

Introduction to the THSCP

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

The Working Together Arrangements state that: A statutory safeguarding partner in relation to a local authority area in England is defined under the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act, 2017) as: (a) the local authority (b) an integrated care board for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area (c) the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area

These three partners have a joint and equal duty

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



Steve Reddy
Children's Services

Steve Reddy is the Interim Statutory Director of Children's Services for Tower Hamlets with lead responsibility for children's safeguarding as well as for the delivery of a range of social care, education, early help, and commissioned services. Steve works closely with partners to ensure the most vulnerable children and young people in the borough are safeguarded from harm.



Korkor Ceasar
Integrated Care Board

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



James Conway
Metropolitan Police

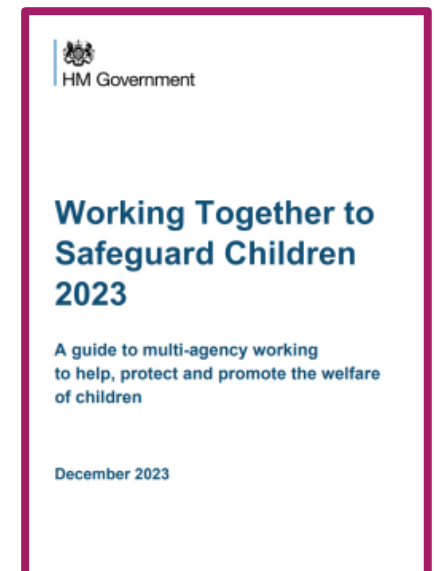
Detective Chief Superintendent Conway is the senior police officer responsible for the strategic and operational oversight for the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Hackney. The Superintendent works closely with both internal and external partners in order to safeguard the vulnerable, tackle crime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

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

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

“Joint functions of lead safeguarding partners

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



Overview of Key Changes in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

2023 saw significant changes in the Working Together Guidance, the THSCP is currently reviewing how the partnership can be strengthened through further compliance

with the guidance. The headline areas for change are:



Multi-agency expectations for all partners



Further inclusion of the voluntary sector



Working with parents/guardians and families



Strengthening accountability, data and reporting



Changes to SCP's strategic leadership and funding



Tackling harm outside the home



Strengthening Scrutiny functions



Support for children with disabilities



Ensuring interdependencies with other boards

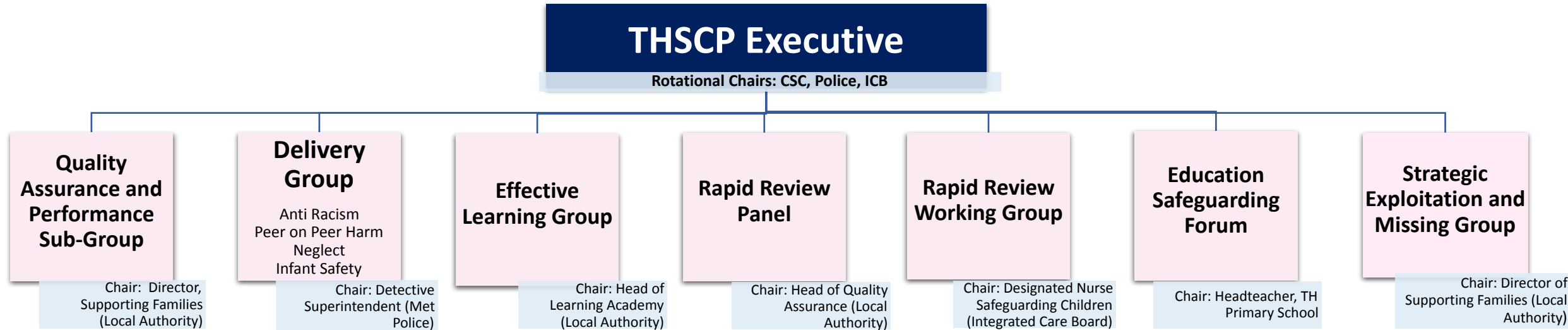


Role of education and childcare providers

In Tower Hamlets the THSCP is responsible for and produces...

- **Oversight and governance system** of all safeguarding activity in the borough.
- **Compliance** – Ensuring all agencies are fulfilling their safeguarding duties and responsibilities.
- **Serious incident notifications** – If a child is seriously harmed and abuse or neglect is suspected a Serious Incident Notification is made to the Department for Education and the Statutory Review Process is triggered, which is a 15 day process facilitated and supported by the THSCP.
- **Statutory reviews** – This is an overarching term for Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Rapid Reviews. (Both of which have replaced the Serious Case Review systems) The THSCP oversees and facilitates all reviews and ensures the processes are robust.
- **Implementing the learning** from statutory reviews, including running learning sessions and creating 7 minute briefings.
- **Quality assurance** of all Safeguarding throughout the borough which includes, leading on **Multi-Agency Audits**, a **Multi-Agency Data Dashboard** (where over 10 partner agencies feed in their safeguarding data), dip sampling through all agencies, reviewing trends from reviews and data, ensuring partners are compliant with mandatory training and addressing any concerns that could affect safeguarding in all agencies such as recruitment and retention.
- **Delivery of multi-agency improvement projects**, the current priority projects are, anti-racism, neglect, infant safety and peer on peer harm. Each area has a project improvement plan for the topic.
- **Produce a statutory Annual Report** – which goes to the Local Authority Cabinet, Ofsted and the Department for Education
- Ensure **multi-agency policies** are up to date and robust. The THSCP also develops new multi-agency policies and pathways when required.
- Liaising with national bodies to look at best practice
- Responsibility for the **levels of need document**
- Employee's two **Young scrutineers** to ensure the voice of the child is at the centre of strategic work.
- **Hosts a webpage** with multi-agency policies, procedures and advice sits.
- Co-ordinates and commissioning **multi-agency safeguarding training** and creates an annual training needs analysis to identify key areas to target.
- **Run awareness sessions** into key areas of safeguarding (Especially in November!)
- An **engagement programme** with children and young people through pre-established groups including the Children in Care Group, CHAMs participation group and police cadets.
- THSCP is the formal route for **multi-agency** escalations and publishes an up-to-date escalation policy with key contacts in each agency.
- **Bulletins** which are sent out too all partners on key activity updates.
- Upkeeps a database of all key partner contacts across the borough.

Governance and Structure



The Groups Explained:

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

Membership

“Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider are required to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children. A list of organisations that meet the criteria to be included as a relevant agency is set out in regulations.

Strong, effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements should be responsive to local circumstances and engage the right people in a collaborative way. This approach requires flexibility from all relevant agencies, to enable joint identification and response to existing and emerging needs, and to agree priorities to improve outcomes for children.” – Working Together 2023

The partnership has been made stronger this year through key agencies taking the lead in many areas including shaping and leading the work in our priority areas. The infographic shows a snapshot of members, but the membership is made up of over 200 professionals from various agencies and teams across Tower Hamlets. Partners include:

Almost any organisation that works with children and young people in Tower Hamlets but to name a few....

- Met Police
- Barts Health
- Integrated Care Board
- GP Care Group
- North East London Foundation Trust
- Education Providers
- Cafcass
- Voluntary Sector
- Probation
- Childrens Services
- Early Help
- Youth Services
- Exploitation Team
- The Education Partnership

Key External Stakeholders include, The Department for Education, Ofsted and The National Panel



Independent Scrutiny

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

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

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

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

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

Finally, the past year also presented various changes and challenges, including notable workforce changes, impacting the effectiveness and continuity of the partnership, and the Executive. The dedication of individuals covering vacant roles and supporting colleagues has been invaluable in maintaining the Partnership’s core work at what remains a challenging time.

It has been a privilege to continue collaborating with the Partnership this year. I extend my sincere gratitude to practitioners and managers across all agencies for their tireless efforts in safeguarding children. Special thanks to the Young Scrutineers for their exceptional dedication and contributions, even with demanding academic schedules!” – Laurelle Brown



The THSCP Independent Scrutineer is Laurelle Brown who is responsible for ensuring the THSCP is compliant, raise any challenges, review processes and procedures and liaise on a national level with other partnerships and key external stakeholders.

“Independent scrutiny should drive continuous improvement and provide assurance that arrangements are working effectively for children, families, and practitioners. It should also consider learning from local child safeguarding practice reviews, national reviews and thematic reports. The independent scrutineer or scrutiny group should be able to demonstrate knowledge, skills and expertise in the area being scrutinised and consequently add value to the work of local agencies.” – *Working Together 2023*

Young Scrutineers

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

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

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

Young Scrutineers in their own words

Imanna

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

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

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

Imtiyaaz

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

THSCP Key Achievements 23-24

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

THSCP Key Achievements 23-24

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

Key Challenges

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

Strategic Plan for the Year Ahead

