



# Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report

**April 2023 - March 2024**



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# Introduction from the Chair

**The Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board is a fundamental part of how our communities, and all the agencies within it, help and protect our children and young people.**

The partnership is led by the NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board, Telford & Wrekin Council, and West Mercia Police, and it becomes truly effective when it involves all the other partner organisations who help safeguard our children and young people. These include our local schools and colleges, nurseries and pre-schools, all of those who work in the NHS, local charities and community groups, and probation staff.

As a partnership we keep children, and their families, at the centre of all that we do. We seek to provide help as early as we can, and work with children and families, building on their strengths. We understand the pressures families face across Telford and Wrekin so, as a partnership, try to help with those. We know if we help with the underlying difficulties, families can often solve things for themselves.

The Board is in a healthy position with a strong, positive commitment from our local partner organisations, and an energetic and dedicated workforce. Progress has been made against our 2023/34 priorities. Our responses to Neglect and Child Exploitation are much improved, with further improvement work being undertaken. Recent reviews and inspections have recognised the level of improvement, and the difference being made to children and their families.

The help available to families through our new local Family Hubs, has improved too. Particularly in respect of families with children at the start of their lives, the amount and range of help has increased. Many more families are receiving help earlier, in locations close to their homes and from people they trust. We hope to build on these improvements during 2024/25.

The Board has worked to reduce the number of children being taken in care, with the intention of keeping more children with their families. The results have been encouraging over the last twelve months, with less children having to leave their families. Additionally, we are part of a national pilot scheme and will be able to further improve how we work.



We have seen also, a reduction in the number of children and families involved in child protection procedures, the most complex and worrying part of what we do. We are confident this is an accurate reflection of the Board getting things right. It shows we are helping earlier, and helping families put in place long-term solutions to their problems.

As a Board we are at an exciting, yet busy, period. **Working Together to Safeguard Children**, the national guidance that shapes how we work, was updated and published in December 2023. It has given us the opportunity to further develop our partnership, in line with direction and guidance from the Government. It will allow us to build on the strengths the partnership has already. As we have worked through 2023/24, we have been able to shape the way ahead and our plans will mature during 2024/25.

It has been a busy, challenging year with all our partners organisations reporting families facing increased pressures, whether that be financially, through anxiety or because of trauma. Our Board, through effective partnership working has been able to provide help and support to many, many of those families and this has made a huge difference to their lives.



**John Clements**  
**Independent Chair of Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board**

# Who is the Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board and what does it do?

Telford & Wrekin Council, West Mercia Police and Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin ICS have a statutory duty to put in place multi-agency safeguarding arrangements to protect and safeguarding vulnerable children. This responsibility is driven by the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board which is funded, equally, by the three partners.

Membership of the Board is drawn from:

- Independent Safeguarding Children Board Chair
- Telford & Wrekin Council, Children Services
- NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Systems (ICS)
- West Mercia Police
- Telford & Wrekin Council, Education and Skills
- Voice of the Child Representative, Project Manager and School Improvement Adviser/ITT Lead
- Telford & Wrekin Council Policy & Governance Service Delivery Manager,
- Telford & Wrekin Council Safeguarding Children Board Legal Advisor, Solicitor, Team Leader People,
- West Mercia Youth Offending Team
- Telford and Wrekin Partnership Safeguarding Children Board Manager.

The Board has agreed its core focus as:

- Put the person who has been harmed or at risk at the centre of everything we do and listen to their views about what we can do to improve the safety of people;
- Hold members to account – are we/they doing enough to keep people safe;
- Collect and share information about how well we are keeping people safe and what more we could do;
- Make sure our workers and volunteers get the training they need to provide safe services and share concerns if they think a person is being hurt or abused;
- Review our policies and guidance to make sure we are constantly improving; and
- Raise awareness of safeguarding issues and what to do.

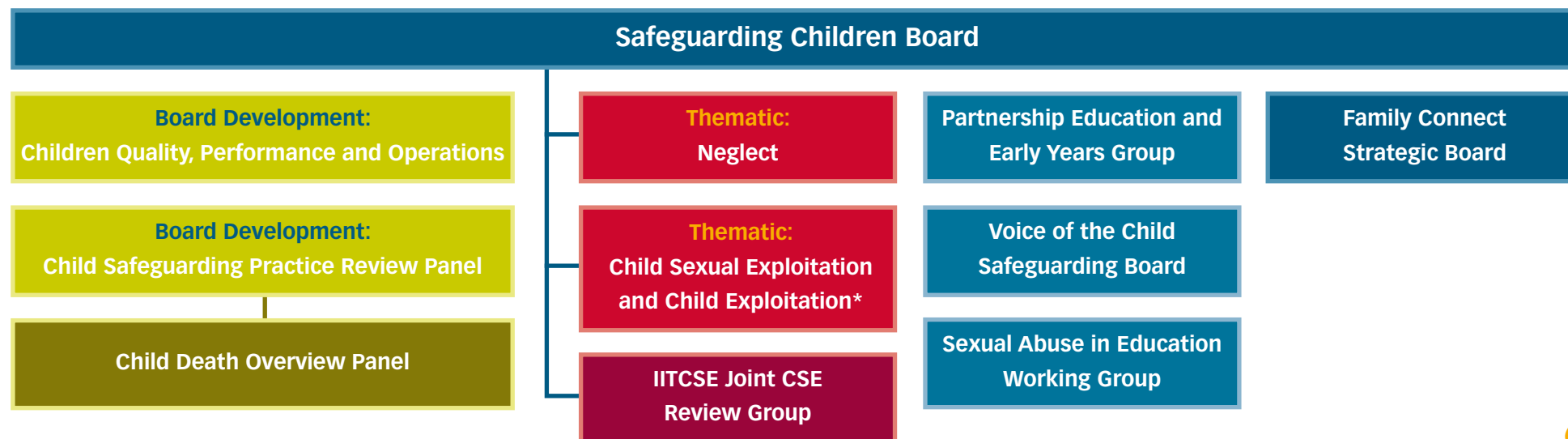


**How the Board does things is as important as what it does. To shape how it delivers its role, the board has adopted the following principles and values:**

- **Empowerment** – people being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and give informed consent;
- **Prevention** – it’s better to take action before harm occurs;
- **Proportionality** – the least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented;
- **Protection** – support and representation for those in greatest need;
- **Partnership** – working with communities who have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting abuse and neglect; and
- **Accountability** – accountability and transparency in safeguarding practice.

Working Together (WTG) 2023 states that one of the three statutory members is required to chair the Board. To support the transition of chair arrangements, Telford and Wrekin Partnership has retained an Independent Chair throughout the WTG2023 transition period. This decision was made to provide independent challenge and scrutiny as well as to support the development and implementation of the new arrangements which will be published in line with the statutory guidance in December 2024. It has been agreed that post December 2024, the Board will move to a model of independent scrutiny and the Board chaired by Telford & Wrekin Council’s Director of Children’s Services.

The current Chair will present this annual report to the Telford & Wrekin Council’s Scrutiny Board for Children and Families and to the Health & Wellbeing Board. To drive delivery of its objectives, the Board has a series of sub-groups as set out below:



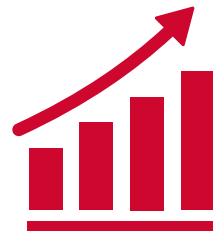
## Telford and Wrekin – the place

The Borough which the Board serves is a place of contrasts. Central to the borough is the New Town of Telford which was commissioned in 1968 and grew rapidly around existing communities including Wellington, Oakengates, Dawley and Madeley. Along the banks of the River Severn is Ironbridge, the birthplace of the industrial revolution and now a World Heritage site. Surrounding Telford is a rural hinterland – accounting for more than two thirds of the borough’s area.

The estimated the population of the borough to be 191,915 (Mid 2023). A quarter (47,600) are aged 0-19. Between 2013 and 2023 the borough’s population increased by 22,900 people - an increase of 13.5% - making it the fastest growing area in the West Midlands. As the population grows it is becoming more diverse and ageing, between 2013 and 2023, the number of people aged 65+ grew by 28.5% which is twice the regional rate of 14.3%.



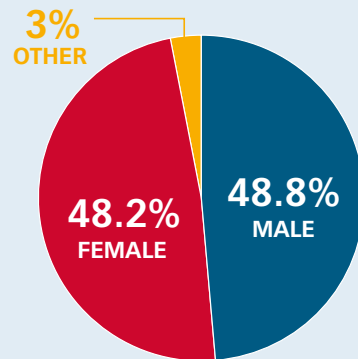
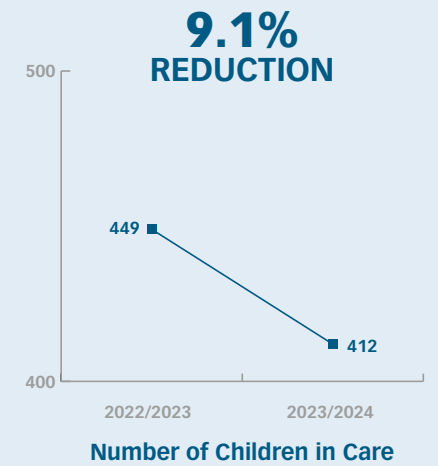
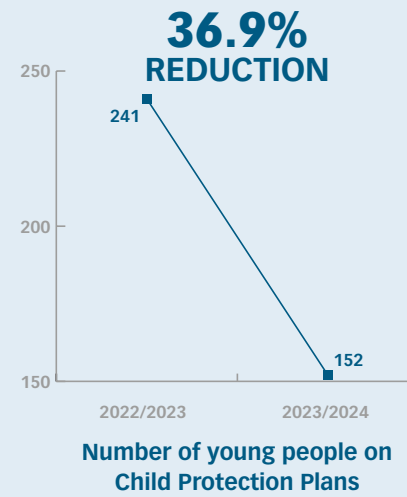
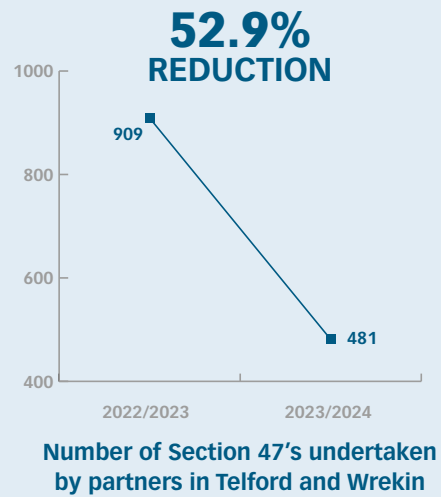
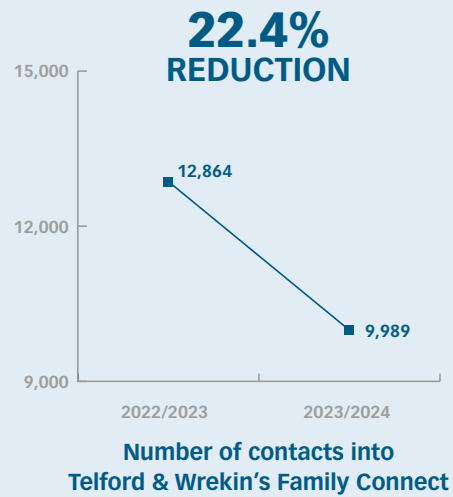
**191,915**  
**POPULATION**



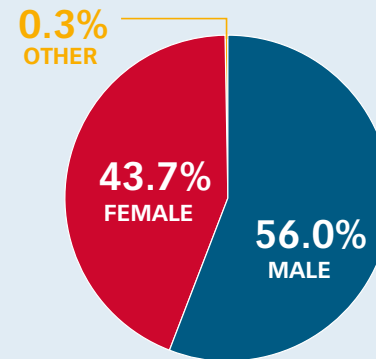
**13.5%**  
**POPULATION INCREASE**  
**FROM 2013 TO 2023**

Many people who have come to live in the borough have been attracted by the value for money housing offer, our schools, outstanding natural environment, growing economy and our connectivity via road and rail into the West Midlands conurbation and beyond.

Whilst at face value the borough is prosperous and thriving, the Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that there are 18 neighbour areas in the Borough which are ranked amongst the 10% most deprived in England. This impacts on the life experience of these residents in terms of poorer outcomes with regards to health, education employment and housing, such challenges have undoubtedly increased because of the current cost of living crisis.



**In 2023/2024 contact received in Telford & Wrekin Family Connect Family by gender split**



**2023/2024 gender split for our young people in local authority care**



# Current priorities and impact

**The Board has two specific priority areas where it recognised there was a need to improve policy and practice to shape better outcomes for children and young people: “neglect” and “child exploitation”.**

The key focus of the neglect thematic sub-group is to implement child centred practice that supports a family to make the necessary step changes to meet for the specific needs of a child. Core to this is addressing underlying challenges in a family that resulted in neglect.

The key activities and the impact of them are set out below:

Priority – Neglect	
Partnership work undertaken	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with Partners, Families and Children to review practice and engagement with families from Family Connect referral, to S47 right through to the Initial Child Protection Conference. (Professor Jan Horwath)</li> <li>• Development of a Neglect windscreen to form part of the Partnerships Threshold guidance. This is to inform professionals of the services which can support families with a specific focus on Neglect.</li> <li>• Clear focus on the number (and trends) in Neglect referrals throughout all statutory services. This has enables data drive decisions and interventions to be implemented.</li> <li>• Multi Agency Case File Audit with a focus on “Neglect” Child in Need cases. To provide assurance to the Board of ingrained practice and identify any gaps in learning.</li> <li>• Further development of Family Safeguarding Model within Children Social Care.</li> <li>• Roll out of six “Family Hubs” across Telford who form part of the Family Hubs network delivering Start for Life Services. These span across strands of parenting, perinatal mental health, infant feeding, home learning environment.</li> <li>• Services on offer are promoted through the Family Hub Offer booklet and Start for Life Offer which is provided at birth registration.</li> </ul>	<p>Child &amp; Family Assessment with neglect as a factor reduced by 35%* (C&amp;F 2022-23 &amp; 2023-24)</p> <p>A reduction of 16.5%** in contacts into Family Connect with “Neglect” as a contributory factor (**Contact into Children Social Care Family connect 2022-23 &amp; 2023-24)</p>

The key focus of the child sexual exploitation and child exploitation thematic sub-group is to address any strategic barriers to achieving this purpose whilst recognising that children and young people are vulnerable to exploitation in a range of social contexts by applying the principle of contextual safeguarding to help respond to and prevent child exploitation.

The key activities and the impact of them are set out below:

<b>Priority – Child Sexual Exploitation &amp; Child Exploitation</b>	
<b>Partnership work undertaken</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of the Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Exploitation Group multi agency data set. The data enables the Thematic group to analyse trends and emerging needs. Services, support and engagement can then be tailored to the local need. All information is reported to Board for oversight and to provide assurance.</li> <li>Development of the Child Exploitation contextual safeguarding model</li> <li>Missing and return home data analysis to ensure that all young people receive a Return Home Interview with 72 hours of being found, by an independent person with a understanding of child Exploitation Triggers and Push Pull Factors. Additional scrutiny that Missing Intervention Meetings are held when required and encompass a full multi agency response.</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>“When concerns about children involve risk of exploitation, they are screened promptly. Consultation offered by the Children Abused Through Exploitation (CATE) team provides additional advice to inform analysis.”</i></b> Ofsted Inspection of Telford and Wrekin local authority children’s services April-May 2024 (Overall Rating “Outstanding”)</p> <p><b><i>“When children go missing from home or from care, they are offered timely return home interviews. There is effective engagement of children by the specialist CATE team in this process, which enables them to explore the push-and-pull factors for children. Through detailed direct work, social workers explore children’s feelings about where they want to live. For some children, this has resulted in them moving and incidents of going missing have stopped.”</i></b> Ofsted Inspection of Telford and Wrekin local authority children’s services April-May 2024 (Overall Rating “Outstanding”)</p>

## Priority – Child Sexual Exploitation & Child Exploitation

### Partnership work undertaken

- Prevent/Channel Panel and Steer Clear oversight. Collaborative working with Lived experienced CSE Survivors through ITTCSE joint CSE Review Group and Partnership Operation Group.
- Creation of “Explore More” document - co-produced with three individuals with lived experience.” is to support any practitioner working with children and young people to understand what sort of matters may indicate that a child or young person is being sexually exploited.
- Co-produced “Child Exploitation Week” Events. Presentation to multi agency Professionals and the roll out of in school explosion awareness session within Schools.

### Impact

*“Children benefit from an experienced team of specialist exploitation workers in the CATE team who provide an exceptional service for children when they are exploited or at risk of exploitation. They skilfully build relationships with children and their families, which supports the reduction of risk and improvement in children’s experiences. This includes disruption activity and referral to the National Referral Mechanism. An innovative and effective multi-agency transition panel plans services and interventions for children into adulthood.”* Ofsted Inspection of Telford and Wrekin local authority children’s services April-May 2024 (Overall Rating “Outstanding”)

#### **Independent Inquiry – Telford Child Sexual Exploitation (IITCSE)**

Telford & Wrekin Council agreed to commission an independent inquiry into child sexual exploitation within the Borough. It appointed the law firm Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP as the Commissioning Body for the Inquiry. The Commissioning Body in turn appointed Tom Crowther KC to chair the Inquiry.

The purpose of the Inquiry was to fully investigate and establish the facts of child sexual exploitation in Telford & Wrekin, to identify if, and where, public, and other, services had failed and where possible, to establish who was accountable for any failure and to make recommendations for the future. The Inquiry report was published on 12 July 2022.

## Priority – Child Sexual Exploitation & Child Exploitation

### Partnership work undertaken

### Impact

In 2024, the Chair and the Commissioning Body conducted a two year review to examine the extent to which recommendations from the Inquiry's report have been implemented. The report from that review was published on 16 July 2024. The following quotes are contained in the report of 16 July 2024. The full report can be found here <https://www.iitcse.com>

***“What I have found has been without exception positive. Of my 47 Recommendations, 38 have been fully implemented. Four remain in progress, but with real progress. Five were, I am told, impossible to put in place without national change.”*** Tom Crowther KC, Statement from the Chair, Publication Day Update 16th July 2024. Independent inquiry, Telford Child Sexual Exploitation

***“What is, in my view, most impressive, is how the response to my Recommendations have been developed with a group called the Independent Lived Experience Consultees – these are three people who were themselves, over the years, victims of exploitation in Telford.”*** Tom Crowther KC, Statement from the Chair, Publication Day Update 16th July 2024. Independent inquiry, Telford Child Sexual Exploitation

## Priority – Child Sexual Exploitation & Child Exploitation

Partnership work undertaken	Impact
	<p><i>“Here, the Consultees’ views have informed the implementation of Recommendations, not only in respect of social care and youth work but the Police, licensing, health and schools. Indeed there is no corner of this response that they have not touched, and the positivity and enthusiasm for what has been done, from the leaders of the services to those professionals at the sharp end, has been overwhelming.”</i> Tom Crowther KC, Statement from the Chair, Publication Day Update 16th July 2024. Independent inquiry, Telford Child Sexual Exploitation</p> <p><i>“People will not forget Telford’s history of child sexual exploitation – and nor should they. But in my view Telford’s approach – the Council’s approach – to the Recommendations, to engagement with its key partners and most of all with those three people it let down as children, now stands as a model.”</i> Tom Crowther KC, Statement from the Chair, Publication Day Update 16th July 2024. Independent inquiry, Telford Child Sexual Exploitation</p> <p><u><a href="http://iitcse.com">The Independent Inquiry into child sexual exploitation in Telford (iitcse.com)</a></u></p>

# Consultation around new priorities in 2024-2025

Following the introduction of Working Together 2023, and in line with the Board's commitment to review its key priorities in 2024, several extraordinary Board meetings were arranged in early 2024 with this as a primary focus. The Board considered local and national data linked to current priorities and emerging areas of concern. Independent Chair, John Clement used multi-media platforms to consult directly with the young people of Telford and Wrekin, through established school safeguarding boards and Telford & Wrekin Council education links. Responses will be collated and made available at to Executive Safeguarding Children Board/Safeguarding Children Board by late September 2024.

Continuing with the Partnerships trajectory of developing its early help offer, as well as understanding the national concerns with children mental health and waiting times for services (which locally was identified through our QPD analysis), the Partners have suggested the following additional priorities.

- Improving the response to children emotional health needs
- Developing how we prevent harm to children and provide support at the earliest opportunity.

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## Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

**The Safeguarding Children Board, Child Safeguarding Review Practice Review (CSPR) Panel oversees and administers all activity in connection to 16C (1) of the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social work Act 2017). Additional to the complying with Children Act 2004, the Panel has delegated authority to undertake this activity to promote a culture of continuous learning and improvement across the organisations by using learning from reviews to drive improvements in practice.**

Since April 2023 the Panel has held two "Rapid Reviews" with both resulting in the need for a Local Safeguarding Practice Review. The first of these reviews was a Joint CSPR with a Safeguarding Partnership from within the London area and the second being fully overseen in Telford.

The Panel has worked closely with a trusted author to create a methodology for future Practice Reviews. The Board was of the view that methods, practices as well as the standard of reports differed greatly when commissioning authors. This methodology was designed to provide structure which would assure the Board that reviews are completed consistently to the necessary standard.

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel works closely with the Quality Performance and Development Subgroup to review and create policies, develop and distribute briefings and to undertake audit activity to provide assurance to the Safeguarding Children Board that learning has been implemented and is effective. The Panel compiles and reviews a document that simplistically displays the Board identified safeguarding concerns/themes and cross references these current and evolving Board training offer.

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## Quality Performance and Development

**Aligned with Working Together 2023, the Board has continued its progression into quantitative data analysis. Quality Performance and Development (QPD) compiles and analyses data from across the spectrum of the partners, in all areas linked to Safeguarding Children. This analysis is reported to Safeguarding Children Board which shapes and informs decisions.**

### MACFA Activity/Themes

QPD is responsible for undertaking and reporting on MACFA Activities to provide assurance to the board around propriety progress and practice implementation. The following themes have been covered through MACFA Activities, providing the Board with the assurance of embedded learning.

- Neglect CIN cases over 6 months
- Young People with SEND and EHCP, open to CATE
- “Think Family” – the Think Family agenda recognises and promotes the importance of a whole-family approach which is built on the principles of ‘Reaching out – think family’
- Confirm perceived/documentated child diagnoses
- Deep Dive into PPO (Police Power of Protection) case
- Child Protection Plan over 12 months.

## 7 Minute Briefing and Policy Reviews

QPD Support requests from the Child and Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Panel, to create 7-minute briefings (this system of communication was chosen based on research, which suggests that seven minutes is an ideal time span to concentrate and learn) linked to ongoing reviews, MACFA activity and thematic concerns and changes in policy.

The following briefings/policies have been created and distributed throughout the partnership:

- Non-Mobile Child Pathway
- Cultural Competence
- Procedure for the Management of Overdoses within Schools
- MARAC (7 Minute Briefing)
- Practice Guide (7 Minute Briefing)
- Trauma informed Practice (7 Minute Briefing)
- CSPR 3 and 10 Learning Briefings
- Information Sharing
- Professional Boundaries
- Professional Curiosity
- Best Practice Language Guide

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## Training and development

We have continued to identify learning which crosses both Adult and Children Safeguarding Boards and consequently held our largest multi-agency event to date. Our partnership understands the importance of learning from people with lived experience. Consequently, we commissioned a lived experienced group to deliver “Trauma Informed Practice” Training to 280 professionals across all agencies in Telford and Wrekin.

Additional to bespoke training events, Telford and Wrekin Partnership continues to administer multiple online and face to face training sessions for all partner agencies. This training includes the continual roll out the latest partnerships “Threshold Guidance” (which has to date delivered this guidance to 498 professionals throughout the partnership), Raising awareness of Child Protection, Raising Awareness of Exploitation and Vulnerabilities, Understanding Child Death Reviews, Managing Allegations against staff and volunteers in a position of trust (LADO), Brook Traffic Light Tool and Raising Awareness of Private Fostering.





For 2024-2025, a key focus of our training offer will be on enhancing professional awareness in Initial and Review of Child Protection Meetings, Child in Need Meetings and Core Groups. The development of this package is a result of the work completed by Prof Jan Horwath in consultation with Telford lived experienced parent group “Dandelions”. Professor Jan Horwath was commissioned with the ask to of reviewing and offer recommendation around how the Board supports its Neglect offer. At Professor Horwath request, the Board facilitated multiple consultation sessions with parents (Dandelions), children and multi-agency front line practitioners to inform recommendations.

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## Our future focus

- Following consultation, for the Board’s priorities agreed (with each priority to have a clear focus, understanding what progress looks like).
- Continued development of the Board’s multi-agency data dashboard to inform strategic oversight of the effectiveness of our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- Continual focus on our exploitation response and development of a co-produced “Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy” between partners and lived experienced consultees.
- Develop our engagement offer, clear focus on the community and voluntary sector, sports and education settings.
- Implementation of the new Safeguarding Board Chair and independent scrutineer in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 publication of new and revised multi-agency safeguarding arrangements December 2024.

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## A heartfelt thank you to...

- All the individuals and families who have taken the brave step to share their experiences and worked with us in pushing for change
- The 100s of professionals up and down the borough who have continued to support the partnership, their colleagues and the residents of Telford and Wrekin

To find out more about the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership and access resources please visit [www.telfordsafeguardingpartnership.org.uk](http://www.telfordsafeguardingpartnership.org.uk)





