

Wigan Safeguarding Children's Partnership



Annual Report 2023 – 2024

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1. Foreword from our 3 Lead Partners

We are delighted to welcome you to the Annual Report for Wigan Safeguarding Children's Partnership (WSCP). Wigan Safeguarding Children's Partnership operates in accordance with the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 statutory guidance. It provides the safeguarding arrangements under which the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies work together to coordinate their safeguarding services, identify, and respond to the needs of children in Wigan, WSCP commissions and publishes Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, and provides scrutiny to ensure the effectiveness of the local safeguarding arrangements.

The ambition of our arrangements is that everyone within the safeguarding arena is empowered to recognise, respond, and fulfil their responsibilities to ensure that children, young people, and families are effectively safeguarded, and their welfare is promoted.

At the heart of these arrangements is a commitment from us, as safeguarding partners, to work together effectively, to encourage constructive challenge where needed, and to foster a culture of professional curiosity and continual learning that drives improvement.

As a partnership, we recognise the important role that the safeguarding arrangements play in coordinating a response that places the best outcomes for children and families at its centre. Safeguarding continues to change with new and emerging risks and our safeguarding approach and interventions must develop in tandem with the pressures and challenges within our communities. To face these new safeguarding challenges, we will work together across the public services, and voluntary sector to build sustainable contextual safeguarding interventions for our local population. This year we have determined as a Partnership that we will move to a new practice model, Family Safeguarding and an implementation plan stretching this year and next is in place and is governed by the Partnership arrangements. We have also started considering how we will deliver the changes in Working Together 2023, this includes our MASA arrangements incorporating the wider Great Manchester Safeguarding Alliance and work underway with the National Safeguarding Partner Facilitator (Education Lead) for the Department for Education, shaping an environment which enables all schools, colleges, early years, and other education and childcare providers in the local area to be fully engaged, involved and included in local safeguarding arrangements. In the coming year we will continue to gain assurance on the quality of safeguarding across the borough and ensure that we implement as a partnership these changes in line with our vision

"We want all children in Wigan to be happy, healthy and safe; to feel listened to and to have the maximum opportunities to be ambitious. If children or their families need help and support it should be at the right time, by the right person and in the right place for them."



**Wigan
Council**

Colette Dutton
Director of Children



NHS
Greater Manchester
Integrated Care

Stephanie Whitelaw
Associate Director

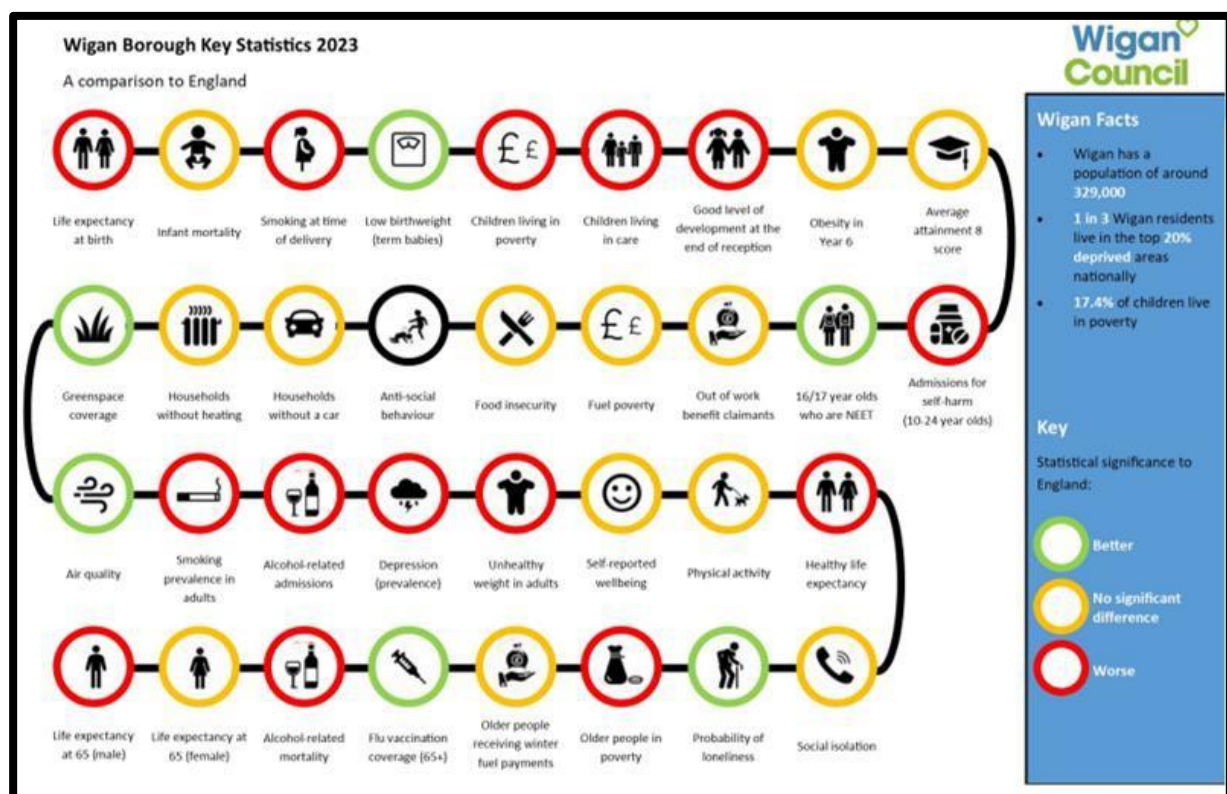


**GREATER MANCHESTER
POLICE**

Clare Jenkins
Chief Superintendent
Greater Manchester
Police Wigan

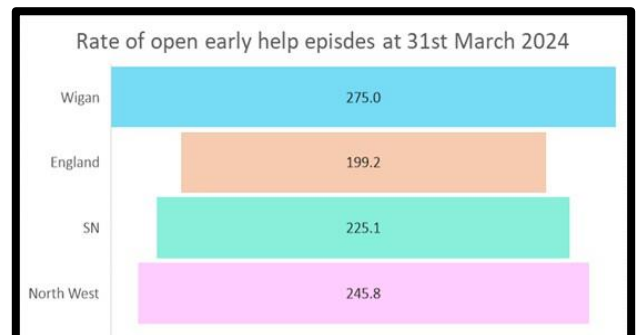
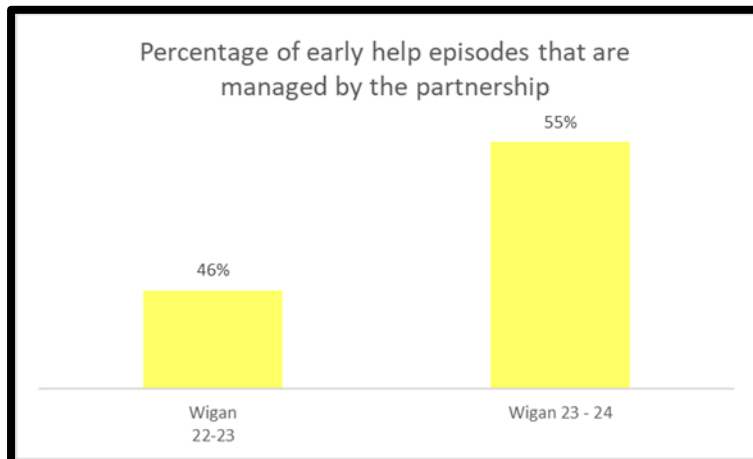
2. What do we know about our Children in Wigan

Wigan is Metropolitan borough in Greater Manchester. The Metropolitan Borough includes Central Wigan and Towns such as Atherton, Hindley, Ashton in Makerfield, Ince, Leigh, Golborne and Tyldesley. The current population of the Metropolitan borough of Wigan is 329,800. It is the second most populated borough in Greater Manchester. 18.34% of the total population are children (0–18-year-olds).

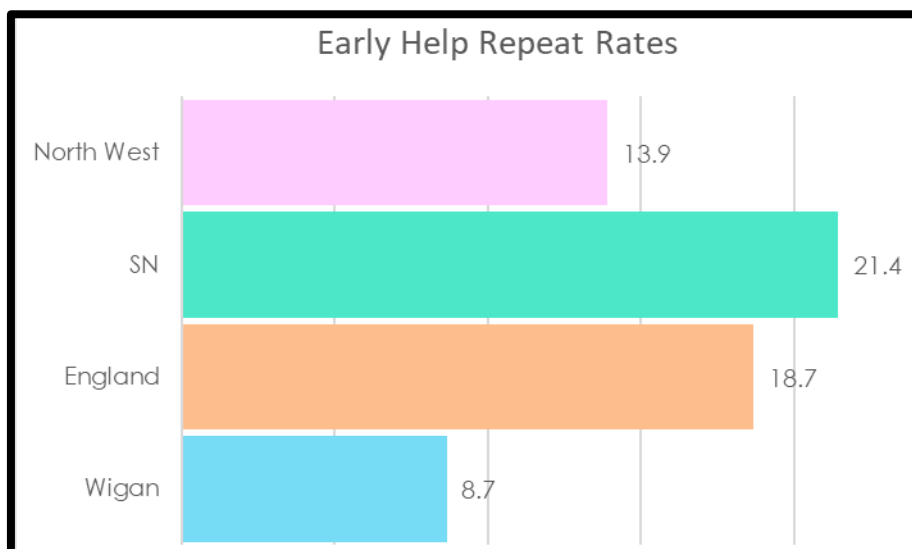


The experiences of children known to early help and statutory safeguarding services:

Early Help – More children have had their support needs co-ordinated through a partnership early help plan which by year end made up over half of the open early help episodes and provided evidence of positive improvement. Schools are the main co-ordinator of partnership early helps. More children in Wigan were benefiting from early help when compared to comparison areas.



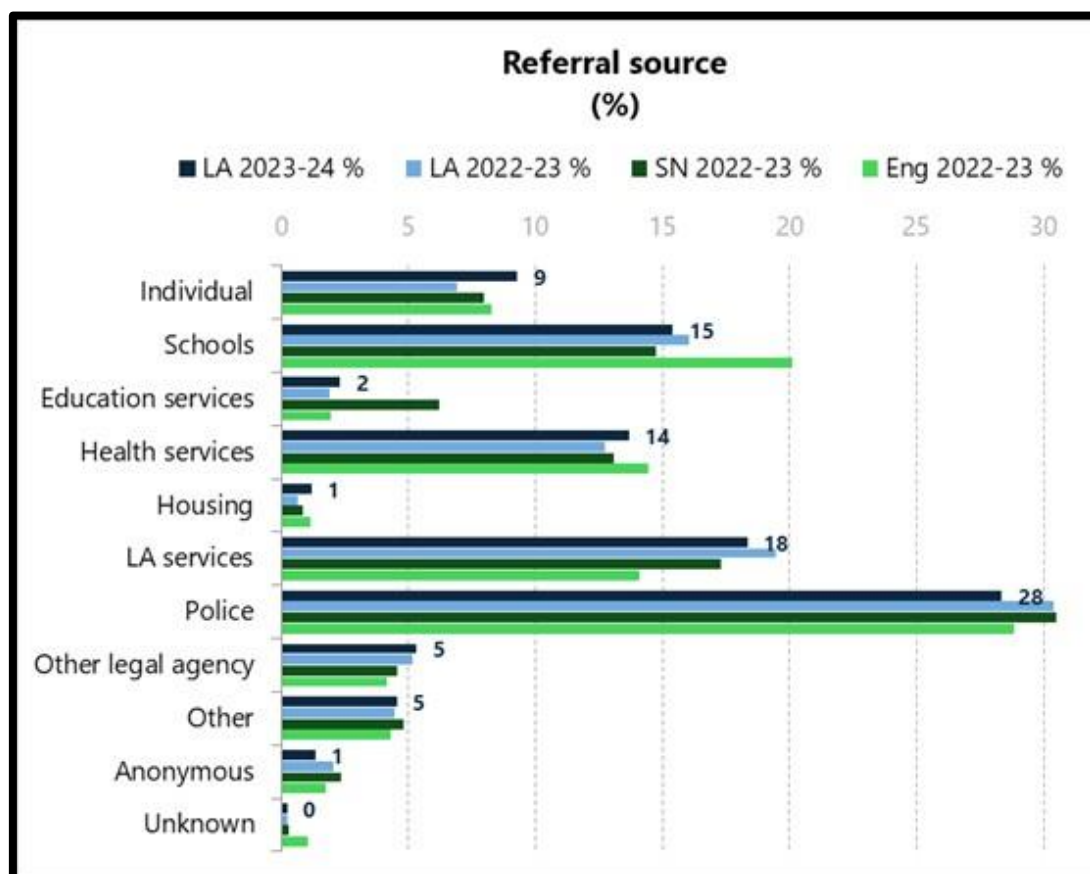
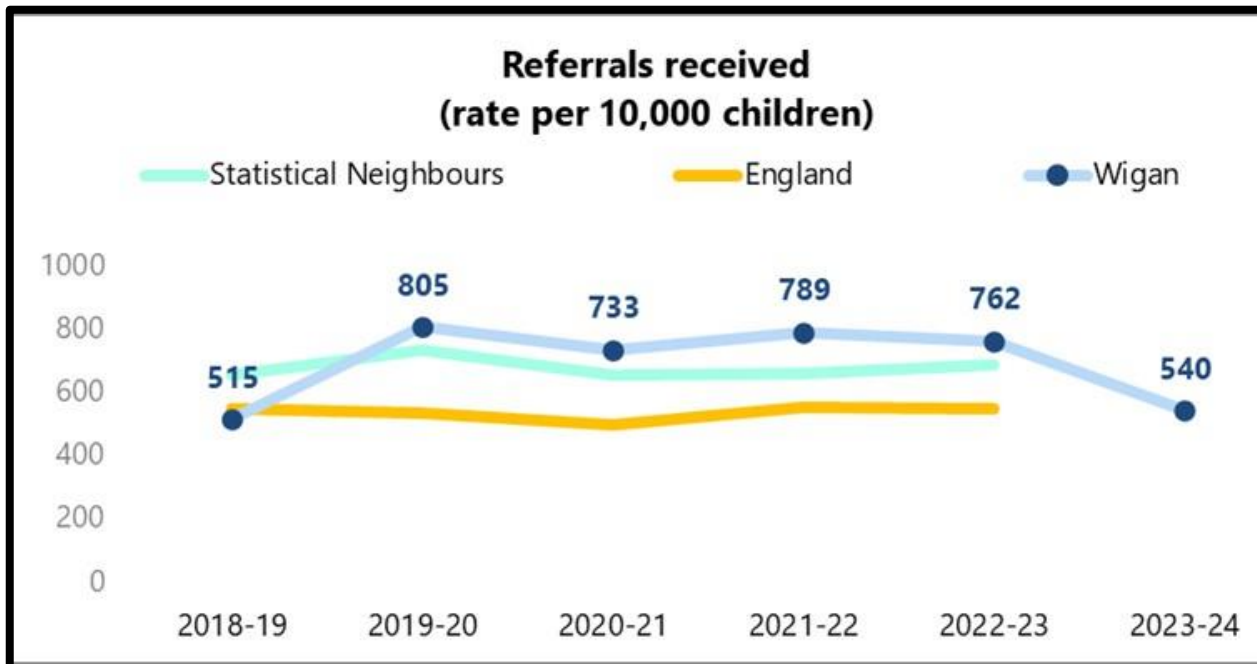
Children in Wigan experienced less repeat early help episodes on average when compared to other areas. By the end of the year Wigan's repeat rate was significantly lower than other areas.



Referrals and re-referrals

The positive impact for children on a strengthened early help system was part of the reason less children in Wigan experienced a referral to statutory services in 2023-24. Having previously been above both England and Statistical Neighbours, Wigan's referral rate fell throughout the year and by year was in line with England and below Statistical Neighbours. This had come about as a result of less referrals from police in line with partnership work undertaken during the year through the Children's First Partnership Hub to strengthen understanding of thresholds. This reduction also

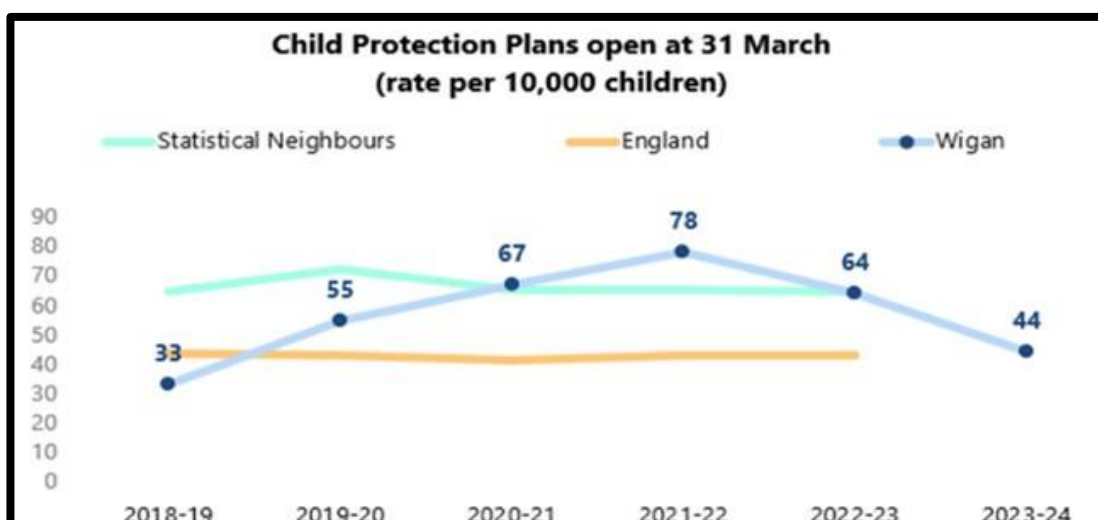
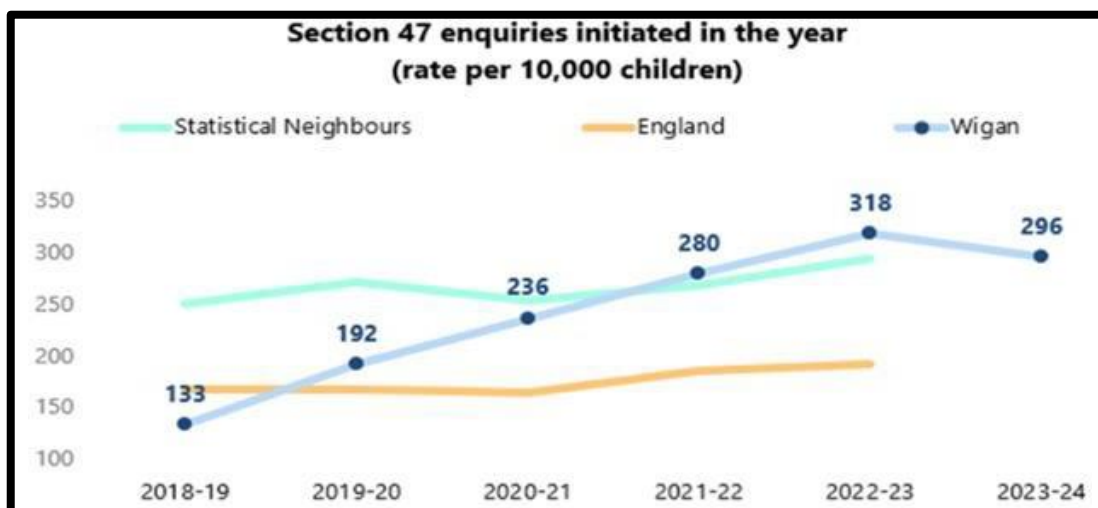
correlated with a stronger footprint of school early help activity. Referrals were down from both police and school sources as illustrated below. Another enabling factor has been a reduction in the number of children experiencing repeat referrals to social care which was down by a quarter (25.1%) when compared to 2022-23 performance, suggesting an improved picture of practice aligned to the practice priorities adopted by the partnership.



Child protection investigation and planning

The number of children who experienced a child protection plan in 2023-24 declined. This decline was anticipated as the partnership sponsored family safeguarding model was rolled out during the year. This is a trend observed in other areas that have successfully implemented family safeguarding model. Less children also experienced a repeat child protection plan, which was a focus of significant partnership challenge earlier in the year. The independent scrutineer completed a review of partnership practice which resulted in a multi-agency repeat CP plan being implemented to strengthen practice. Whilst proportionately, the percentage of repeat plans increased because the total number starting a plan was lower, the actual number of children who experienced a repeat plan was lower than the previous year. There had been a 25% reduction in repeats.

At year end Wigan was below statistical neighbour average for the rate of children subject to child protection and in line with England. Child protection investigations also declined, although remain significantly above average. Through challenge and scrutiny, the partnership understands that this is largely related to robust adherence to multi-agency procedures with regards to older children at risk of missing and due to contextual issues for children already subject to plans or in care, meaning children are receiving a robust multi agency response to new, emerging and ongoing risks.



Children in Care

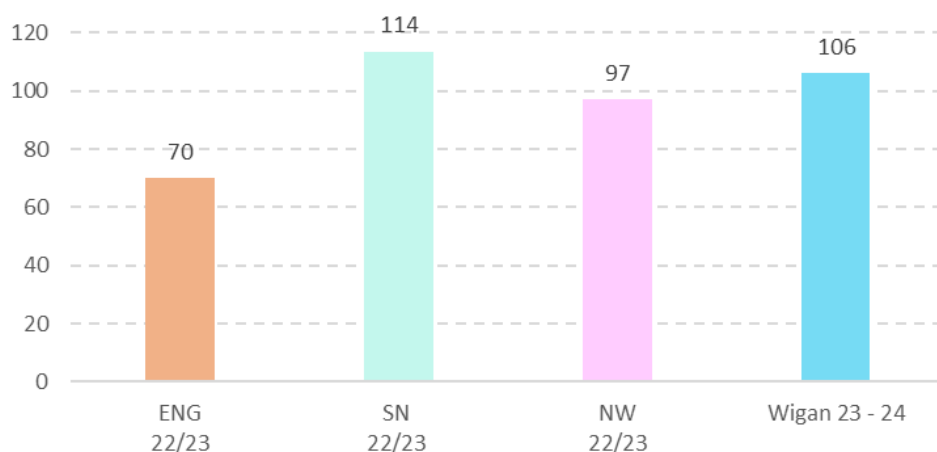
Children experiencing care in Wigan increased in 2023-24 and the partnership understands that this increase was in relation to two key factors:

- Less Wigan children were discharged from care than in the previous year
- There was a significant increase in Wigan caring for separated young people during the year.

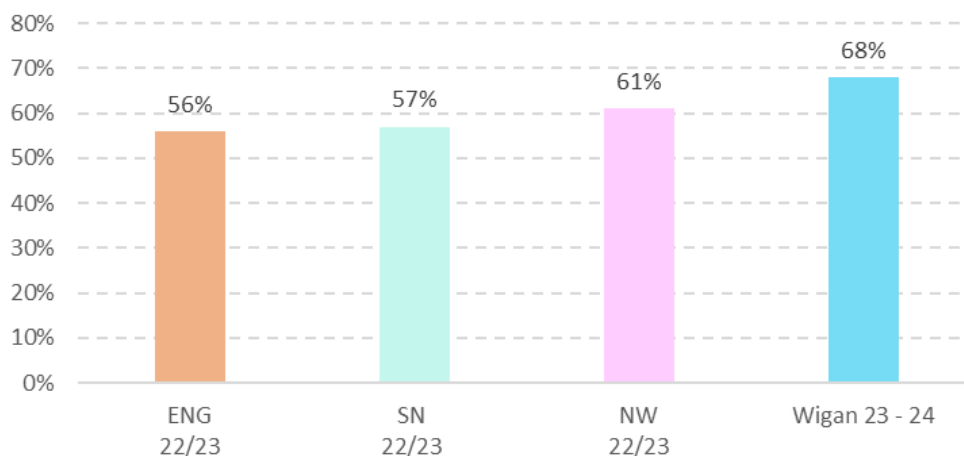
It is important to note the number of Wigan children who came into care increased slightly but not to any significant level. By year Wigan was above England and North West average with respect to the rate of children in care per 10,000 children but remained below statistical neighbours despite the increase in separated young people in our care.

Positively more cared for Wigan children were able to be cared for by the family and friends with a good increase throughout the year in use of these types of placements. By year this accounted for 17% of placements compared to 11% at the end of 2022-23. Positively Wigan performs well at ensuring when children do come into care, most children can remain living locally which is extremely positive for Wigan children.

Rate of children in care: Wigan 2023-24 and comparator areas 2022-23



% of children in care residing in Wigan: Wigan 2023-24 and comparator areas 2022-23



3. Governance and Scrutiny of Wigan Safeguarding Children Partnership

2023-24

The responsibilities, values, and ambitions of Wigan Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Responsibilities:

The Children's Safeguarding Partnership was formed pursuant to the arrangements described in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018). Wigan Safeguarding Children Partnership has key responsibilities, some defined statutorily and others at a local level:

- Overseeing the production and delivery of the local safeguarding strategies and plans and to ensure that partner agencies have clear and effective strategic and operational responses to safeguarding the people of Wigan and that they discharge their responsibility effectively.
- Ensuring that robust systems and processes are in place to hold partner agencies to account in relation to safeguarding policy and practice and to ensure that serious incidents and/or breaches in policy and practice are fully investigated and lessons learned.
- Delivering and ensuring the provision of guidance, support, and workforce development to partner agencies to enable them to discharge their safeguarding responsibilities effectively.
- Producing annual business plans and strategic planning documents in line with statutory requirements.
- Ensuring compliance with all statutory requirements for monitoring and reporting safeguarding activity at strategic level (e.g., reporting of performance management information, compliance with inspections).
- Ensuring that an appropriate and effective infrastructure is in place to support the Executive in delivering local safeguarding strategy and business plans.
- Overseeing the commitment of resources to support safeguarding in Wigan.

Values:

Our values illustrate the approach the partnership will take in delivering its vision.

- Children have the right to live their lives free from violence, abuse, and neglect and to feel safe in their homes and communities.
- All children and young people should have the opportunity to grow up safely and be protected from abuse and neglect, crime, and anti-social behaviour.
- Safeguarding children is a shared responsibility of all agencies and agencies commit to holding each to account.
- The individual, family and community should be at the heart of safeguarding practice, and we should value and actively seek their views and experiences to shape future practice and policy.
- High quality multi-agency working based on consensus, equality, respect, and collaboration is essential to good safeguarding outcomes.
- There is a commitment to continuous improvement and learning across the partnership.

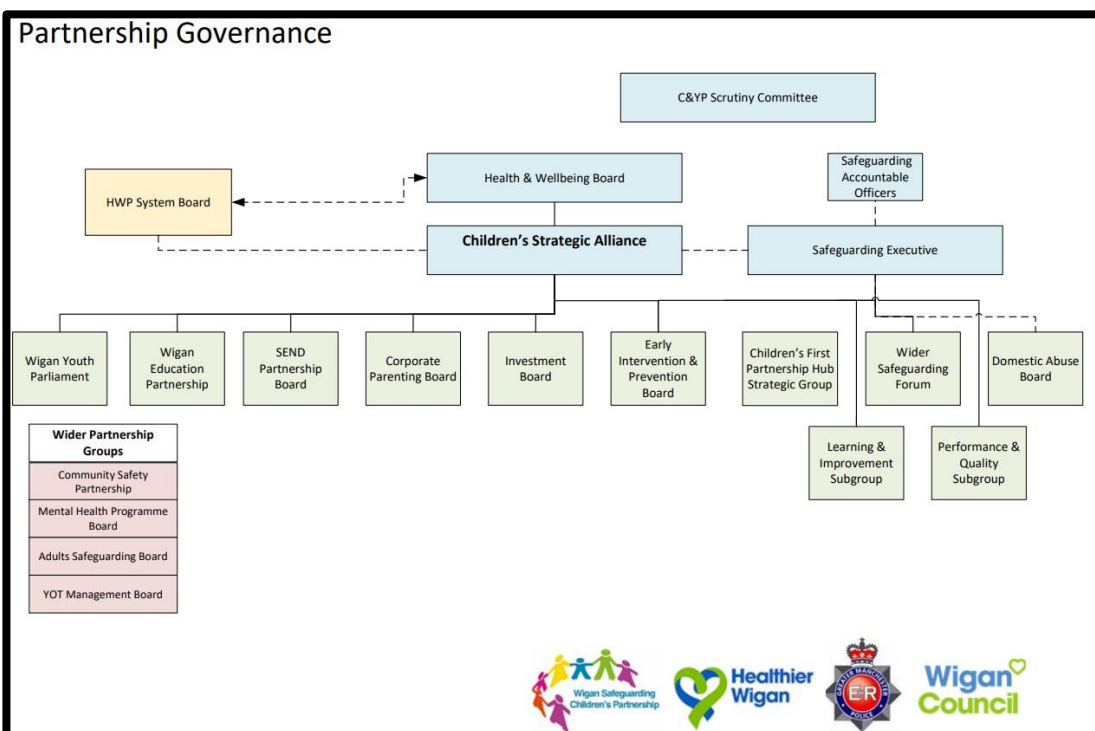
Ambitions:

Our Ambition is that in achieving this we will:

- Champion the interests and rights of children and young people at risk of abuse and neglect.
- Ensure there is an emphasis on outcomes for children, young people, and families at risk of abuse and neglect.
- Provide independent and objective challenge and leadership that is essential to ensure the best outcomes for those in need of protection and safeguarding amidst competing priorities.
- Involve all partners, not just police, health and the local authority with a clear platform and duty to co-operate.
- Scrutinise and improve practice – using a range of new practice and individual user led approaches and meaningful measures to provide accountable oversight and feedback on performance and outcomes, with a focus on before crisis and that incorporates early help across the life course.
- Learn from experience and evidence of what works well – creating workable strategic and operational arrangements that fit form to function and are proportionate, efficient, effective, and adequately resourced.
- Meet the leadership challenge of connecting multiple partners together and collaborate to achieve common goals and within new ways of working.
- Ensure that every child and young person becomes a confident, resilient adult.

Governance in terms of Wider Strategic Partnerships

All Executive members are expected to promote the safeguarding children's agenda within wider strategic meetings and use the opportunities afforded to persuade and influence other parts of the system as and when necessary to ensure the delivery of the partnership's vision.



Involving Children and Families

The Executive are keen to get the views of our children and families and have collected this through several routes:

- We understand how our single agencies collect the voices of children and families through our Section 11 audit and our planned Peer Visits.
- We collect the voice of children through audit.
- We collect the voice of children and their families through our case reviews.
- We collect the voice of children through consultation and focus groups.
- We engage in the partnership voice work using the Lundy Model as part of the Participation Strategy 2022 – 2025 ([Participation Strategy 2022-2025 \(wigan.gov.uk\)](#) evidence of which can be found in the Participation Annual report 23-24.



Feedback from families working with Start Well in Q4:

- 100% said they were updated about what was happening
- 100% felt listened to
- 100% felt the worker helped them

Feedback from families working with CSC in Q4:

- 81% said they were updated about what was happening
- 81% felt listened to
- 88% felt the worker helped them

We continue to have oversight of single agency approaches to collecting the voice of families and we meet parents and children to elicit their voice through case reviews. As part of initiating the maturity work, the Partnership agreed that in 2024-25 we would consolidate our learning into a specific engagement and communication program. At the time of writing, the Partnership has joined the regional improvement work which is seeking to develop innovative approaches to capturing the voice of children directly relating to our scrutiny function. Therefore, we await the outcome of this before the final model can be agreed.

Caring Hearts Awards took place in March 2024, designed and delivered by our children and young people. We received almost 200 nominations from parents, carers, children and young adults who wanted to nominate their worker for their amazing support, help, advocacy and listening skills, to mention a few of the categories.

Independent Scrutiny

Working Together 2023 states that the purpose of the independent scrutiny is to provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area, including arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases. Robust and objective scrutiny cannot rest with one individual or a single exercise, rather it requires a range of mechanisms to achieve two aims:

- To ensure Wigan has robust and effective safeguarding children's arrangements in place that are owned and delivered by key partners and all relevant bodies.
- To ensure that the plan is subject to regular constructive challenge throughout the year and that the three lead partners address identified weaknesses.

As set out in our last annual report (2022- 2023) Wigan Safeguarding Children's Partnership's Independent Scrutineer facilitated the development of the Partnership a strategic plan which has formed the basis of this report.

4. WSCP Priorities

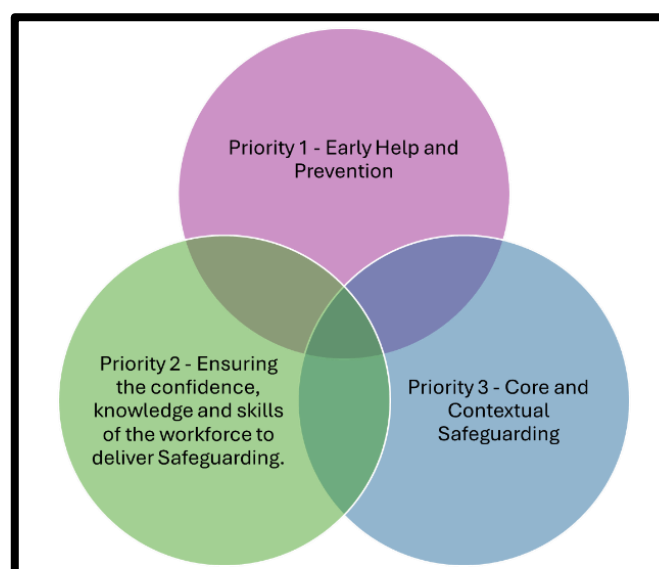
The Priorities for Wigan Safeguarding Children's Partnership 2023-24.

As per the Strategic Plan, the Partnership undertook to make a difference to children and their families in the following priority areas:

Priority 1 - Early Help and Prevention Early Help and Prevention Strategy

Focus has been on the continued delivery of our outstanding key objectives within our Early Help and Prevention Program and Strategy:

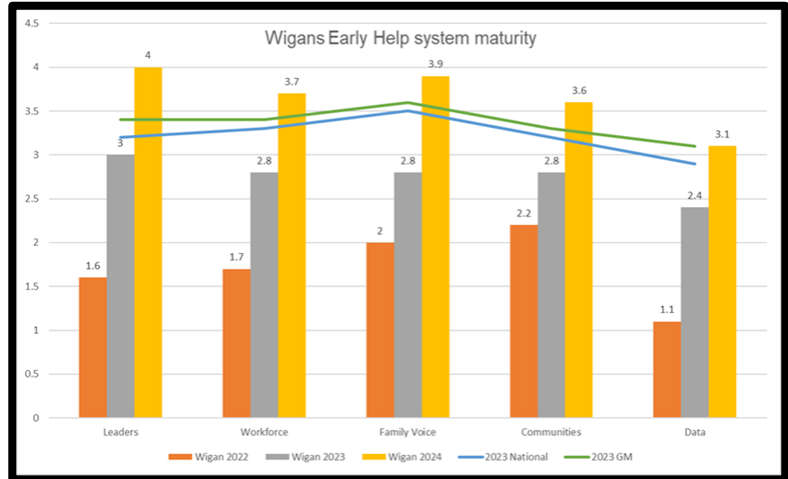
1. Work with families to establish ways to gather their voice
2. Developing our Early Help and prevention workforce
3. Develop family hubs life course model across our seven neighbourhoods, utilising our assets and resources effectively
4. Develop a community, asset-based approach in our neighbourhoods, building relationships with the VCFSe in the borough
5. Make smarter use of evidence and data to demonstrate improved outcomes for our families



The following achievements should be noted for 2023 -24:

- The Early Help and Prevention Strategy was signed off by the partnership and a Programme plan has been in place to enable delivery of the strategy. We have demonstrated improvements in our scoring of the Early Help System guide self-assessment, evidencing an increased maturity in the system.

- We have established mechanisms for engagement with families, a full communication and engagement plan is in place and families have been consulted extensively in the development of the family hub model.
- There is an Early Help core workforce profile in place, workshops developed with key managers to embed the workforce strategy and practice which will led by the Early Help Work Force Development Officer in the Safeguarding Business Team.
- An outcomes and quality assurance framework have been developed to provide assurance to the Early help and Prevention Board about the service delivery across the partnership.



- The new Early Help whole family assessment has been produced and limited access for all partners to the integrated case management system has been facilitated and training provided.
- Start Well Family Centre Provision has been delivered by five primary schools since 2016 this provision was brought into the council in 2024 to provide resource to shape Family Hub delivery.
- We have launched three family hubs since October 2023, the first was in the Wigan Central Neighbourhood and has enabled access to over 30 different services at the family hub, building true partnerships at the very earliest opportunity for our families, enabling the preventative element of our strategy to really come together.
- Further work is underway with VCFSE in the Leigh Atherton and Tyldesley neighbourhoods, the GM Innovations unit agreed to support this work. AllChild (formerly West London Zone) confirmed plans to work with us in the same neighbourhoods.

The Impact of the developments in line with this priority area are as follows:

- More preventative services are less fragmented and accessible in one place as a result of family hub delivery.
- Greater understanding and awareness for our children and families of the services on offer. As a result of an easy to access website, calendar and promotional materials to enable improved communication and promotion of the family hub and early help support
- Whole family approach, considers the whole family in allocation of support
- Some families tell us they feel listened to, lots of engagement with families to develop the services in the family hub
- Engagement with families through Early Help audits are telling us that families feel better supported with a whole family approach
- An early help system which is maturing to enable support at the earliest opportunity for families
- Connectivity between partners to find the right solution early for families that need it and a wider range of partners involved in supporting earliest and early help

- Access and training on the early help assessment and support from the early help development team, encouraging more partners to carry out an early help assessment

Areas of focus for 2024 – 2025:

During the next twelve months we will establish a staffing model and estates for our family hub development. In Leigh, Atherton and Tyldesley, we will work with AllChild (formerly West London Zone) to implement services in identified schools and work with the GM innovation unit to build connections with the voluntary and community sector in the area. We will ensure that we have an effective early help and prevention workforce in place to enable wider partnership engagement with early help including engaging voluntary and community provision.

Priority 2 - Ensuring the confidence, knowledge and skills of the workforce to deliver Safeguarding.

Ensuring that skills-based training transfers into practice is key to strong safeguarding practice. Given the significant challenges faced by the wider workforce including organisational memory, recruitment and retention, we must ensure that practitioners are able to carry out what they learn. We aim to work towards creating a workforce offer that will cover the entire breadth of the safeguarding continuum from Earliest Help to Child Protection. We have identified a Core Set of Competencies expected for

professionals working within the Safeguarding Arena, this includes Senior Managers and professionals working with children and families.

Our aim will be to develop a 'whole systems' approach, this year's world social work week was celebrated by staff across the partnership and activities and training opportunities were open to all.

Feedback from World Social Work Week:

Amazing week, and fantastic opportunity to celebrate all our fantastic practitioners. It really does feel like a supportive and caring family.

The offer this week has been brilliant and inspiring. There hasn't been anything that I've attended and haven't come away inspired and full of new knowledge.

Fantastic week - a brilliant choice of people delivering the sessions. So relevant for the workforce.

Workforce Development and System Maturity:

1. Workforce Development Plan:

A comprehensive workforce development plan is in place to create a confident and competent workforce, supporting the Early Help and prevention system.

Progress: A training needs analysis, with Early Help as a core focus, has been approved. Funding has been secured for a dedicated Early Help Workforce Development Officer to guide the system's growth from implementation to maturity.

2. Place-Based, Neighbourhood Approach:

The workforce model will follow a place-based, neighbourhood approach utilizing the family hub delivery model.

Progress: This model is under development. The first multi-agency, community-based family hub opened, with 2,434 people accessing it during the reporting period. Two more hubs are planned for the next six months.

3. Training Needs Analysis:

Further work will ensure that the training needs analysis reflects the needs of all professionals working with children and families.

Progress: The first analysis is completed, and recruitment is underway for the Workforce Development Officer to advance this work.

4. Collaborative Leadership:

Progress: Leaders, partner organizations, and agencies collaborate to co-own the vision for Early Help and prevention.

5. Reflective Learning:

Progress: Learning is promoted, and changes in practice are embedded. Audits suggest that these processes continue to be effective.

6. Staff Morale and Value:

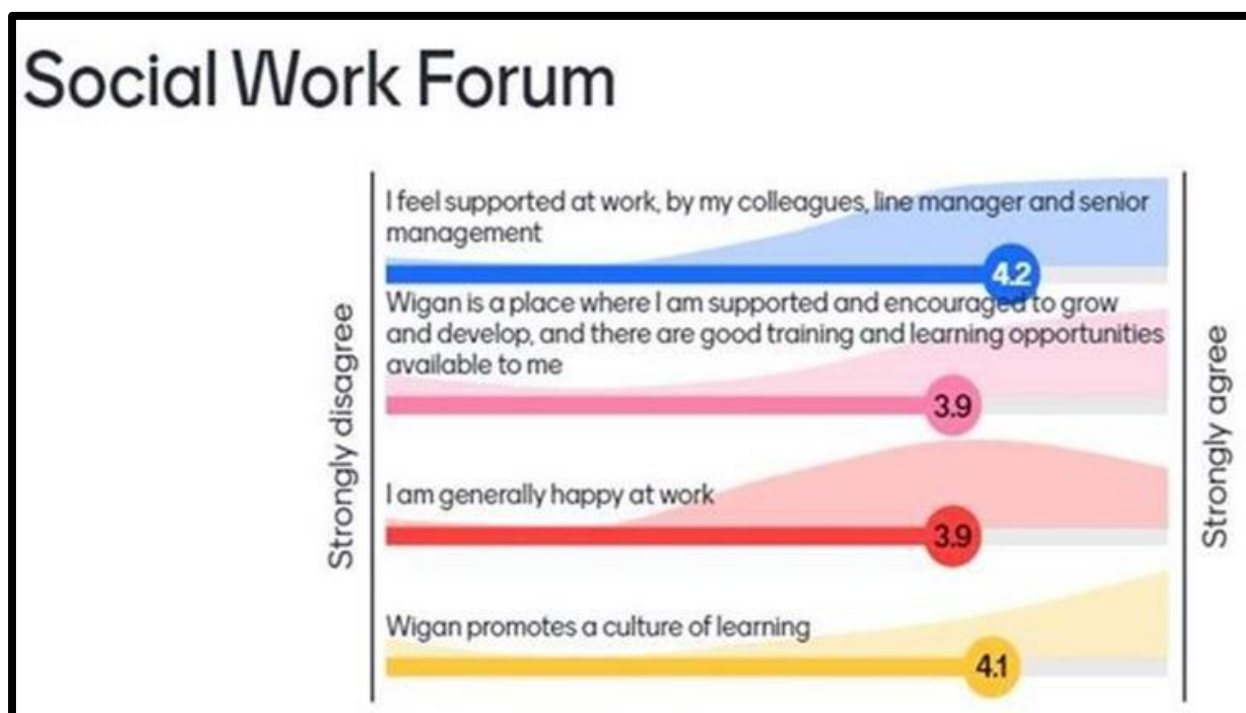
Progress: Frontline staff and their managers feel listened to and valued. A diagram illustrating an example of how staff are listened to is featured below.

7. Workforce Confidence and Skills:

Progress: Performance data, audit and workforce feedback tell us that the workforce is becoming more confident, skilled, and interconnected in delivering family-focused interventions.



Figure 2 An example of staff being listened to from Children's Social Care



1. Whole Family Approach:

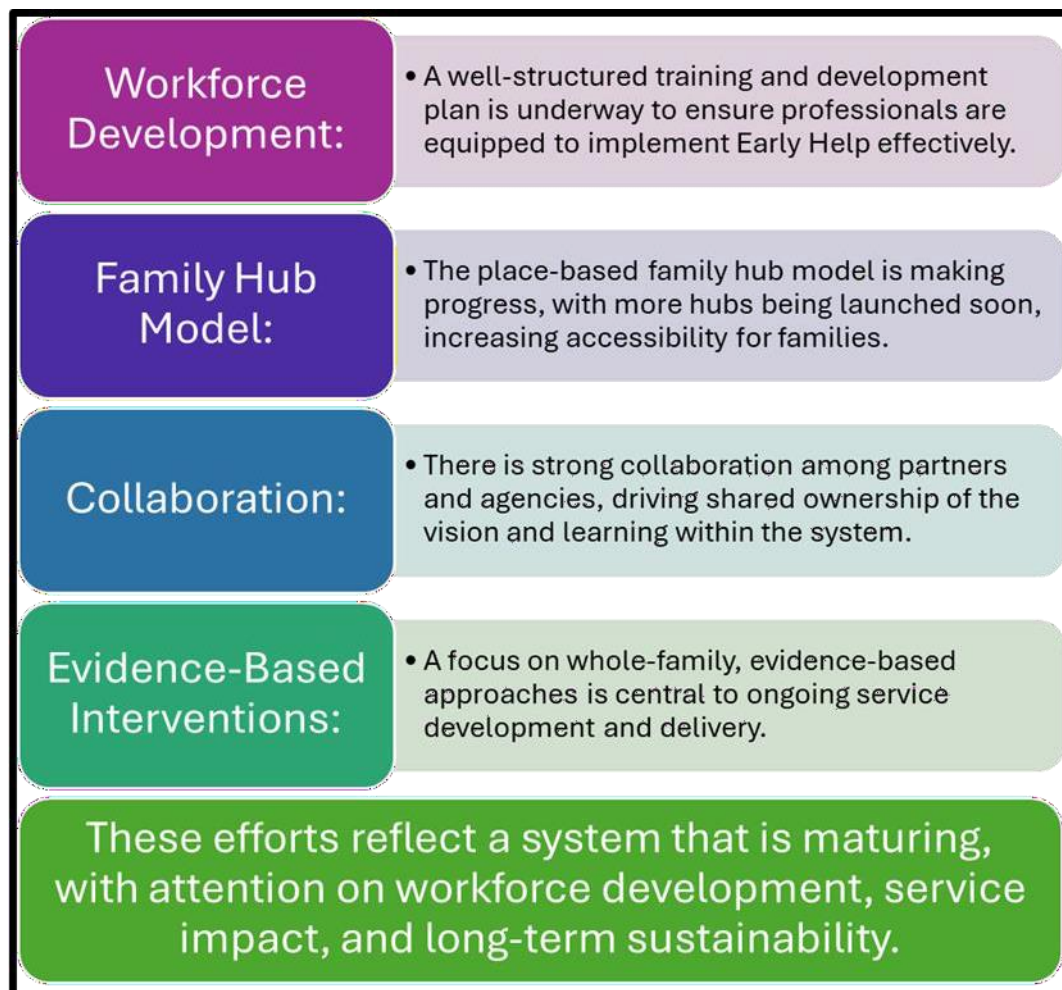
All interventions are whole-family focused, evidence-based, and evaluated for their impact. The partnership will continue to scrutinize the outcomes using this framework.

2. Reduced System Demand:



Early indications suggest that the Early Help and family-focused approach is reducing demand on the system at the front door. This will be monitored through the Performance subgroup for assurance.

Key Takeaways:



Priority 3 - Core and Contextual Safeguarding

It is a priority for the Partnership to scrutinise and identify positive system change within the core statutory duties held by services as well as the core offer intended to safeguard children more widely. The partnership continued to prioritise our work around complex safeguarding, including exploitation and an understanding of our context, push and pull factors.

Current Progress and Key Initiatives:

1. Shared Partnership Approach:

The Operational and MACE/ROTH planning group (involving all statutory partners, with plans to include wider community partners) is at the heart of a shared partnership approach. This group drives continued development, particularly regarding exploitation and safeguarding.

During 2023/ 24 the Reach Safeguarding Adolescent Service was formed. This places the multi- agency complex safeguarding service with the Youth Offending Team and the Youth and Community Provision as well as an Edge of Care team for adolescents. This is underpinned but the Greater Manchester Safeguarding Adolescents Framework and uses a trusted relationship approach for working with children and young people.

2. Trauma-Informed Practice:

Trauma Informed Practice was chosen as the second principle for the Greater Manchester (GM) Peer Review. This is a strength within the REACH (Wigan's adolescence safeguarding service), reflected in training, planning, and family interventions. It demonstrates a strong foundation for supporting vulnerable adolescents.

3. Service Goals:

The REACH service aims to:

- Improve the quality of care for at-risk adolescents.
- Reduce the number of adolescents entering care.
- Address and reduce contextual harms (such as exploitation and abuse).
- Enhance access to education and training.
- Reduce the number of missing episodes.
- Improve attention to their health needs.

Areas of Focus for 2024–2025:

1. Governance and Reporting:

Improving governance arrangements and reporting to ensure there is a shared understanding of performance around adolescent exploitation within the partnership.

2. Transition Support:

Focus on improving transition arrangements for young people as they move into adulthood, ensuring continuity of support and services during this critical period.

3. Embedding Learning from Reviews:

Strengthening the process of embedding learning from reviews into the children's workforce. A key focus is on quickly implementing lessons learned across all teams to enhance the service and create a strong learning culture.

4. Introducing the "Your Choice" CBT Approach:

The introduction of the "Your Choice" Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) approach into the REACH service will provide additional therapeutic support aimed at preventing and addressing harmful behaviours in adolescents.

5. Engaging with the GM Peer Review Framework:

Actively participating in the renewed GM Peer Review framework to invite external scrutiny and feedback, which will help to continuously improve service delivery.

Summary of Key Priorities:



These strategic goals for 2024–2025 reflect a commitment to improving the care, support, and outcomes for adolescents, particularly in addressing exploitation, transitions, and trauma-informed practices.

Delivering the 3 Priorities:

To deliver against the priorities, the Partnership agreed and embedded the strategic plan as a way of defining our areas for scrutiny and leadership. It also undertook a comprehensive training needs analysis taking a system wide approach to the multi-agency offer. The Partnership continued to drive its business via a system of subgroups and linked strategic groups and Boards.

Each priority had a set of outcome measures for the Partnership to be delivered over a three-year period (September 2023-2025). Work began towards the latter end of this reporting period to ensure here is a 'golden thread' between the work against priorities at the subgroup level into the Executive and other relevant strategic groups. Agencies who are members of the Partnership had previously also agreed to adopt the Local Authority Practice Priorities. This approach continued through the reporting period however, it was agreed that there should be renewed focus on the strategic priorities and the practice priorities would now be considered business as usual for 24-25.

5. Themes emanating from Reviews and Quality Assurance

Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Through the year the Wigan Safeguarding Children's Partnership carried out reviews of cases at different thresholds to consider the opportunity for partners to learn. The purpose of a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (as defined by Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023). "Is to explore how the system worked together to support and safeguarding a child so that professionals improve the way in which they work, both individually and collectively." In 2023 – 2024 WSCP did not participate in any National Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. However, there was one Local Child Safeguarding Review (LCSPR) in progress and one new local review recommended.

The table below outlines the progress of LCSPRs April 2023-March 2024.

LCSPR Progress	Count
LCSPR's started	1
LCSPR's Published	0
LCSPR's awaiting publication	2

Key Learning

There were several key learning themes identified through multiple review and audit processes these included:

Intrafamilial Sexual Abuse	The impact of past trauma and its affect upon parenting capacity	Professional curiosity and challenge with families
The voice of the child and understanding the lived experience of our more complex young people.	A gap in wrap around support for our more complex adolescence.	More intensive support for those acting as Special Guardians.
Cross boarder working within health and police.	Effective escalation in cases where there are professional differences.	Smooth transitions between Children's and Adults services for children who are looked after.

It is positive that the thematic areas identified align with the WSCP Practice Priorities that were in place for the majority of 2023/24 (Strategic Plan finalised in September 2023) and demonstrates that the partnership understands its systems and practice-based gaps. There are workstreams and work plans ongoing to address identified themes throughout the coming year. The Partnership understands that many of our learning themes are common nationally and we continue to make links to regional and national forums and research to strengthen our approaches to finding and embedding improvements.

What have we done to implement and embed learning?

In 2023- 2024 we continued to consider how to improve the case review process with a focus on the strengthening of single agency ability to identify learning at Rapid Review stage. We now also carry out Reflective Learning Reviews for cases that do not reach the statutory threshold but the partnership there is still learning.

Learning circles relating to 5 Reflective Learning Reviews and 5 Rapid Reviews took place during this period. This was in response to feedback from the partnership. The Learning and Improvement team have delivered face-to-face Learning Circle sessions to a multi-agency audience in this year, allowing all to access the learning in a way that is most appropriate for their needs. The Learning Circles products have also been circulated to partners, where they have been adapted to suit their single agency requirements.

WSCP have produced a summary of learning undertaken via review processes in 2023. We are continuing to understand the impact of single agency learning and distance travelled in relation to local and national learning/priorities better. There is evidence that single agencies are acknowledging and responding to local and national learning. We are developing stronger routes to identifying and disseminating learning at the earliest opportunity.

We are also developing an audit function to review key thematic areas of learning, 'one year on' to measure progress made in agencies because of those themes that have been identified through review.

What we need to do?

This year the Partnership has worked to develop a case review policy which is clear and effective in preventing delays in our review processes and we will continue to review this policy as we move forward. Partners will be provided with a range of opportunities to contribute to the developments and practice-based sessions build skills and confidence in the application of the refreshed process.

The Partnership continues to work on strengthening quality assurance and action tracking through workstreams. This will prevent duplication of work and any lag around our action plan completion rates.

What impact have LCSPRs had?

As noted nationally (Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, 2022*), the partnership had recognised that LCSPRs were not delivering significantly more impact when compared to what was already available through the Rapid Review Process. Our processes identify that learning from the Rapid Review had already been implemented prior to the LCSPR and we have seen a decrease in the number of LCSPRs undertaken.

Similarly, to other partnerships nationally, we have identified a need for greater clarification around when an LCSPR was required. Partners have highlighted a need for clearer guidance and consistency in its application. The independent Scrutineer undertook a workshop session during this period for the partnership on thresholds for Rapid Reviews and LCSPR in response to this need. Over the coming year, WSCP will consider the benefit of Thematic LCSPRs in offering additional value to Rapid Reviews. Whilst partners have a clear understanding of the learning from LCSPR's and are beginning to recognise how this learning generates outputs across the system. There remain challenges in developing measurable outcomes, but there is evidence of work towards this which will continue in the coming year.

The WSCP audit schedule has been directly developed by learning from reviews and we have seen a new approach to audit completion developed and rolled out. This has brought improved

engagement from partners with more ownership of contributions and improved responses to actions set.

Reference:

Jonathan Dickens, Julie Taylor, Laura Cook, Joanna Garstang, Nutmeg Hallett, Cynthia Okpokiri and Julia Rimmer (2022) Annual review of local child safeguarding practice reviews.

Multi Agency Audits

The multi-agency audits conducted during the reporting period aimed to assess the effectiveness of the partnership's services and identify areas for improvement. Here is an overview of the six key audit themes, their objectives, and the focus areas:

1. Step Up/Step Down

Objective: To evaluate how well single agency actions are viewed from a multi-agency perspective when service provision moves between thresholds (i.e., “step up” to more intensive services or “step down” to less intensive services).

Focus: Understanding how service transitions are handled across the partnership and ensuring that agencies work collaboratively during these critical shifts in service delivery.

Outcome: The audit highlights both positive practices and areas for improvement in the Step Up/Step Down process. While clear early help planning, the inclusion of the child’s voice, and collaborative professional relationships were strengths, there were gaps in communication between agencies, insufficient use of resolution policies, and inaccuracies in family records that needed addressing to improve the overall effectiveness of the system

2. Intrafamilial Sexual Abuse

Objective: To assess the broader impact of intrafamilial sexual abuse on the partnership, with a focus on how the system supports children, families, and the workforce in managing complex and sensitive cases.

Focus: Evaluating existing system and practice elements that help address the unique challenges presented by intrafamilial sexual abuse cases.

Outcome: The audit findings revealed significant challenges for professionals dealing with intrafamilial sexual abuse. Concerns included the complexity of categorising abuse and a lack of timely support and training for schools. However, strong practices were noted in joint planning, school involvement, and safeguarding actions, showing that when agencies collaborate effectively, positive outcomes for children and families can be achieved. The use of asset-based approaches and tools also supported better understanding and management of complex cases.

3. Police Powers of Protection – Part 1

Objective: To investigate the significant rise in the use of Police Powers of Protection (PPP), based on data collected by Children's Social Care (CSC), and examine the recording, data collection, and practice standards related to PPP usage.

Focus: Ensuring that PPP usage follows appropriate guidelines and assessing any gaps in data recording or operational practices.

Outcomes: These issues suggest the need for better data integration, consistent usage of codes, and improved communication between CSC and GMP to ensure that children under PPP are properly tracked and safeguarded.

4. Step Down (follow up)

Objective: To assess the effectiveness of step-down procedures, particularly the transitions from Child Protection Plan (CPP) to Child in Need (CiN) status, and from CiN to Early Help or Universal Services across the partnership.

Focus: Evaluating how well the system supports families and children as they move from more intensive to less intensive services and ensuring that necessary support is maintained throughout these transitions.

Outcomes: Whilst there are many strengths in the CPP to CiN step-down process and Core Group meetings, improvements were needed in supporting families during step-downs, ensuring children's views are acted upon, and preventing families from re-entering the system due to unmet needs.

5. Police Powers of Protection – Part 2

Objective: A focused follow-up audit building on the findings from the first Police Powers of Protection audit to further investigate specific concerns or patterns identified in the initial review.

Focus: Continuation of the audit to gather deeper insights into PPP usage and areas requiring immediate improvement.

Outcomes: The audit findings highlighted progress made since the initial audit but identified there were still areas for improvement in the use and management of Police Protection Powers (PPP) for safeguarding children.

6. Partner Early Helps

Objective: To assess the effectiveness of Partner-led Early Help interventions and how well they incorporate a multi-agency approach to planning and service delivery.

Focus: Identifying strengths and areas for improvement in Early Help provisions, with particular attention to multi-agency collaboration and the integration of services.

Outcomes: The audit showed that professionals supporting children and families are attempting to undertake holistic assessments and child and family centred plans. Whilst there was some good practice seen, this area of work requires further development to ensure that children and their families are supported at the earliest opportunity through a co-ordinated response. Key areas of development centre upon effective multi-agency working; collaborative working with families, ensuring a whole family approach; and improving the quality of assessments and SMART planning

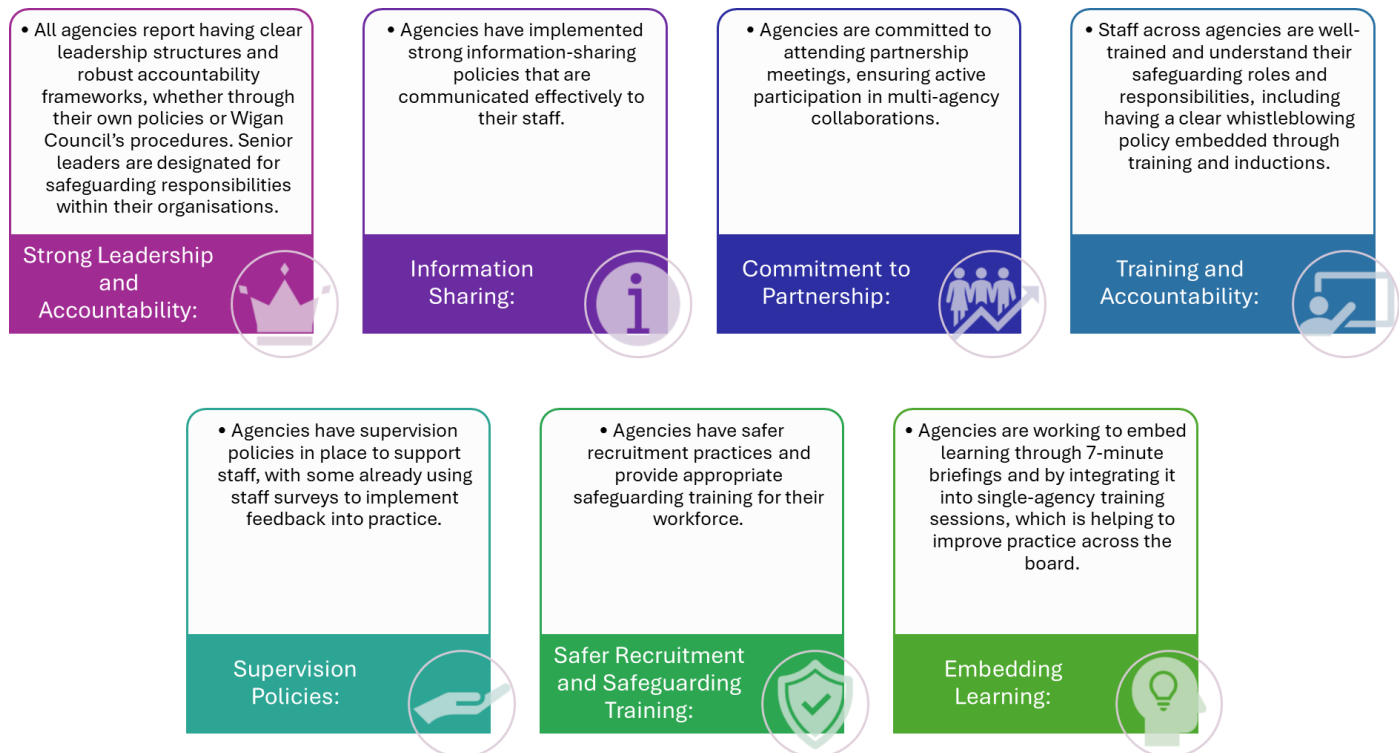
Conclusion:

These audits serve as critical tools for evaluating how well the partnership functions across different service areas, including transitions between service thresholds, handling complex cases like intrafamilial sexual abuse and ensuring proper use of protective powers. The findings from these audits are essential for driving system-wide improvements and enhancing collaboration between agencies to provide the best possible support to children and families and actions arising are undertaken and tracked through this group.

Section 11

Section 11 of the 2004 Children Act sets out the provision for Local Children Safeguarding Partnerships to undertake a self-assessment audit of how organisations and services are meeting standards to safeguard children and young people.

What Is Working Well:



Summary:

Over the last 12 months agencies have shown strength in leadership, accountability, and multi-agency collaboration and this is positive progress from the previous reporting period as the partnership has matured. There remain areas for continued development, and these include:

Areas of Focus 2024 – 2025

- Consistent Practice:** While improvements have been made, consistently good practice is not yet fully embedded across all agencies.
- Training Uptake:** Some agencies are struggling to meet their training targets, which could impact overall safeguarding effectiveness.
- Supervision Policy Impact:** Although the supervision policy is in place, it is not yet clear that it is having a significant impact on the outcomes for children. Some agencies need to further embed this policy.
- Voice of the Child:** The voice of the child and family is not always central in all the work undertaken by agencies, and some plans are missing children's views. This means their thoughts and feelings are not consistently being incorporated into actions and decisions.

5. **Evidencing Embedded Learning:** Some agencies find it difficult to provide clear evidence of when learning has been embedded at the frontline level, indicating gaps in assessing the impact of training and policies.
6. **Elective Home Education:** A growing number of children are now Electively Home Educated, which raises concerns about how agencies can ensure that these children are safeguarded effectively.

7. Wider Partner Engagement

The Wider Safeguarding Forum has provided valuable insights into various practice issues, driving improvement work across the partnership. Key actions and discussions include:

1. Feedback on Practice Improvements

Members of the forum play a critical role in assessing whether practice improvements are genuinely helping practitioners in their work with children and families. They also identify new areas where focus is required for further improvement.

2. Support for GMP's "Right Care Right Person"

Regular discussions have focused on supporting Greater Manchester Police (GMP) in implementing their "Right Care Right Person" initiative. Forum members have provided feedback on how this policy impacts their services and contributed to planning to ensure the safety of children and families.

3. GMP's Child-Centred Policing Plan

The forum welcomed the Child-Centred Policing Plan, developed by GMP and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). Partners were encouraged to shape the development of this ambitious plan, which aims to place children at the centre of policing work.

4. Wigan Adolescent Service and GM Adolescent Framework

A presentation on the Wigan Adolescent Service was shared with the forum, aligning with the Greater Manchester Adolescent Framework Principles, focusing on complex safeguarding and responses to adolescents at risk.

5. LADO Annual Report

In November 2023, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report was presented, giving the forum the chance to discuss how to address services with low referral rates. These discussions were informed by national cases of professional misconduct, emphasizing the need for robust LADO arrangements.

6. Changes in "Working Together to Safeguard Children"

In February 2024, the forum reviewed changes in the "Working Together to Safeguard Children" guidance. The group was invited to contribute feedback and suggestions on how to effectively implement these changes, shaping the partnership's future approach.

7. Independent Scrutiny of Child Protection Conferences

The Independent Scrutineer provided insights into child protection conference practices. While some good practices were identified, it was recommended that improvements be made, particularly in engaging parents more effectively to foster better collaboration during the process.

8. Work of the Executive

The Executive Group over the last 12 months worked in a context of shared challenges including staffing changes, retention and organisational pressures. One partner, Greater Manchester Mental Health, during this period was identified as an “area of concern” under NHSE assurance system (NHS Oversight Framework 22/23) in Tier 1 and the impact of this for Children in Wigan was considered and scrutinised. The Children’s Executive held oversight of the work of the subgroups, celebrating achievements and challenging when there were difficulties in the pace of progress. The Executive also directed the work of the Independent Scrutineer into areas where it was felt scrutiny would be helpful in further understanding the quality of work being delivered and its impact on children and families.

In May 2023 Children’s Social Care had a focused visit following their Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACs) Ofsted inspection in May 2022. In May 2022 Children’s services were graded Requires Improvement to be Good however the headline findings one year later stated that:

“Since the previous inspection, in May 2022, when the overall effectiveness of the service was judged to require improvement to be good, senior leaders have identified appropriate priority areas for improvement in children’s services. This has ensured that there is a more effective and coordinated multi-agency response at the front door than was previously the case. Systems and processes have been strengthened and risk of harm is recognised promptly, which ensures that the majority of children receive an appropriate level of support at the right time. There is continued strong corporate and political support for children’s services in Wigan, including substantial financial investment. This has enabled senior leaders to respond proactively and creatively to workforce challenges, such as increasing the number of managers and social workers at the front door, which is having a positive impact on practice. The introduction of a new early help development team means that children and families in Wigan are now receiving earlier help and support to meet a range of complex needs.”

Although the letter did not specifically reference the WSCP, it offered valuable assurance that the priorities were appropriate and provided guidance on areas where continued focus is needed. Positively the letter drew attention to “A review of management oversight and response to referrals at the front door was recently undertaken by the independent scrutineer of the local safeguarding partnership. A programme of regular thematic multi-agency audits further strengthens quality assurance activity across the partnership.”

Some partner agencies acknowledged significant demand and resourcing challenges at times during this reporting period including colleagues from the Probation Service and GMMH (as above). It is testament to the commitment to the work of the Local Safeguarding Partnership that meetings were regular and well attended, with attendees being of sufficient seniority to give permissions and instruction where needed. The Executive (Exec) meeting was chaired by the Associate Director for

Quality (Wigan GM). Towards the end of the reporting period this was taken up by the Director of Children's Services Wigan Council, and for some of the reporting period the Independent Scrutineer chaired the Performance subgroup, offering a level of objective reflection and challenge as well as expertise to improve their work. The group continued to scrutinise and drive forward system change throughout the year these included:

- High prevalence of domestic abuse in the region and concerns about the level of understanding in the system and the impact of it.
- Equity and sufficiency of funding coming into the Partnership.
- Access to, timeliness of data as well as the quality of the analysis.
- Child Protection processes
- The impact of changes to organisations and staffing as described above.
- The proposed introduction of 'Right Care Right Person' by GMP and the way the system needed to respond.
- The implementation of the requirements of local Early Help and Prevention strategies and the impact on the system.
- Consideration of the changes needed to the Partnership arising from Working Together 2023.

8. Wigan Safeguarding Children Partnership Financial Report 2023-2024

FINANCIAL REPORT - CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP		
EXPENDITURE	2023/24 - Actual	
Salaries and Expenses	£	250,912
Professional Fees	£	29,951
Miscellaneous Costs	£	2,676
Schools Training Software	£	15,093
Total Expenditure	£	298,632
CONTRIBUTIONS		
Wigan Council	£	84,155
Wigan Council - Supporting Families - funding to support post(s)	£	46,432
Schools	£	73,072
Police	£	14,400
Wigan Borough Clinical Commissioning Group /ICB	£	58,968
WWL NHS Foundation Trust	£	13,091
Greater Manchester Mental Health	£	6,546
National Probation Service	£	1,966
Total Income	£	298,630
Funding Shortfall	£	2

Conclusion

In conclusion, Wigan Safeguarding Children Partnership has sought continuous improvement of its own systems, structures and effectiveness in this reporting period and has undertaken a great deal of meaningful activity which has benefited the safeguarding workforce and ultimately children and families in Wigan. None of this would have been possible without the dedicated commitment and hard work from all of our Partner agencies to whom we want to say thank you.

For the coming year 24-25 the following priorities have been determined:



9. Independent Scrutineer Report



Independent Scrutineer Reflections

During the period covered by this yearly report, revised statutory guidance: 'Working Together 2023' was published in December 2023. That guidance details the requirements for the content of yearly reports and sets expectations about the future requirements of the leadership provided by statutory partners through local safeguarding partnership arrangements. On the basis that the revised guidance was introduced in December 2023, National Safeguarding Partner Facilitator advice is that it is recognised that the yearly report for 23-24 may need to be considered as an intermediary report in respect of meeting the requirements of revised statutory guidance. It is in this context that I provide my independent scrutineer reflections albeit despite the revision to statutory guidance, the core requirements of safeguarding partners yearly reports remain unchanged.

I was appointed to the role of Scrutineer in July 2022 and during the period covered by this report, I have attended Executive Group meetings, and I chaired the performance subgroup meeting held in May 2023; Children's Social Care assumed responsibility for chairing this subgroup from that point onwards. I also met regularly with the Director of Children's Services.

This report provides a raft of information about the activity that has been undertaken by agencies to keep children and young people safe in Wigan; the amount of work undertaken is commendable. There are some examples of impact provided particularly in respect of the impact of the partnership arrangements in the co-ordination and delivery of early help support to children and families; another example is the multi-agency placed based disruption to safeguard children from exploitation. The inclusion of performance data in future yearly reports will further aid the evidencing of the effectiveness and impact of the partnership arrangements.

As Independent Scrutineer, I am required to have oversight of the way in which statutory partners identify and learn from serious child safeguarding cases. I facilitated a workshop to afford statutory partners an opportunity to reflect on criteria and decision making in respect of serious child safeguarding cases. I also completed a review of decision making made by statutory partners in respect of a Rapid Review and concurred with the decision making and rationale for the decision reached. I have challenged partners regarding proposals to publish a summary report for a Child Safeguarding Practice Review. Two Rapid Reviews were completed during period covered by this report; I would invite statutory partners to consider:

- Their line of sight to the Rapid Review findings.
- Their oversight of the implementation of learning from both Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and its impact.
- The visibility of published reviews on WSCP website.

In addition to the above activity, I was commissioned to conduct a distinct piece of independent scrutiny activity by statutory partners during 2023-24 in respect of decision making and planning at Child Protection Conferences, plus a follow up piece of scrutiny activity in respect of repeat child protection plans. Findings from the first exercise were fed back to the Executive Group in May 2023 and two recommendations were made:

- Child Protection Conference multi agency forum to review:
 - Standards/guidance and practice in respect of submission and sharing of agency reports with professionals and parents/carers and invites to all health providers.

- The application of significant harm threshold in Initial Child Protection Conferences and Child Protection Plan “threshold” decision making.
- WSCP statutory safeguarding partner to commission/distribute guidance as to when Claire’s Law should be used and reinforce when information should be shared between professionals/with parents through safeguarding processes.

The follow up piece of scrutiny activity was conducted in two phases; the first of which reported to WSCP Executive in March 24. This exercise was carried out to identify and explore the factors impacting on multi- agency practice and decision making and resulting in children becoming subject of a second child protection plan. The exercise identified the following factors as impacting on the rate of repeat child protection plans:

- Application of statutory thresholds (s17 and s47) and use of concept of significant harm in decision making.
- Common understanding and application of mandates to share information to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Rigorous evaluation and analysis of available information to evaluate need and risk.
- Evaluating change and the sustainability of change, including use of measures of change.
- Oversight and challenge of partner attendance at all relevant multi agency planning forums.
- Relationship and strengths-based practice whereby parents are empowered and motivated to engage with services to make sustainable change.
- Coordinated step down from statutory intervention to Early Help level of need.

Both exercises found examples of good practice; phase two of the second exercise formally reported in May 2024 and that work included exploration of why issues identified in the initial scrutiny exercise completed in May 23 remained unresolved by March 2024.

In respect of implementing the requirements of revised statutory guidance, I have contributed to work at a regional level to develop arrangements for Lead Safeguarding Partners to come together to deliver their collective leadership arrangements. The early implementation of such arrangements is to be celebrated as is the desire to utilise existing Forums across the Combined Authority footprint to address matters that impact on safeguarding outcomes for children and young people. On a Wigan footprint, delegated safeguarding partners will need to refine their arrangements so they support them to deliver their responsibilities as set out in Working Together 2023 including the implementation of the children’s social care national framework.

Liz Murphy

WSCP Independent Scrutineer, September 2024