 2023' (hereafter referred to as Working Together 2023). These arrangements emphasise that carrying out safeguarding successfully is only accomplished by putting children at the centre of the system, and by every person and agency playing their full part. Organisations, agencies and practitioners in Kent should be aware of, and comply, with the principles set out in this document.

Layout of this document

- **Section 1** provides introductory text setting out the national context as well as the Kent context.
- **Section 2** describes the responsibilities of the Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Agencies.
- **Section 3** describes the steps taken by the Safeguarding Partners, Relevant Agencies and organisations to engage children and families.
- **Section 4** deals with the offer of support described in the Kent Support Levels Guidance for children and families.
- **Section 5** details how learning and improvements are taken forward.
- **Section 6** describes the local arrangements regarding Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, and the Partnership's relationship with the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.
- **Section 7** defines the key components of the scrutiny processes and the adopted model of independent scrutiny.
- **Section 8** deals with how data and other intelligence information are used to assess how well the Partnership is performing.
- **Section 9** covers information about the role and responsibilities of the Business Team which supports the KSCMP arrangements.

- **Section 10** details the funding arrangements agreed by the Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Agencies.
- **Section 11** sets out the processes for resolving disputes at the strategic and operational level.
- **Section 12** provides information about the annual review process and information about access to the annual report.
- **Section 13** sets out the relationship between the KSCMP and the broader strategic partnership bodies.
- **Section 14** outlines arrangements for information sharing in the Partnership.

National context

Working Together 2023 clarifies that the three statutory Safeguarding Partners operating in a local authority area in England (as defined under the Children Act 2004 and amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) are:

- the local authority
- an integrated care board for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area
- the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area.

Working Together 2023 further states that these three partners have a joint and equal duty to make arrangements to work together as a team to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area and to include and develop the role of wider local organisations in the process. To fulfil this role, the Safeguarding Partners are required to set out how they will work together as well as how they will work with any Relevant Agencies. Relevant Agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the Safeguarding Partners require to effectively safeguard and promote the welfare of local children.

The purpose of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements is to ensure that local organisations and agencies are clear about how they will work together to safeguard children and promote their welfare, in a system where:

- there is a clear, shared vision for how to improve outcomes for children locally across all levels of need and all types of harm,
- when a child is identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm there is a prompt, appropriate and effective response to ensure the protection and support of the child,
- organisations and agencies are challenged appropriately, effectively holding one another to account,
- the voice of children and families combined with the knowledge of experienced practitioners and insights from data, provides a greater understanding of the areas of strength and/or in need of improvement within arrangements and practice,
- information is sought, analysed, shared, and broken down by protected characteristics to facilitate more accurate and timely decision-making for children and families, and to understand outcomes for different communities of children,
- effective collection, sharing and analysis of data, enables early identification of new

safeguarding risks, issues, emerging threats, and joined-up responses across Relevant Agencies,

- there is a learning culture which supports local services to become more reflective and implement changes to practice,
- senior leaders have a good knowledge and understanding about the quality of local practice and its impact on children and families.

Kent context

The requirements placed on the Safeguarding Partners are such that it is necessary to establish KSCMP arrangements which best respond to the statutory guidance and, which also improve multi-agency working and cooperation.

Our KSCMP arrangements set us on a course to transform strategic and operational systems to be more strengths-based, aspirational and optimistic for children. Our vision is 'to protect children from harm and prevent them from the risk of being harmed, support their recovering from harmful situations and improve our services through learning'. The voice of children and families is central to how we safeguard children in our arrangements and our work with families and carers will help us form a more insightful understanding of this. The arrangements described in this document also communicate our vision and principles. They incorporate all aspects of the Kent model for helping children and families and underscore our relentless focus on enabling and empowering children and families to be safeguarded within their environment, peer groups, schools and communities and on finding resolutions that work for them.

Under the KSCMP arrangements, agencies will work together in a system where:

- children's and families' views and experiences are at the centre of all we do,
- first-rate practice is the norm,
- partner agencies hold one another to account effectively,
- there is early identification of emergent safeguarding issues,
- learning is promoted and embedded in practice and system oversight,
- information is shared effectively in support of operational delivery,
- the public can feel confident that children are safeguarded from harm or risk of abuse.

Our ambition is to continue to develop a shared and robust Partnership arrangement based on a common approach that can respond to identified needs, provide consistent agency responses and achieve early intervention and improved outcomes for children. Through the Partnership, we are able to meet our requirements to identify, evaluate, plan, implement, review and assure effective multi-agency safeguarding practice.

The Partnership will further deliver effective practice in the context of community of safeguarding strategy, policy and service development within Kent. We will examine and drive further opportunities to shape and influence policy development leading to improved practice and outcomes for children.

These arrangements have been updated in 2024 in response to new requirements set out in Working Together 2023 and local reflection on how to improve the effectiveness of the Partnership. We will review the KSCMP arrangements annually forthwith.

Section 2: Safeguarding Partnership

Lead Safeguarding Partners

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 defines the Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) to be: Chief Executives of Local Authorities, Chief Executives of the ICBs, and Chief Officers of police forces. For Kent the LSPs are:

- Chief Executive of Kent County Council (KCC) – Amanda Beer,
- Chief Executive of Kent and Medway NHS ICB (KMICB) – Paul Bentley,
- Chief Constable of Kent Police – Tim Smith.

Throughout our arrangements we refer to these individuals as the LSPs, but they may also be known as the Safeguarding Partners or Accountable Officers.

To fulfil their joint functions², the LSPs will meet twice a year. Chairship of the meeting will rotate through the LSPs, to a timetable that ensures different agencies Chair the LSP and Executive at any given time. As well as the LSPs, these meetings will be attended by:

- KSCMP Partnership Chair (see the Delegated Safeguarding Partners below),
- KSCMP Independent Scrutineer,
- Education representatives (who also sit on the KSCMP Executive),
- KSCMP Business Team.

These meetings will provide an opportunity for the LSPs to review and sign-off key Partnership documents, including:

- Partnership arrangements,
- Scrutiny and Assurance Framework,
- Priorities and strategic plan,
- Annual report,
- Annual budget,
- Kent Support Levels Guidance (threshold document).

Additional key Partnership information and updates will be presented to the LSP meeting, including:

- Practice review reports,
- Data dashboards,
- Section 11 bi-annual audit,
- Key decisions undertaken by the KSCMP Executive,
- Independent Scrutiny reports.

² As set out on page 27 of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

The LSPs will also be regularly appraised of the activities of the Partnership through a quarterly LSP report, coordinated by the KSCMP System Improvement Manager, as well as the KSCMP annual report. The LSPs will also have the opportunity to engage with, and hear from, wider Partnership agencies via the regular reports they receive, but also through attending the KSCMP Partnership Forum or inviting sub-group chairs/members to present to their meetings.

The LSPs are also responsible for holding their agency Delegated Safeguarding Partner (DSP) to account, in addition to the collective work of the Executive. Each LSP will have internal reporting routes to ensure oversight of DSP activity.

Delegated Safeguarding Partners

Each LSP has appointed a Delegated Safeguarding Partner (DSP) for its agency. They are:

- Corporate Director, Children Young People and Education, KCC – Sarah Hammond,
- Chief Nurse, KMICB – Paul Lumsdon
- Assistant Chief Constable, Kent Police – Simon Wilson.

The DSPs form the KSCMP Executive and are referred to as such throughout this document. The Executive will meet bi-monthly at Board meetings which are also attended by:

- Education representative members (two school headteachers and the chair of the KSCMP Education Safeguarding Group),
- KSCMP Independent Scrutineer,
- KSCMP Business Team.

The Executive provide the ongoing strategic direction for the Partnership and ensure the LSPs are kept appraised of Partnership activities and developments. Key decisions made by the Executive will be reported to the LSPs via the regularly established channels, as well as on an exceptions basis if required. In addition, each Executive member will be responsible for ensuring appropriate reporting and escalation to their agency LSP through internal organisation channels.

They will receive regular updates on the progress of the Partnership priorities and strategic plan, updates on the activities of the Partnership sub-groups (including through an annual report and a quarterly circular), and relevant scrutiny reports.

Partnership Chair

Working Together 2023 requires a Partnership Chair be appointed from the DSP group. In Kent this will be rotated on a bi-annual basis through the DSPs, ensuring that at no time is the same agency chair of both the Partnership and the LSP meeting. The functions of the Partnership Chair³ are:

- Chairing the Executive Board meetings, including those convened as a response to specific and exceptional circumstances.
- Providing a report from the Executive to the LSP meeting, including an overview of key decisions and activities, risks and challenges, and response to findings and recommendations from independent scrutiny.
- Escalating key issues or risks to the LSPs through regular channels and by exception when required.
- Developing strategic links, supporting and holding to account all LSPs in fulfilling their safeguarding duties for children.
- Ensuring that local arrangements are designed to work collaboratively and effectively by encouraging and supporting the development of partnership working between the LSPs, DSPs, independent scrutiny role and sub-groups.

Geographical area

The geographical footprint for these arrangements is the KCC local authority area. The geographical boundary of the KMICB and Kent Police corresponds to the parts which fall within the KCC local authority area.

The LSPs, Executive and Relevant Agencies included in these arrangements will fulfil their statutory and other duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children from Kent who live or are placed outside of the KCC local authority area, including looked after children placed in Kent by other local authorities. We will continue to work jointly with neighbouring authorities and strengthen practical working arrangements where appropriate, including with Medway, the London Boroughs, East Sussex and Surrey.

Relevant Agencies

Relevant Agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the LSPs consider is essential to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children. Strong, effective, multi-agency arrangements are ones that are responsive to local circumstances and engage the right people. For local arrangements to be effective, we will engage organisations and agencies that can work with us in a collaborative way to provide targeted support to children and families as appropriate. This approach requires flexibility to enable the joint identification of, and response to, existing and emerging needs and to agree priorities to improve outcomes for children.

When selected by the LSPs to be part of the local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, Relevant Agencies must act in accordance with the arrangements. Named Relevant Agencies will be expected to:

³ Including those outlined on page 30 of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.

- Act in accordance with the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including KSCMP policies and procedures,
- Attend and engage in relevant Partnership sub-groups or meetings,
- Be involved in and support practice review processes, including Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews,
- Be subject to KSCMP scrutiny and assurance arrangements (see section 7),
- Be involved in relevant multi-agency audits, including the Section 11 bi-annual audit if appropriate, and,
- Share relevant performance data with the Partnership.

Relevant Agencies should also be consulted by the LSP and Executive on decisions about the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. In Kent this will take place primarily through the Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group and Partnership Forum, as well as other ad-hoc consultative activities.

We have selected Relevant Agencies informed by the requirements and considerations of Working Together 2023, learning from local risk and context, and through assessment of what each body can actively contribute to safeguarding children in Kent. The selected organisations deemed to be Relevant Agencies have specific and direct responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and as a result it is necessary to designate them as Relevant Agencies within the meaning of the regulations.

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018 sets out the list of 33 Relevant Agencies that are required to work under the multi-agency safeguarding partnership arrangements. The full list of selected Relevant Agencies and other organisations and agencies included in the KSCMP arrangements is detailed in Appendix 1. The list of selected Relevant Agencies will be reviewed annually and may change over time to reflect changing circumstances or to make the arrangements work more effectively.

Organisations and agencies who are not named in the Relevant Agency regulations, whilst not under a statutory duty, should nevertheless cooperate and collaborate with the Partnership, particularly as they may have duties under section 10 and/or section 11 of the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017).

Schools, colleges, other education, early years and childcare providers

Schools, colleges and other educational providers play a pivotal role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and as such their engagement in the Partnership arrangements is essential. Working Together 2023 states “It is expected all local education and childcare providers working with children up to the age of 18, including alternative provision, pupil referral units and further education will be included because of the pivotal role they play in children’s daily lives and amount of time they spend with them”⁴. It further expands that there is also an expectation that senior education leaders be included in the strategic leadership of the Partnership.

Due to the large number of educational and early years settings in Kent, it is not appropriate to nominate or identify specific establishments as Relevant Agencies on behalf of the sector; however, it is equally not achievable for every individual establishment and provider to

⁴ Page 31, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

be in attendance and represented within the Partnership meetings. As such, all education establishments are named as Relevant Agencies in Kent, and will be represented and engaged in the following ways:

- Two school leaders will be additional members of the KSCMP Executive, acting as advisory (non-decision making) members. Their role is not to represent the education sector in Kent, but to provide representative views for consideration in strategic decision making and direction. They will additionally be invited to attend and engage in the LSP meetings.
- Education Safeguarding Group provides a forum to hear a range of views across the education sector in Kent. As it is not possible for all organisations to be represented, engagement with Kent Association of Leaders in Education (KALE) to identify relevant representative members of this group, as well as direct approaches to other educational establishments and networks, will provide a broad spectrum of attendees.
- The chair of the Education Safeguarding Group will also have opportunity to represent the collective view of the sub-group in KSCMP Executive Board and at the LSP meeting.
- The KSCMP Education Newsletter is produced quarterly and disseminated to schools⁵ across Kent, providing details on the activities and discussions of the Education Safeguarding Group, relevant KSCMP updates and information, and further opportunities for engagement in the Partnership.
- Individual education establishments are engaged directly in practice review processes where relevant.

Residential homes for children

We will work to establish a relationship with the existing residential children's homes providers and independent fostering agencies' networks, and to secure representation in relevant KSCMP sub-groups, including the Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group and Partnership Forum.

Voluntary, Charity, Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations and sports clubs

It is not possible to include all VCSE and sports providers services as Relevant Agencies, given the geographic size of Kent, although their involvement and engagement is important. A communications strategy will be developed with VCSE and sports organisations, to highlight local pathways for guidance and referrals regarding safeguarding concerns. Individual specific organisations will also be required to contribute to practice reviews when necessary.

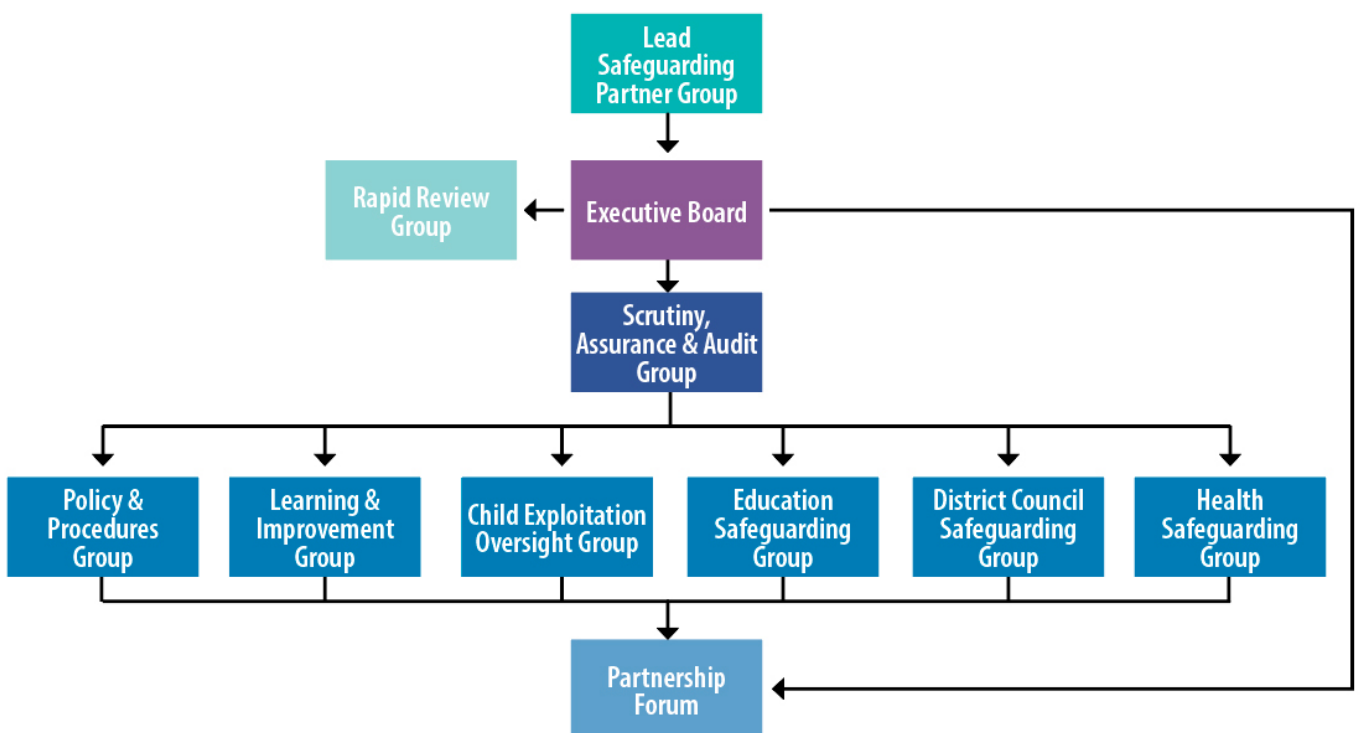
Relevant Agency involvement and representation

Relevant Agency representation will be through direct membership of the KSCMP sub-groups, or through the Chair of the relevant Partnership group. The twice annual Partnership Forum will also provide opportunities for direct Relevant Agency representation and dialogue with the KSCMP Executive. The Chairs of the Partnership sub-groups will provide updates to the Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group.

⁵ The Education Newsletter is sent to the generic email address for all schools that KSCMP holds the details for and settings (including early years) who have signed up directly to the mailing list via the KSCMP website.

Relevant Agency	Role	Representation
Education	Educates children in schools, colleges and early years settings	Education representatives on the Executive Board and LSP meeting, and Education Safeguarding Group
Health	Provides primary, community and secondary health care provision	KMICB represents the health sector for the area, and Health Safeguarding Group.
District Council	Provides housing, waste collection, and local planning	District Council Safeguarding Group
Kent, Surrey and Sussex Probation Service	Supervises offenders and released prisoners in the community	Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group
CAFCASS	Looks after the interests of the children involved in family proceedings	Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group
Kent Fire and Rescue Service	Provides statutory fire and rescue service	Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group
Additional Social Care	Providers fostering, adoption, children's homes, residential family centres and holiday schemes	Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group

Partnership structure



As detailed earlier in these arrangements, the LSPs and Executive will provide the strategic leadership of the Partnership. The Safeguarding Partners have a shared and equal duty for the safeguarding arrangements in Kent, working together with the Relevant Agencies. The primary objective of the Executive is to ensure that the functions of the Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Agencies are effectively discharged in accordance with the requirements set out in Working Together 2023. The Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group will lead on the system of challenge and holding partners to account, to assist the Executive in improving overall system performance and effectiveness (further information about the group can be found in **Section 7: Scrutiny**). The sub-groups will provide focus on dedicated areas of interest and/or responsibilities. The terms of reference for KSCMP sub-groups will be published on the KSCMP website and reviewed annually.

In addition to the formal, regular sub-groups of the Partnership, we will also convene specific topical multi-agency working groups to respond to emerging themes when necessary.

Sub-groups

All KSCMP sub-groups are expected to:

- Act on, and respond to, relevant taskings from the KSCMP Executive, Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group, Learning and Improvement Group, and other sub-groups where relevant. This may include actions relating to the recommendations arising from LCSPRs, multi-agency audits, or other KSCMP activity.
- Be accountable for delivery against, and to work towards progressing the KSCMP priorities and Strategic Plan.
- Provide regular reports into the Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group.
- Provide updates for the KSCMP Executive Circular.

All KSCMP sub-groups will have a named Chair and Deputy Chair. Chairs of the sub-groups are reviewed as required and are expected to:

- Provide an update on sub-group activity to the Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group (either directly, or via their agency representative).
- Provide a written report on the activities of the sub-group to the KSCMP Executive once a year.
- Attend agenda setting meetings, review minutes in a timely manner, and otherwise support the effective administration of the meeting.

Policy and Procedures Group

The Policy and Procedures Group is a joint Kent and Medway sub-group, in recognition of the range of joint policies and practices which exist, as well as a number of shared partners. The group is responsible for the development of local policies, procedures, and guidance for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children on behalf of the KSCMP and Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP).

Learning and Improvement Group

The Learning and Improvement Group supports the Partnership through oversight and implementation of practice review recommendations and learning. Key agency representatives offer insight into how recommendations can be translated into action in a meaningful and achievable way for their organisation and commit to owning and following up implementation as well as measuring impact. The group also provides a space for discussion of multi-agency training needs and development.

Child Exploitation Oversight Group

A Kent Child Exploitation Oversight Group will be established to provide strategic oversight of child exploitation across Kent, including child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation and modern slavery. The group will consider relevant exploitation related data and reporting, and monitor the efficacies of strategies, tools, and activities to respond to child exploitation in Kent. Consideration will be given as to how this group will link in with other existing relevant forums, such as the Joint Exploitation Group.

Education Safeguarding Group

The Education Safeguarding Group facilitates communication across the education sector on statutory safeguarding duties and compliance with KSCMP policies and procedures, as well as identifying strategic and practice issues for consideration by the Partnership. The group acts as a formal representation of education providers as Relevant Agencies, given that it is not possible to engage every education establishment in Kent directly within the KSCMP.

District Council Safeguarding Group

The District Council Safeguarding Group provides representation from the 12 district and borough councils in Kent within the Partnership. The group provides a link between the activity of district and borough councils and the KSCMP. It also provides assurance that local safeguarding children issues are raised and addressed at a local level with opportunities for sharing good practice.

Health Safeguarding Group

The Health Safeguarding Group is a joint Kent and Medway group which offers a route for representation of broader health providers within the Partnership, although it is recognised that the KMICB are responsible overall for representation of the Kent health sector. The group will be reestablished by early 2025.

Governance arrangements for the safeguarding partnership

All sub-groups will report to the Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group, providing updates on activities. Key risks or challenges identified by sub-groups should be escalated to the Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group for consideration and discussion in the first instance, unless there is an urgent or pressing need for the matter to be escalated directly to the KSCMP Executive.

The KSCMP Executive will receive a yearly report from the Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group, authored by the KSCMP Independent Scrutineer, which will include an overview from each of the sub-groups. The KSCMP Executive will also receive a quarterly Executive Circular, containing a short overview of key activities of each sub-group. The Circular will also be shared with KSCMP sub-group chairs, to enable identification of shared areas of interest.

The KSCMP Partnership Forum will be held twice a year, with the potential for additional focused events when required. The purpose of the Forum will be to provide an opportunity for all sub-group members to hear directly from and engage with the KSCMP Executive, as well as receive relevant updates on Partnership activities.

Section 3: Voice of children & families

Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Agencies are dedicated to engaging with children and families at an individual, service and strategic level. We will listen to what children and families tell us in our conversations with them and reflect on what they have shared. Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Agencies will share how the voice of the children and families they support is heard within their agencies and how those messages will contribute to our overall understanding of their views.

It is our ambition that engagement with children and families will:

- Help to systematically shape priorities, service development and delivery, and to individually support children and families.
- Enable information to be developed for children by children.
- Support the development of processes to help children to have more awareness of issues, a greater understanding of what information, services and support are available to them, and be more empowered to make positive choices and help keep themselves safe.
- Improve their confidence, improve skills and improve outcomes.
- Promote supportive relationships and safeguarding arrangements between children and families, peers, the wider community, schools and colleges, practitioners and senior leaders.

The KSCMP routinely engages children and families within practice review processes, as outlined in the KSCMP Practice Improvement Framework and KSCMP Engagement with Families in Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews guidance. It is recognised, however, that broader engagement with and hearing from children and families is an area of development need for the Partnership. In 2025 the KSCMP Executive will consider the recommendations from a 'Child's Voice' project and further updates will be made to the arrangements to reflect changes made as a result.

Section 4: Helping children & families

Kent Support Levels Guidance

Most children have a number of basic needs that are well supported through a range of universal services. These services include schools, early years education and childcare, health, housing, youth services, leisure facilities and services provided by voluntary organisations.

Some children, however, have additional or more complex needs and may require access to additional, intensive or specialist services to support them. The **Kent Support Levels Guidance** (SLG) provides further detail and describes the services available for supporting children and families to stay independent, and the thresholds applied in accessing local services. The Kent SLG, summarised below, represents a framework which describes the level of need a child, young person or family may have, and the nature of support that is available at each level. It is owned by KCC Integrated Children's Services (ICS) and revised regularly in consultation with partner agencies. The Kent SLG will be signed-off by both the KSCMP Executive and LSPs whenever revisions are made.

Universal Support – Level 1

Universal services are provided to or are routinely available to all children and families.

[Read about Universal Support – Level 1](#)

Additional Support – Level 2

Children and families with additional needs who require extra help to improve outcomes.

[Read about Additional Support – Level 2](#)

Intensive Support – Level 3

Intensive support can be offered to children and families where they have complex or multiple needs requiring local authority services to work together with universal services.

[Read about Intensive Support – Level 3](#)

Specialist Support – Level 4

Children who are considered to have been harmed or are likely to suffer significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect.

[Read about Specialist Support – Level 4](#)

Family First Practice Framework

Working Together 2023 requires local authorities with their Safeguarding Partners and any Relevant Agencies, to develop, agree, and publish local protocols for assessments and support. KCC have developed the Family First Practice Framework.

Section 5: Learning & improvement

Our KSCMP arrangements are underpinned by the proactive gathering of intelligence and a systematic approach to the identification and analysis of safeguarding issues and emerging risks which may undermine safeguarding and the welfare of children. The importance we place on embedding strong analytical capabilities in our arrangements cannot be overemphasised and we are committed to producing insightful information which can inform future changes.

Practice improvement is a key focus of the Partnership. The Safeguarding Partners and other selected Relevant Agencies will work with the Business Team to coordinate outcomes of scrutiny and assurance activity, disseminate learning from local and national child safeguarding practice reviews, multi-agency audits, and other national reports and research.

Multi-agency Learning & Development Programme

As outlined in Working Together 2023, multi-agency training is important for supporting the collective understanding of local needs and for multi-agency practitioners to be effective in universal services and across the safeguarding arrangements. To be effective, practitioners need to continue to build their knowledge and skills and be aware of new and emerging themes. In addition, individual organisations and agencies are required to ensure that their workforce is sufficiently trained and competent in safeguarding children. The premise of multi-agency training is that it is 'added value' and 'better together' to provide a collective understanding of the local needs of children and families and the threshold of intervention.

Within the Partnership, we are committed to developing a consistent approach to multi-agency learning and development. The Safeguarding Partners, supported by the Business Team, will undertake a training needs analysis to understand what local training and resources are required at appropriate intervals. The programme will also be informed by multi-agency audits, local and national child safeguarding practice reviews, and research. All Safeguarding Partner organisations and Relevant Agencies will be required to contribute to the development of the multi-agency learning and development programme. The programme will be underpinned by robust evaluation processes.

The KSCMP learning and development programme will be made up of a variety of approaches, including e-learning, face-to-face-training, virtual training and webinars, workshops, conferences, seminars, and supporting practice resources. The programme will be published and accessed through a Learner Management System (LMS), and will cater for basic, intermediate, and specialist level needs. The programme will be flexible, updated and republished to reflect local need.

Publications that support learning and may be of interest will also be made available through communications routes and published on the KSCMP website.

Section 6: Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Undertaking child safeguarding practice reviews

The responsibility for how the safeguarding community learns lessons from serious child safeguarding incidents lies at a national level with the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (the Panel) and at a local level with the Safeguarding Partners.

There are procedures in place which enable the Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Agencies to:

- Identify serious child safeguarding cases which raise issues of importance in relation to the local area.
- Commission and oversee the review of those cases, where they consider it appropriate for a review to be undertaken.

The local process for identifying and making decisions on whether to undertake reviews and how lessons are learnt and embedded in practice are outlined in the KSCMP Practice Improvement Framework.

The Learning and Improvement Group will oversee the capture of learning points from case reviews about improvements needed and disseminate learning. The group will agree and monitor actions to implement recommendations from LCSPRs and measure subsequent impact on practice.

Publication of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPRs)

The KSCMP arrangements comply with the requirements set out in Working Together 2023, including sending a copy of the full LCSPR report to the National Panel and to the Secretary of State within the expected timescale. Where the KSCMP decides only to publish information relating to the improvements to be made following the review, arrangements will be made to provide a copy of that information to the Panel and the Secretary of State within the required timescale.

Where other proceedings have an impact on, or delay, the publication of reports, for example, an ongoing criminal investigation, inquest, or future prosecution, the KSCMP will inform the Panel and the Secretary of State of the reasons for the delay.

Actions in response to local and national reviews

There is an ongoing commitment to continuous learning leading to enhanced practice and improvement of outcomes and experiences. The Safeguarding Partners will take account of the findings from all local and national reviews with a view to considering how identified

improvements should be implemented locally. This includes the way in which organisations and agencies work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Findings from local reviews undertaken in Kent will be shared with relevant parties locally, and ongoing monitoring to ascertain progress on the implementation of recommendations will be undertaken via the Learning and Improvement Group.

The sustainability of these improvements will be monitored and regularly followed up to ensure that there is real impact on improving outcomes for children. Responsibility for this activity sits with both the Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group and the Learning and Improvement Group.

When further guidance is issued by the relevant government department, it will be incorporated into the KSCMP arrangements by the Policy and Procedures Group.

Section 7: Scrutiny

The KSCMP arrangements have been developed to create an environment that is conducive to robust scrutiny and a Partnership approach to learning and improvement across the children's multi-agency safeguarding system. The KSCMP Scrutiny and Assurance Framework provides a detailed overview of the scrutiny and assurance tools, approaches, and measures.

We will promote a culture of challenge and holding partners to account based on evidence and respect, and these values will be embedded within different levels and processes across the safeguarding system. We have adopted a multi-faceted approach to scrutiny, made up of two essential components. The first component focuses on the ongoing scrutiny through the work of the Partnership sub-groups. The second component relates to the commissioned Independent Scrutineer to review the arrangements.

Ongoing scrutiny

The KSCMP has developed a Scrutiny and Assurance Framework (SAF) which provides a mechanism for quality assurance, audits and deep dives into specific themes. This includes the use of good benchmarking information to give a clear picture of overall system performance. We have developed data dashboards which can help inform the Safeguarding Partners if there are clear signs of system problems. The SAF will drive a programme of qualitative and systematic analytical actions by the multi-agency partners and will be used as a means for testing the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. The framework includes the use of single agency and multi-agency audits, underpinned by organisational quality assurance processes in-line with section 11 requirements as defined in the Children's Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017). The framework contributes to the evaluation of the overall performance of the KSCMP arrangements and how they are improving practice.

The SAF enables Safeguarding Partners to:

1 Seek assurance as to:

- Whether all agencies are fulfilling their responsibilities to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Whether all agencies are joined up and working together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children across the safeguarding system.
- The efficacy of frontline practice.

2 Provide the focus for:

- Testing the interconnectedness between performance, practice and the views of children and their families.
- The annual report.

3 Analyse and respond to:

- Independent scrutiny which helps to determine the effectiveness of our arrangements, including arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding practice reviews.
- The voice of children and families.

Independent scrutiny

The second component consists of the commissioning of specific independent scrutiny work to provide the critical challenge and appraisal of the multi-agency safeguarding partnership arrangements. To this end a KSCMP Independent Scrutineer has been engaged on an ongoing basis. Additional independent scrutiny can be commissioned in response to recommendations from LCSPRs or as a follow up to recommendations and actions from regulatory inspections.

The role of the KSCMP Independent Scrutineer is critical to provide assurance in assessing the effectiveness of the KSCMP arrangements, including arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding incidents. The Independent Scrutineer will:

- Carry out work with reference to the SAF,
- Attend the LSP Group meetings to provide oversight of independent scrutiny observations and recommendations made to the Partnership,
- Attend KSCMP Executive Boards and offer critical reflection and challenge,
- Attend KSCMP Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group, highlighting observations and risks for consideration,
- Author a yearly report from the Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group, providing an overview of sub-group and scrutiny activities, and key considerations for the KSCMP Executive,
- Review the draft KSCMP annual report and contribute an Independent Scrutineer section,
- Undertake specific reviews or scrutiny work as requested by and agreed with the KSCMP Executive and/or KSCMP System Improvement Manager.

Section 8: Performance data & intelligence

The KSCMP arrangements will use data and other intelligence information to assess the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families across the safeguarding system in Kent.

KSCMP will seek to address:

- The outcomes we want for children and families,
- What success looks like,
- What we have done and how we have improved,
- The impact of our work.

Responses to these four key areas will inform our monitoring, evaluation and next steps planning, focused to deliver a culture of continuous learning and improvement. This culture both challenges and supports the KSCMP arrangements at all levels, and will set high standards of expectations for systems leaders and individual agency leads.

We will adopt a responsive and balanced approach to monitoring performance and intelligence that can be flexible to meet the needs of changing local conditions and emerging issues. We have developed data dashboards to provide insight into key Partnership data measures aligned to our priorities, learning themes identified through practice reviews, or which reflect performance across the system. Using the dashboards we can seek to understand impact of our activities on the system and consider broader national context and comparison. The dashboards are reported to the Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group to identify trends or challenges, and escalate serious or ongoing risks to the Executive for a strategic response.

The KSCMP Executive will oversee the development of Partnership priorities and an accompanying strategic plan which outlines what activity will be undertaken and how progress and impact will be understood. These will be signed-off by the LSPs, ensuring that the Safeguarding Partner strategic leaders are committed to a common direction. Progress against the strategic plan will be reported to the Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group at each regular meeting, with any key challenges discussed and escalation to the KSCMP Executive if required. The KSCMP Executive will receive an overview of progress against the strategic plan at appropriate intervals, as well as any escalations.

Section 9: Business Team

The KSCMP Business Team is responsible for the development and implementation of the KSCMP arrangements. The team consists of posts that are multi-disciplinary and operates under the ethos of agile working. Day-to-day management will be through the KSCMP System Improvement Manager.

The Business Team coordinate the work of the KSCMP Executive, bringing together strategic leads and developing overarching strategic approaches. The Team is also responsible for the day-to-day running of the KSCMP arrangements- the main structure and sub-structures and workstreams, including coordination of Partnership meetings, training, and communications (including social media and website management). Whilst the Team will support the sub-groups in considering safeguarding matters, it remains the responsibility of the Safeguarding Partner agencies and Relevant Agency membership of those groups to take forward the actions identified.

The Business Team will also be responsible for:

- Developing and promoting best and innovative practice to improve outcomes relating to safeguarding for children and families.
- Leading on system change that allows partners to work together differently and more effectively across the safeguarding pathway.
- Designing and producing insightful analytical reports to the KSCMP Executive about what is working well and which areas of practice or management need improving.
- Facilitating the practice review process and coordinating action in relation to reviews that meet the statutory Serious Incident Notification threshold.
- Working with partners to develop and implement new ways of working.

The Business Team support the SAF which helps the KSCMP determine overall assurance across the safeguarding system. This includes improved data and needs analysis to inform measuring the impact of the KSCMP arrangements.

The Business Team also leads on learning from local and national reviews, including from serious child safeguarding incidents. Furthermore, the Business Team are instrumental with regard to reviewing the implementation of relevant new legislation and statutory guidance, policies, procedures, strategies and other key documents.

Section 10: Funding arrangements

Working in partnership to meet our statutory obligations means that, as Safeguarding Partners, we must agree how we fund the KSCMP arrangements. The Children's Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) and statutory guidance require selected Relevant Agencies to contribute to the KSCMP arrangements, including funding, accommodation, services and any resources connected with the KSCMP arrangements. Therefore, in Kent, Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Agencies will be required to provide appropriate funding to the KSCMP arrangements. Funding should be sufficient to cover all elements of the Partnership arrangements, including staffing of the Business Team, and be contributions of actual funding and in-kind resources.

Working Together 2023 requires LSPs to agree the level of funding needed to deliver the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and states that funding contributions from the statutory Safeguarding Partners should be equitable. The KSCMP funding arrangements will be agreed on annual basis by the LSPs, subject to discussions with the Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Agencies. Financial contributions by individual agencies will be reported in the KSCMP annual reports. The quarterly reports to the LSP from the KSCMP System Improvement Manager will include oversight of resourcing, highlighting challenges or risks to be addressed. If any Safeguarding Partners do not fulfil their funding responsibilities as identified in the KSCMP arrangements, the dispute resolution process, outlined in **section 11**, will be invoked.

Section 11: Dispute resolution

Working collaboratively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and families which leads to better outcomes is at the heart of our KSCMP arrangements. We are committed to resolving any disputes between the Safeguarding Partners, Relevant Agencies and other organisations in a timely manner through effective leadership, openness, transparency and effective professional challenge.

Where necessary, legislation allows the Secretary of State to take enforcement action against any agency that is not meeting its statutory obligations as part of local safeguarding arrangements.

It is acknowledged that any Safeguarding Partners that fail to comply with their obligations under law are held to account through a variety of regulatory and inspection activities, for example, Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills), HMICFRS (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services) and CQC (Care Quality Commission).

Safeguarding Partnership-level escalation process

If a clear single point of leadership is required, the Partnership Chair will act on behalf of and in the interests of all three Safeguarding Partners. This will be done through discussion at the KSCMP Executive Board. If there is a need to address matters outside of the ordinary cycle of meetings, this will be recorded in the minutes of the next KSCMP meeting. The dispute resolution process is as follows:

Stage 1

The first point of resolution of issues is via the KSCMP Executive. Any issues that cannot be resolved directly between the Executive will be escalated to the Lead Safeguarding Partners.

Stage 2

If a resolution cannot be reached by the Lead Safeguarding Partners, the issue will be escalated to the KSCMP Independent Scrutineer for consideration of mediation (if required) and resolution. If a meeting is required, the meeting will be chaired by an independent scrutiny person with an agenda agreed prior to the meeting by all parties involved.

Stage 3

If no resolution can be reached, consideration will be given by the Safeguarding Partners to seek formal independent arbitration via a professional body such as the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators under the CEDR (Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution) Model Mediation Procedure to reach an acceptable conclusion.

Safeguarding practice-level escalation process

Although Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Agencies work within different organisational structures, with staff from a variety of professional backgrounds and perspectives, there is a common understanding that we should work in collaboration to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This requires that all agencies must act in compliance with Working Together 2023 and the underpinning KSCMP arrangements, policies and procedures.

It is necessary to have in place a quick and straightforward means of ensuring safeguarding arrangements and resolving professional differences of opinion. In the event of any disagreement between practitioners involved in the KSCMP arrangements relating to multi-agency safeguarding practice, the required steps to be taken are detailed in the **KSCMP Escalation and Professional Challenge Policy**, which can be found on the KSCMP website.

LCSPR Protocol

The KSCMP LCSPR Protocol sets out the pathway for the appraisal and endorsement of LCSPRs and provides a pathway for escalation and dispute resolution regarding reviews.

Section 12: Annual reporting arrangements

A KSCMP annual report will be published for the previous financial year by the end of September. The report will include, in-line with the requirements of Working Together 2023:

- What the KSCMP has done as a result of the arrangements, including on child safeguarding practice reviews.
- How effective the KSCMP arrangements have been in practice.
- The contribution of each Safeguarding Partner to the functioning and structure of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- Any themes emanating from aggregated methods of scrutiny, for example, reviews, scrutineer activity and multi-agency audits.
- Evidence of the impact of the work of the Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Agencies, including, training, on outcomes for children and families.
- An analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities.
- An analysis of learning from serious incidents.
- A record of key decisions and actions taken by the Safeguarding Partners in the yearly cycle, including in relation to implementing the recommendations for any local and national child safeguarding practice reviews and the impact that has had.
- Ways in which the Safeguarding Partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision.
- The breakdown of costs in delivering the arrangements for that period, including the financial contributions of individual partners, any changes to funding and an assessment of the impact and value for money of this funding.
- Evidence of how Safeguarding Partners are ensuring the adequate representation and input of education at both the operational and strategic levels of the arrangements.
- An overview of how data is being used to encourage learning within the arrangements and evidence of how information sharing has improved practice and outcomes.
- A review of the impact and learning from independent scrutiny arrangements to ensure the leadership is strong and the arrangements are leading to the desired and necessary impact.
- Any updates to the KSCMP arrangements with the proposed timescale for implementation.
- Evidence that national reforms have been implemented, taking into account key decisions and actions taken by Safeguarding Partners in response to reforms, and any issues or concerns encountered within the yearly cycle.

The annual report will be approved by the KSCMP Executive and LSPs and published on the KSCMP website. The report will be presented through the established governance channels of each of the Safeguarding Partner agencies as appropriate. It will also be available to Relevant Agencies and other strategic partnership bodies.

Section 13: Strategic partnerships

The KSCMP arrangements have been established and revised in the context of wider partnership arrangements across the county.

It is necessary for the KSCMP arrangements to link with other strategic partnership bodies and workstreams that support children and families, including:

- Child Death Overview Panel
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Family Justice Board
- Joint Exploitation Group
- KCC Corporate Parenting Panel
- Kent and Medway Channel Panel
- Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group
- Kent and Medway Integrated Care System Partnership Board
- Kent and Medway Prevent Duty Delivery Board
- Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board
- Kent and Medway Serious Violence Partnership Board
- Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit
- Kent County Youth Justice Board
- Kent Criminal Justice Board
- Kent Health and Wellbeing Board
- Kent Substance Misuse Alliance
- Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Strategic Management Board

The primary link with the named partnership bodies will be via the Safeguarding Partner agencies who are represented at the forums. The KSCMP Executive will share updates and key information relevant to the safeguarding system for children at their Board meetings. The KSCMP Business Team will attend specific partnership bodies to provide a direct link with the Partnership, where there is an identified need to do so.

The KSCMP Executive will also receive presentations and information items on the annual reports of particular partnership bodies, including (but not limited to):

- Child Death Overview Panel
- Kent and Medway Prevent (including Channel Panel).

Section 14: Information sharing

Working Together 2023 highlights that information sharing is essential at both a practice and strategic level, to enable effective safeguarding of children. The KSCMP is a signatory to the **Kent and Medway Information Sharing Agreement**. The agreement provides openness and transparency in information sharing, as well as appropriate governance and support, which assists us to share personal information lawfully, safely, and securely.

The **KSCMP website** provides further detail on the need for information sharing, relevant legislation and guidance, and a **myth-busting guide**.

Appendix 1: List of Relevant Agencies

Education

- The Education People
- 16-19 Academies
- Alternative provision academies
- Governing bodies of maintained schools
- Governing bodies of maintained nursery schools
- Governing bodies of pupil referral units
- Independent educational institutions
- Schools approved under section 342 of the Education Act 1996 - SEND
- Special post-16 institutions
- Governing bodies of institutions within the further education sector
- Governing bodies of English higher education providers
- Childminders

Health Provider Trusts

- Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust (KCHFT)
- Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust (KMPT)
- North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT)
- East Kent Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust (EKHUFT)
- Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust (MTW)
- Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust
- South East Coast Ambulance Service (SECAmbs)

Additional social care

- Registered providers of adoption support services
- Registered providers of fostering services
- Registered providers of children's homes
- Registered providers of residential family centres
- Registered providers of residential holiday schemes for disabled children

District councils

- Ashford Borough Council
- Canterbury City Council
- Dartford Borough Council
- Dover District Council
- Folkestone & Hythe District Council
- Gravesham Borough Council
- Maidstone Borough Council
- Sevenoaks District Council
- Swale Borough Council
- Thanet District Council
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Other agencies

- Kent, Surrey and Sussex Probation Service
- The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)
- Kent Fire and Rescue Service
- British Transport Police
- Port of Dover Police
- UK Border Force

