# Merton Safeguarding Children Board

## Communications Strategy  Agreed January 2015 at MSCB Meeting

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<tr>
<th>PROJECT</th>
<th>Merton Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB)</th>
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| MSCB Communications Task & Finish Group | Lisa Deer (Policy Officer, Merton Council – Young Merton)  
Sheena Maclean (MSCB administrator)  
Melanie Monaghan (Merton Carers Support) – Melanie will lead this T&F Group in future  
Bronwen Pickering (Merton Council Communications)  
Carla Thomas (MSCB training officer)  
Malcolm Ward (interim manager of MSCB) |

| Spokesperson/s |  
Chairman of the Merton Safeguarding Children Board  
Director of Children, Schools and Families |

| Responsibilities | Communications Strategy and Plan  
The board is responsible for signing off the MSCB Communications Strategy and for agreeing the action plan for the next 18 months. |

| MSCB Annual Report and Child Death Review Panel Report – LSCBs are required to ‘publish’ these reports | When endorsed by the Board these reports will be uploaded to the MSCB website |

| Annual Business Plan | The Board will publish its agreed rolling Business Plan once per year when it has been revised and then in the Annual report will review progress of the Actions. |

| News releases and editorial | Drafted by the Board Manager of the MSCB (with advice from Merton Communications Officer as necessary) and signed off by the chairman of the board. |

| Website content and content maintenance | The Board Manager will be responsible for the content of the website with assistance from the MSCB Training Officer who will take the lead for the practice pages for Professionals; An MSCB administrator uploads the content. The content should be informative and kept up-to-date. Need to work on ease of access to the website and its familiarity to all local professionals. |

| Media relations | All communication with the media is agreed by the Board. Only the Chairman and the Director of Children, Schools and Families have the authority to speak to the media on behalf of the Merton Safeguarding Children Board. |

| Freedom of Information Requests | The Dept of Education has previously indicated that LSCBs are exempt in their own right from FOI requests. |

| Reactive Media Responses | For any critical incidents the MSCB will co-ordinate the planning of pro-active and re-active Media responses and will liaise with the Communications Sections of other Partner Agencies as required |

| Serious Case Reviews | The board is responsible for publishing serious case reviews and placing them on the website. |

| MSCB Branding | The aim should be to have a single and recognisable branding to market awareness of the Board and its activities  
The chairman of the board is responsible for the decision on whether or not the board should go ahead and refresh its branding. With any branding refresh, the communications representative on the board will work up branding for the chairman to sign off with the agreement of the rest of the board.  
Branding to cover MSCB logo, publications, letter heads, power points, email strap-lines, etc  
The MSCB logo should not be used by any Partner or other agency without explicit written approval of the MSCB |

| Audiences | MSCB Members and SubGroup Members  
The Strategy should enable effective and confidential communication to the MSCB members for the conduct of the Board’s business as set out by statute and guidance – this is currently hosted through the Merton Partnership website  
Multi-Agency Staff & Volunteers of local agencies working with children and their families, or adults who have contact with children, in Merton  
It is important to ensure effective communication by the MSCB to and from frontline staff and managers so that everyone is aware of:  
- agreed national and local safeguarding protocols & what their personal responsibilities for safeguarding children are;  
- the findings from local audits and national and local case reviews/research into the quality of multi-agency safeguarding work and its operation and what |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes, if any, are needed to ensure continuous improvement;</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>what multi-agency training is on offer; and</td>
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<tr>
<td>the role of the LSCB and the work it does and how practitioners may communicate with the Board and influence its work.</td>
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External

Communicating with the public is vital in the board’s work on promoting the responsibility the whole of society has towards ensuring children are safe and secure and informing people about what they can do if they have concerns about a child. The board’s work also contributes to building public confidence that the relevant agencies are looking out for children’s welfare.

- Young people
- Residents
- Faith and Community Groups

Background

Regulation 5 of the Local Safeguarding Children Boards’ Regulations 2006 sets out that one of the things that the LSCB does is:

*Communicating to persons and bodies in the area of the authority the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, raising their awareness of how this can best be done and encouraging them to do so...*

The LSCB is an independent board which includes all agencies involved in protecting the welfare of children and taking action when a child or young person is at risk of abuse or neglect. The purpose of the board is to bring together professionals from a range of specialisms and expertise to ensure that all agencies know each other’s actions and that there is a coordinated approach to securing the welfare of children in the borough. In addition, the board comes together to review processes and share best practice in its work to continually improve.

The LSCB also provides quality training to practitioners involved in safeguarding children who work in the organisations represented on the board. Some of the courses are very popular and there is no problem with getting people interested in them. Others are more difficult to fill but are nevertheless important for people working in safeguarding.

Strategy

Ensure co-ordinated and accurate communications with all relevant parties by:

- defining objectives
- using the most appropriate communications channels tailored to the different audiences
- identifying events where the board can be represented
- identifying partners’ publications which could be used to publicise the board’s work
- developing a resource of agreed key messages which can be included in MSCB initiatives and which can be available for Partner Agencies to use and promote
- developing a programme of work and implementation plan
- agreeing for each initiative adopted by the MSCB what the Communication issues are that will follow – adapt the Frontsheet for reports to the Board to address this

Timeline

January 2015 – March 2016

Branding

The MSCB will seek to make its branding better-known as a symbol of safeguarding children.

Communications channels

**Different Audiences will require different approaches - Messages should mirror the MSCB agreed priorities**

**Public**

- LSCB internet pages: these are currently hosted on the council’s website.
- My Merton – quarterly borough magazine which is distributed to every household in the borough (80,000 households) – aim at least once p year for MSCB item
- Exhibition space in council reception
- Local media
- Through Partner Agency initiatives where the MSCB may be promoted
### Communications

#### Aims
- To inform the public about what to do if they are concerned about the welfare of a child
- To inform young people about abuse and how they can seek help to prevent or stop it
- To raise awareness across the multi-agency workforce of what members of staff should do if they are concerned about the welfare of a child
- To raise awareness of the Merton Safeguarding Children Board among practitioners and their managers
- To promote learning and improvement, including through the quality training and briefings provided by the LSCB to practitioners

#### Key Messages

**Child-focused messages**
- Everyone has the responsibility to ensure children are kept safe and well
- Every child has a right to grow up in a safe and loving environment
- No child or young person should be neglected or abused – abuse can take several forms, including witnessing abuse and online abuse

**MSCB-focused messages**
- The safety of children is at the heart of the decisions and actions taken by the MSCP
- The MSCP will work to ensure that the voice of the child is included in its activities including making decisions
- The MSCP is committed to working with professionals in children’s welfare to promote the safety and wellbeing of young people in Merton
- The MSCP knows the value of the flow of accurate, timely and targeted communications in its work to provide young people at risk with a safe environment
- The MSCP invites constructive appraisal in its endeavour to continuously improve

#### Assessing effectiveness of communications
- Annual questionnaire to a sample of practitioners about how well informed they feel about the board’s activities (Survey Monkey?)
- Regular agenda item at the Board’s meetings on communications effectiveness and the action plan progress
- Merton Safeguarding Children’s Board to review communications strategy and action plan, as part of its annual rolling Business Plan review

#### Evaluation
- Balanced, factual press coverage
- Increased awareness of what the MSCP is and the work it does and recognition of the branding
Merton Safeguarding Children Board

- Fully informed staff on key local safeguarding issues and developments
- One safeguarding editorial piece in each issue of the borough magazine
- 2/3 proactive news stories per year on safeguarding issues

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<th>Timetable</th>
<th>2015 - 2016</th>
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<td></td>
<td>This is a working document and therefore includes meetings which could be necessary for the Board to be aware of throughout the year. Partner Agencies are asked to provide information on their. It is possible that in 2015 – 16 the MSCB will need to respond</td>
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**January 2015**

**February**

- 2 Feb: copy deadline for the spring issue of My Merton (comes out 19 March)
- 4 Feb: Council
- 5 Feb: Adoption UK conference 2015: theme this year us teenage mental health: [http://www.adoptionuk.org/teenmentalhealth](http://www.adoptionuk.org/teenmentalhealth)
- 6 Feb: press briefing
- 10 February: Safer Internet Day
- 16 Feb: cabinet
- 25 Feb: press briefing
- Develop questionnaire for practitioners to assess the level of understanding of the Board’s work and their view of how communications could be improved.

**March**

- Review and refresh LSCB website pages
- Review and refresh the Board’s promotional material
- 5 March: MSCB / CSF Annual Conference for Practitioners and Managers ‘Working the Frontline’ Improving communication with children and young people
- 11 March: copy deadline for Young Merton Together
- 19 March: Spring issue of My Merton comes out (copy deadline for this issue is 2 February)
- 23 March: Young Merton Together
- **26 March: pre election period – will impact on the type of messages which can be promoted in April**

**April**

- Review and refresh LSCB website pages
- Review and refresh the Board’s promotional material

**May**

- 3 May: copy deadline for My Merton
- 6 May: copy deadline for Young Merton Together
- **7 May: General election**
- w/c 18 May: Young Merton Together

**June**

- Consider promoting safeguarding messages in literature aimed at parents for children’s summer activities programmes
- 1-7 June: National Child Safety Week
- 8-14 June: Carers' Week
- June: Mitcham Carnival
- 27 June: Wimbledon Village Fair
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<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Events</th>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>29 June: Summer issue of My Merton comes out (copy deadline for this issue is 3 May)</td>
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<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>1 July: copy deadline for Young Merton Together</td>
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<td>w/c 13 July: Young Merton Together</td>
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<td>23 July: copy deadline for autumn issue of My Merton</td>
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<td>August</td>
<td>Holidays</td>
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<td>September</td>
<td>11 September: Autumn issue of My Merton comes out (copy deadline for this issue is 23 July)</td>
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<td>16 September: copy deadline for Young Merton Together</td>
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<td>28 September: Young Merton Together</td>
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<td>October</td>
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<td>November</td>
<td>16 Days against Domestic Violence – White Ribbon Day</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11 November: Copy deadline for Young Merton Together</td>
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<td></td>
<td>19 November: Winter issue of My Merton comes out (copy deadline for this issue is 1 October)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>w/c 23 November: Young Merton together</td>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Borough Christmas lights switch-on (stalls are available)</td>
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Jan 2015