

Children's MARS Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

2023/2024



North Lincolnshire

**CHILDREN'S
MULTI-AGENCY
RESILIENCE &
SAFEGUARDING
BOARD**

Helping Children,
Protecting Children



Introduction and context

The Children's Multi-Agency Resilience and Safeguarding (MARS) Local Arrangements are set within the context of the One Family Approach which aims to create an integrated offer for all children, young people and families where we work together to improve outcomes so that children can thrive in their families, achieve in their schools and flourish in their communities.

Helping and protecting children through a co-ordinated approach to safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility. Children, young people and families are at the centre of all we do and through collaborative working across agencies who work with children, young people and families, including those who work with parents/carers, the ambition of our Local Arrangements is that everyone is able to recognise, respond and fulfil their responsibilities to children, young people and families in order that we safeguard and promote their welfare.

The Local Arrangements identifies voice and engagement as a core function and the North Lincolnshire Children's MARS Board is committed to effective communication and stakeholder engagement with professionals from safeguarding partner organisations and relevant agencies working with children, young people and families, along with parents/carers, members of the public and communities.

As we take a One Family Approach across North Lincolnshire, we want children, young people and families to be able to build upon their strengths and their resilience to find or be enabled to find solutions when things are not going so well. They should be able to access available information, advice, guidance and be enabled to maximise their potential and enhance their life chances.

We want children, young people and families to be supported by a workforce that is resilient, confident, competent and with authorisation to do what they think is the right thing via the fewest best interventions to enable whole family turnaround.

When carried out effectively, communications and stakeholder engagement can have a significant impact on raising awareness, enabling self-responsibility and being resolution focussed, enhancing skills and knowledge, improving practice, driving partnership action and system change and supporting the work of the partnership. As such, it is integral in ensuring the effectiveness of safeguarding practice and in promoting the welfare of children and young people across North Lincolnshire.

Purpose and principles

This strategy sets out how the Children's MARS Local Arrangements will communicate and engage with stakeholders. It covers both reactive and proactive communications and clarifies the different mechanisms for communication and stakeholder engagement activity.

This strategy will outline how stakeholders will be engaged and involved in the Children's MARS Local Arrangements and how key information and messages will be communicated across the partnership.

Our stakeholder engagement principles are:

- to have positive meaningful relationships
- to be open, honest and transparent
- to challenge and support as required
- to provide feedback on outcomes of engagement
- to make best use of strengths and assets
- for all key stakeholders to have influence
- to work collaboratively and co-productively
- to listen, learn, review and adapt

This is underpinned and supported by communications that are:

- accessible and inclusive
- a two-way process
- timely, relevant and accurate
- compliant with UK GDPR and other statutory footings

Methods of communication and stakeholder engagement

This strategy is built upon the following methods of communication and stakeholder engagement:

Collaborate

Working together to develop an understanding of all issues and interests to work out alternatives and identify preferred solutions

Involve

Participatory processes designed to help identify issues and views to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered prior to decision making

Consult

Two way communication designed to obtain public feedback about ideas on rationale, alternatives and proposals to inform decision making

Inform

Communication and providing balanced and objective information to assist understanding about something that is going to happen or has happened



Internal Communication

Through the Children's MARS Local Arrangements partnership structure, there will be internal communications and opportunities for stakeholder engagement with Safeguarding Partners and relevant agencies through established partnership arrangements and communication pathways, regarding all aspects of the early help and safeguarding system as appropriate.

Safeguarding Partners

Safeguarding Partners will receive communications on activity across the early help and safeguarding system through the Children's MARS Board (on a quarterly basis) and through Children's MARS Board Development Sessions (as hoc as required). Safeguarding Partners will also receive general communications from the Children's MARS team, subject matter experts and Independent Scrutiny Officers where appropriate.

Through Safeguarding Partners (or their representatives) and/or the Children's MARS team and/or subject matter experts, there will be communications from and to other relevant boards, partnerships and democratic processes as required.

All partnership communications will be supported through the Children's MARS team and/or subject matter experts.

Relevant Agencies

Representatives from relevant agencies are engaged in and contribute to the Children's MARS Local Arrangements partnership structure and as such they communicate to or receive communications, regarding relevant aspects of the early help and safeguarding system.

The Children's MARS team will communicate with relevant agencies to engage in partnership meetings, scrutiny and assurance activity, education and learning events; disseminate key messages, learning and outcomes; and disseminate routine correspondence pertaining business associated with the early help and safeguarding system.

Relevant agencies will be expected to disseminate information they receive across their respective organisations and to take action where appropriate and communicate any safeguarding and/or practice issues and/or areas of good practice to the Children's MARS team and/or subject matter experts and/or Safeguarding Partners as appropriate.

A senior manager from any safeguarding partner organisation or relevant agency can submit a Notification of Serious Child Safeguarding Incident form to the Safeguarding Partners via the Children's MARS team following the guidance on the form. Likewise, a senior manager from any agency can request that the Safeguarding Partners consider undertaking a Child Safeguarding Practice Review if the criteria for a serious child safeguarding incident are not met, yet the case may raise issues of importance to the local area and there has been the identification of good practice, poor practice or 'near miss' events.

The [Children's MARS Policy and Procedure for Improving Child Protection and Safeguarding Practice](#) should be consulted prior to submission of these forms.

External Communication

The Children's MARS Board is committed to communication and engagement with children, young people and families along with parents/carers, members of the public and communities.

It is recognised that there is not one definition of community, there can be:

- **Communities of place** where the community is defined by its geographical area with physical boundaries such as a housing estate, neighbourhood, parish or village
- **Communities of interest** where there is an identification of common interest to the people within the community, other than where they live although it may refer to their background

Under the auspices of the Children's MARS Local Arrangements, communication and engagement with children, young people and families along with parents/carers, members of the public and communities will be co-ordinated through and/or with the knowledge of the Children's MARS team and/or subject matter experts.

There are a range of established partnerships, groups, networks and forums to engage with, for example, the North Lincolnshire Youth Council (NLYC), Children in Care Council (CICC), Cool Kidz Club, PIP Forum and SENDIASS. There are also opportunities to engage directly with children, young people and families who have experienced services.

It is also recognised that people often belong to more than one community. Examples of 'communities' who are engaged in the Children's MARS Local Arrangements are:

- Business leaders
- Children and young people, children and young people with disabilities, children and young people looked after
- Community groups
- Elected Members including Cabinet Member for Children and Families
- Faith groups
- Parents, carers and grandparents (including single parents, dads)
- People from black and ethnic minority (BAME) communities
- People who identify as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender (LGBT)
- People who use services designed to support them
- Schools and colleges
- Services and agencies who work with children and young people within the voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector
- Services that support children, young people and their families
- Services within the council
- Those that might, in the future, require services
- The media
- Vulnerable adults and older people

Mechanism of communication and stakeholder engagement

Various methods are used to deliver communication activities.

It is acknowledged that several mechanisms may need to be deployed in order for the messages to be successful.

Well timed communications are more impactful and they will be either:

Reactive – acting in response to a situation or incident rather than creating it. Examples include communications relating to serious child safeguarding incidents, other serious incidents and briefings stemming from practice learning and case specific line of sight events

Proactive – creating communications rather than responding to a situation or incident after it has happened such as a planned campaigns or routine messaging. Examples include specific campaigns associated with ‘shine a light’ and/or ‘line of sight’ areas of focus, the Children’s MARS News Updates and dissemination of education and training events

Face to Face

- There are significant opportunities for communication and stakeholder engagement through partnership meetings, development sessions, practice forums, community events and education and learning events. In this current context, face to face may be physically face to face or via an electronic medium i.e. Microsoft Teams

Electronic

- Speedy and targeted communications will be delivered to a varied audience via the Children's MARS email account - mars@northlincs.gov.uk. Communications and publications will also be made available on the Children’s MARS website - www.northlincsmars.co.uk

Print

- Leaflets, posters, newsletters and letters will be issued to deliver planned communications. Dissemination may be through electronic and/or media mechanisms, though information for children, young people and their families should be easily accessible and available in a physical format where required i.e. via community centres, schools, libraries, at receptions of the relevant partner agencies, health centres and must be in a format accessible for all (i.e. large print, translations, audio etc).

Media

- Where appropriate, approved press releases will be issued to the media to promote messages relating to the Children’s MARS Local Arrangements. Shared communication channels will be drawn from those already used by individual parties. These should include local papers, trade publications, national papers, local magazines (including parish publications), partnership publications (including websites, intranets, staff magazines, public magazines and social media channels) and local radio. Children's MARS social media channels are routed through Twitter and Facebook - @SafeNorthLincs

Branding, logo and style guidelines

The Children's MARS Local Arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in North Lincolnshire. Safeguarding partner organisations and relevant agencies are engaged in the arrangements, though as a collective, the Children's MARS brand has its own identity and can be easily identified and easily recognised to reflect the partnership as a whole.

The Children's MARS logo and/or brand including its colour palette should be used on all documents and communications, including those where the Children's MARS Board is the lead or contributing partnership.

Resources

The Children's MARS Local Arrangements clarifies that Safeguarding Partners will provide equitable and proportionate funding which will cover all elements of the arrangements and consists of actual funding and in-kind resources. As part of this, Safeguarding Partners will contribute to the development and delivery of communications, marketing and events.

Monitoring and evaluation

Through listening, learning, reviewing and adapting, we will continue to build upon the communication and stakeholder engagement arrangements we have in place. To this end, evaluation is essential for all communication and stakeholder engagement activity as it helps to assess the effectiveness of different types of activity and the mediums used.

Qualitative and quantitative research can be undertaken before and after a campaign or branding exercise to determine possible changes in people's perceptions over a longer period of time.

Hits to a website, engagement with social media, or increased calls to a dedicated phone number can also help to determine if a communications campaign has raised awareness.

Stakeholder engagement in relation to communications activity and the changes in the way in which the Children's MARS Board communicates across the partnership, may help to evaluate whether or not the changes have been positive.

This strategy will be used across the partnership as a working document to shape and orientate communication and stakeholder engagement activity and it will be reviewed and adapted in year as appropriate.

Quarterly performance information relating to communication and stakeholder engagement activity including social media activity and performance via Safe North Lincs is produced and presented to the Safeguarding Practice Learning and Improvement Group and the Children's MARS Board.

Areas for development 2023/24

- Develop bespoke communications to articulate the 2023/24 'shine a light' and 'line of sight' areas of focus and key priorities for action
- Continue to develop the Children's MARS Spotlight as a mechanism for co-ordinating communication messages, key tools and resources and upcoming training associated with the Children's MARS Shine a Light areas of focus
- To make use of communication and stakeholder engagement performance information to help target and orientate social media activity, extend reach and enhance engagement
- To use the Children's MARS Information Event 2023, Staying Safe Conference, DSL Conference and other stakeholder engagement and information events to engage with practitioners, managers and senior leaders across the partnership
- Further develop bespoke communications on the Children's MARS website for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector
- Led by VANL, contribute to the development of a VCSE conference and safeguarding information forum
- Continue to explore and implement further opportunities to communicate and engage with children, young people and families, along with parents/carers, members of the public and communities
- To further develop and utilise the Family Voice Representatives to shape and influence stakeholder engagement activity and outputs

Sign up for Children's MARS Communications

Many of our key communications are promoted via email. If you wish to subscribe for Children's MARS communications emails, please complete the [communications sign up form](#).

The Children's MARS Board regularly post updates via the partnership social media pages Safe North Lincs. Support and advice for children and families can be found on our Facebook and Twitter pages.

Follow us on Facebook [Safe North Lincs](#) or Twitter [@SafeNorthLincs](#)

A collection of previous newsletters, briefings and key communications are available to view on the communications page of the [Children's MARS website](#).



 [@safeNorthLincs](#)

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 www.northlincscmars.co.uk

