



Warwickshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (WSCP)

Independent Scrutiny

Date ratified by Delegated Statutory Partners:	February 2025
Date for Review:	March 2027

Introduction

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) requires that:

‘Safeguarding partners must ensure that there are arrangements for effective independent scrutiny in place for their local area.’ (para 89 p36).

Further, the Children and Social Work Act 2017 amended the Children Act 2004 to state that “Section 16G - (3) The arrangements must include arrangements for scrutiny by an independent person of the effectiveness of the arrangements.”

The decision on how best to implement a robust system of independent scrutiny is to be made locally, and Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) should be assured that the system in place leads to objective and rigorous analysis of local arrangements.

Independent Scrutiny contributes to the wider system of accountability which includes the independent inspectorates’ single agency inspections, including inspection of local authority children’s services (ILACS), and HMICFRS assessment of individual police force’s effectiveness, efficiency, and legitimacy (PEEL), CQC inspections of ICBs and health providers, as well as Joint Targeted Area Inspections, National Child Protection Inspections and annual reporting arrangements.

Independent scrutiny can be delivered through a range of methods and structures. Scrutiny and quality assurance can be undertaken through interviews, focus groups, data analysis, peer review, and observation/participation in sub-group activity. Scrutiny should take account of the voice and experience of children and their families, and the views of practitioners.

The functions of Independent Scrutiny are to:

- Provide safeguarding partners and relevant agencies with independent, rigorous, and effective support and challenge at both a strategic and operational level.
- Provide assurance to the whole system in judging the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements through a range of scrutiny methods.
- Ensure that statutory duties are being fulfilled, quality assurance mechanisms are in place, and that local child safeguarding practice reviews and national reviews are analysed, with key learning areas identified and effectively implemented across the safeguarding system.
- Ensure that the voice of children and families is considered as part of scrutiny and that this is at the heart of arrangements through direct feedback, informing policy and practice.
- Be regarded as a ‘critical friend’ and provide opportunities for two-way discussion and reflection between frontline practitioners and leaders. This will encourage and enable strong, clear, strategic leadership.

- Provide independent advice when there are disagreements between agencies and safeguarding partners and facilitate escalation procedures.
- Evaluate and contribute to multi-agency safeguarding published arrangements and the yearly report, alongside feeding into the wider accountability systems such as inspections.

Independent scrutiny should:

- Drive continuous improvement.
- Provide assurance that arrangements are working effectively for children, families and practitioners.
- Provide assurance that the LSPs and Designated Safeguarding Partners (DSP) are providing effective leadership.
- Consider learning from local child safeguarding practice reviews, national reviews and thematic reports.
- Add value to the work of the safeguarding partnership.
- Be evidence based.
- Make an impact.
- Based on sharing and analysis of local and national data, intelligence and information.

The Warwickshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership approach to Independent Scrutiny

Scrutiny arrangements for the WSCP will form part of robust performance and quality assurance arrangements for the partnership. This will include:

- The Assurance and Review subgroup focussed on quality assurance and performance monitoring, including a safeguarding performance data dashboard.
- Multi agency audits – frequency to be agreed.
- S11 and S175/157 annual audits.
- Independent scrutiny and accountability within single agency governance arrangements.
- Regulators reports and inspections.

WSCP have appointed an Independent Scrutineer who will agree an annual work programme (April to March) with the Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) and the Business Manager (see appendix 2).

The Scrutineer will:

- Provide partners with quarterly progress reports to the Executive and wider Partnership on their work programme.

- The Scrutineer will act as a critical friend and if required will offer an independent view of any issues that partners cannot resolve through local escalation processes.
- The Scrutineer will participate in regional and national networks to ensure their work is informed by best practice.
- The Scrutineer will engage with children, young people and families who are, or have received services to gain their direct feedback on how they have experienced the multiagency partnership working.
- The Scrutineer will provide an annual statement of assurance to the WSCP and present the Annual Report to HWB and Safeguarding Partner agencies as required.

Reporting

The Scrutineer will be performance managed by the WSCP Executive Group attended by the Delegated Safeguarding Partners on behalf of the Lead Safeguarding Partners.

The Scrutineer will work within the Independent Scrutiny Framework set out in appendix 1.

Appendix 1: INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY FRAMEWORK*

Ares of focus	How will we do this?
LEADERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The WSCP partner leads are clearly identified and accountable; • are developing, reviewing and ensuring funding for strategic WSCP activity; • and are identifying and publishing agreed outcomes for WSCP activity to safeguard children. • Delegated representatives of the three lead partners are strategically placed on relevant partnership meetings, subgroups and working groups to ensure oversight. • The three partner leads are working alongside other strategic boards including; the Health and Well-Being Board, Safe in Warwickshire Partnership Board, Violence Against Women and Girls Board, Warwickshire Safeguarding Adults Board to facilitate information sharing and identify areas of cross over or opportunities for joint working. • The LSPs via the DSPs are ensuring the necessary annual reporting is in place; with the WSCP yearly report appropriately scrutinised. • They are ensuring that a process is in place to review annual WSCP outcomes and for assessing forward planning procedures. • Assess how effectively EDI is embedded across the WSCP.
ENGAGEMENT OF RELEVANT AGENCIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wider safeguarding children partnership is informed and updated with findings from local and national reviews. They are informed of local and national guidelines regarding safeguarding children in and outside of the home environment
OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and Young People are consulted; and given opportunities to input into and influence the work of the WSCP. • A communication strategy is in place (engagement strategy) to ensure that those affected most by safeguarding concerns are aware of their right to be safeguarded and to play a part in developing initiatives to prevent, respond to, and report about safeguarding threats. • Young People play a role in assessing and representing desired outcomes during their transition to adult services.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND INFORMATION SHARING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanisms are in place for the three core partners to collect, analyse, and share relevant multi-agency data about the safeguarding of children. • Agencies from the wider partnership are undertaking and sharing their own single agency audits of data about safeguarding children. • Relevant data from the full WSCP is being used to review the impact of safeguarding initiatives on desired outcomes for children. • Relevant data shared across the partnership is used to inform an assessment of gaps in data needed to identify priorities; and future safeguarding plans.
LEARNING FROM LOCAL AND NATIONAL REVIEWS AND RESEARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All partners are aware of the criteria and process for referral of serious incidents. • Case reviews are adequately resourced to enhance learning, and to involve the necessary range of strategic and operational staff to extract and embed learning. • Learning from local and national reviews is cascaded and used to improve outcomes for children their families and communities. • Learning from case reviews is integrated into future WSCP training policy and practice.
MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a transparent and clearly understood process for identifying, providing, and evaluating WSCP training needs with all safeguarding partners including children and families. • The planning and delivery of multi-agency training is informed by the Business Plan and WSCP priorities; local data; local and national policy; legislation, and up to date research findings. • The take up and use of WSCP training is monitored. • The WSCP assesses the impact of safeguarding children training on practice and using this to inform future training needs.

*** Derived from The Association of Safeguarding Partners / University of Bedford Checklist for independent scrutiny**

Appendix 2. Independent Scrutiny Programme 2024/25.

Activity	How will we do this?
<p>Observe /attend meetings as follows:</p> <p><u>WSCP Meetings</u> WSCP – Accountability Group WSCP – Lead Safeguarding Partners Executive Meeting WSCP- Delegated Safeguarding Partners Group Meeting WSCP Partnership meeting</p> <p><u>WSCP Subgroups</u> Safeguarding Review Group Rapid Reviews Assurance and Review Group</p>	<p>Reading of papers and attendance at key meetings.</p>
Annual Statement writing and quarterly reporting	<p>To produce an evidence based annual statement</p> <p>To produce quarterly progress reports</p>
Visits as agreed to such as the Family Connect (Front Door).	To engage with staff, attend strategy discussions, ICPC etc.
Meetings with children, families and other stakeholders including schools	Hold meetings as agreed with DSPs/Business Manager
Thematic deep dive/bespoke scrutiny as required	Agree deep dive with DSPs/Business Manager
Involvement in S11 and S175/157 challenge process	Role within this process to be agreed with WSCP
General administration	<p>Including quarterly meetings with WSCP Chief Executive</p> <p>Attendance at regional MASA network meetings</p>

Information requirements

- All papers from WSCP highlighted above and sub-groups, as required
- Single and multi-agency performance data.
- Access on an agreed basis to IT systems (to be negotiated on case-by-case basis).
- All learning reviews.
- Notification of all escalations and outcomes.
- Analysis from agencies of complaints/ compliments received.