

Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

18 March 2026

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| Title | Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP) Annual Report FY 24/25 |
| Purpose of the report | To note the report for information |
| Report status | Public report |
| Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report | Lara Patel, Executive Director Children's Services |
| Report author | Alastair Harsant, Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnership |
| Lead Councillor | Cllr Wendy Griffith |
| Council priority | Safeguard & support the health & wellbeing of Reading's adults & children |
| Recommendations | 1. That committee note the report |

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 (WTSC23) provides the statutory guidance for all safeguarding children partnerships in England. From March 2019, the safeguarding partners across the west of Berkshire (Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham) joined to become the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP). BWSCP is the key statutory partnership whose role is to co-ordinate the partners safeguarding services; act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others; and implement local and national learning including from serious child safeguarding incidents.
- 1.2. This Annual Report, required by WTSC23, is being presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure members are informed about the work and achievements of the BWSCP for the 2024/2025 financial year.
- 1.3. Public Health Directors are not identified as either Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) or Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) as defined in WTSC23. Through financial year 2024/25, Public Health Directors across Berkshire West, including Reading's Public Health Director, became substantive members of the LSP meeting group.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. As required by WTSC23, the BWSCP is required to publish an annual report on the effectiveness of child safeguarding arrangements and promotion of the welfare of children in Berkshire West, detailing the work and progress undertaken within the year, giving an account of how it has discharged its duties against statutory guidance. This is a Berkshire West report, but information in relation to Reading is included within it.
- 2.2. For information on the published safeguarding arrangements and links to previous annual reports, follow this link:

<https://www.berkshirewestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/scp/the-partnership/draft-berkshire-west-safeguarding-children-partnership-assurance-documents>

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. The BWSCP entered 2024/25 with 5 main priority areas:
 - A) Creation of a Berkshire West Wide Neglect Strategy
 - B) Extra-familial Harm: Contextual Safeguarding, Exploitation and Serious Youth Violence
 - C) Establishing a Berkshire West wide Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) & Front Door Arrangements Leadership Group
 - D) Development of the Partnership Learning and Development Group Training offer
 - E) Continuing Development of the BWSCP Partnership

- 3.2. During March 2025, the BWSCP established 5 new priority areas for the period 2025 to 2028 that were officially launched in April 2025. They are:
 - **Priority 1: Lead Wokingham Borough Council** – Safeguarding & Support for Children and Young People from Intra Familial Harm
 - **Priority 2: Lead Thames Valley Police** - Safeguarding & Support for Children and Young People from Extra Familial Harm
 - **Priority 3: Lead Reading Borough Council** - Safeguarding & Support for Children and Young People from Domestic Abuse
 - **Priority 4: Lead West Berkshire Council** - Safeguarding & Support for Children Not in School
 - **Priority 5: Lead Integrated Care Board** - Safeguarding & Support for Pre-School Children, Reducing Neglect

- 3.3. A [Joint targeted area inspection of Reading](#) took place in Reading from February-March 2025. This was an inspection of the Partnership focussing on the multi-agency response to children aged 7 and under who are victims of domestic abuse. Inspectors' evaluation of strategic arrangements in Reading considered the multi-agency response to children of all ages. This inspection identified significant weaknesses in the multi-agency approach to prevention, help and support for children and their families who are victims of domestic abuse in Reading.

- 3.4. The Joint Targeted Area Inspection found *Shortfalls in the multi-agency strategic safeguarding partnership leading to systemic weaknesses in multi-agency safeguarding practice.*

- 3.5. The inspection also found that: *The safeguarding partnership priorities had not been sufficiently focused on outcomes for children.* This has been addressed by the development of the five new child focused priorities outlined above in item 3.2.

- 3.6. The Joint targeted area inspection of Reading also outlined the following area of improvement: *The effectiveness of strategic governance arrangements to ensure priorities are set and aligned with the other strategic partnerships, with a focus on those children subject to domestic abuse.*

- 3.7. The local Reading response to the findings of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection is being delivered through a Rapid Improvement Plan. A Partnership Action Plan was

submitted to Ofsted 13 August 2025. A Department for Education Improvement Advisor was appointed to support Reading Borough Council from 1 July 2025.

- 3.8. **Item 3.1 A) The Berkshire West Wide Neglect Strategy.** Strategy and tools were published December 2025 - [Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership - Neglect: Information and Guidance](#) . Current oversight of this strategy and activity sits with the **Priority 5** operational delivery group, Safeguarding & Support for Pre-School Children, Reducing Neglect, led by the Integrated Care Board.
- 3.9. **Item 3.1 B) Extra-familial Harm: Contextual Safeguarding, Exploitation and Serious Youth Violence.** This priority sits with Thames Valley Police as the lead for **Priority 2**, Safeguarding & Support for Children and Young People from Extra Familial Harm.
- 3.10. **Item 3.1 C) Establishing a Berkshire West wide Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) & Front Door Arrangements.** An oversight group exists and continues to meet quarterly in person. A data dashboard is in place and continues to be refined. The agencies involved in this group recognise the benefit of an ongoing dialogue to better understand how each local areas arrangements operate. Processes differ behind each 'front door', including language. The Partnership recognises that as children and families move between local areas, an understanding of local area process is advantageous, for example where a statutory 'threshold' is not met.
- 3.11. **Item 3.1 D) Development of the Partnership Learning and Development Group Training offer.** A learning improvement framework was established in 2024. Following a survey to members of the Partnership in November 2024, a key theme emerged - 'Professional Curiosity' training. In response, a multi-agency subgroup formed and devised a training module that was successfully delivered in June and November 2025 to members of the BWSCP and is scheduled to be delivered throughout 2026. Additionally, resource support from Wokingham Borough Council has been secured at the end of the FY24/25 to help establish a training needs framework in consideration of the **5 Priorities** listed in 3.2 above.
- 3.12. **Item 3.1 E) Continuing Development of the BWSCP Partnership.** Public Health colleagues have been engaged in the BWSCP across several subgroups including the DSP and LSP groups to help with the alignment of Priorities. Education representatives and local area Directors of Education have been more closely involved with the DSP through the reporting year 24/25, as is asked in WTSC23.
- 3.13. The BWSCP held its first in person conference since COVID, in October 2024. This event was the platform for a Berkshire West wide multi-agency discussion to help inform the future direction of the BWSCP and its priorities, as listed in item 3.2 above. A follow up BWSCP conference took place 20 January 2026.
- 3.14. A BWSCP options appraisal of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements is underway to be concluded by early 2026, following the outcome of the Reading Joint Targeted Area Inspection.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1. The work of the BWSCP aligns with the Reading Borough Council plan priority 2025/28 by contributing to the priority of 'Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children'.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. Not applicable.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. The Annual report has been written with contributions from all BWSCP partners and circulated to and agreed by the Statutory Safeguarding Partners. It was disseminated to all partners and published on the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership website in December 2025.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not applicable; however, equality and diversity continue to be a key theme for the safeguarding partnership arrangements.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. Not applicable.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 (WTSC23) provides the statutory framework for safeguarding children partnerships in England. BWSCP is the key statutory partnership whose role is to co-ordinate the partners safeguarding services; act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others; and implement local and national learning including from serious child safeguarding reviews.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. BWSCP is jointly funded by Reading Borough Council, Wokingham Borough Council, West Berkshire Council, Thames Valley Police and the ICB.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. Not applicable.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. There are none.

Appendices

1. BWSCP Annual Report 2024-25

[bwscp annual report 2024-2025 final.pdf](#)