

Brief for independent scrutiny – Bexley

1. Purpose

The purpose of this brief is to outline the requirements of the independent scrutiny function as set out in statutory guidance (Working Together 2018), which will provide the critical challenge and appraisal of Bexley's multi-agency safeguarding partnership arrangements in relation to children and young people.

2. Background

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 replaces Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) with a new statutory framework requiring health (Clinical Commissioning Groups), police and local authorities to determine local arrangements for the protection and safeguarding of children in their area. Included in statutory guidance is the provision of independent scrutiny – this is described in **Appendix 1**.

The 3 safeguarding partners named above are responsible for determining local arrangements including involving other relevant agencies. The role of independent scrutiny will form part of these arrangements and do the following:

- Provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of services to protect children
- Assist when there is disagreement between the leaders responsible for protecting children in the agencies involved in multi-agency arrangements
- Support a culture and environment conducive to robust scrutiny and constructive challenge.

3. The role of independent scrutiny

As noted above, the 3 safeguarding partners must ensure there is independent scrutiny of the effectiveness of the arrangements. It will be a local decision how best to implement a robust system of independent scrutiny. Safeguarding partners should involve a person(s) who are independent. The person(s) who will provide independent scrutiny will be appointed by the 3 safeguarding partners – the police, CCG and local authority – and will work independently of the 3 safeguarding partners.

3.1 Key questions in terms of the scrutiny function

- How effective are the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in getting a clear line of sight on single agency and multi-agency practice?
- Do the arrangements enable space for reflection and learning from practice?
- Do the partnership arrangements have a positive impact on multi-agency working and/or front-line practice?
- How and why were the partnership priorities selected? Were these the right priorities?
- What has gone well and what's the evidence to support this?
- What has potential but it is too early to assess impact?
- Any worries or issues which need addressing?
- What arrangements are there for learning with families and practitioners and is there a focus on healing and kindness in basic practice?
- How does relationship based practice thrive and is the overall vision for families to stay together where it is in the children's best interests consistently led and implemented across the partnership?

3.2 Summary of Key Responsibilities

The role of independent scrutiny is to:

- Assess how well organisations come together to cooperate with one another to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to hold each other to account for effective safeguarding.
- Contribute to the content of the partnership's annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, their performance and the effectiveness of local services.
- Assess the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families including early help.
- Assess whether the 3 safeguarding partners are fulfilling their statutory obligations.

- Scrutinise any quality assurance activity (including multi-agency case file auditing and processes for identifying lessons to be learned).
- Scrutinise the effectiveness of training, including multi-agency training, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Provide the 3 safeguarding partners with the necessary assurances regarding the robustness and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements for the borough.
- Work with the safeguarding partnership operational team to plan their programme of activity.
- Provide a rigorous and transparent assessment of the extent to which appropriate and effective systems and processes are in place in all partner agencies so as to fulfil their statutory duties and ensure that children are protected and that appropriate safeguarding strategies are developed and embedded.
- Evaluate arrangements for the operation of the safeguarding partnership, including the purpose and functions of board meetings, and recommend and implement appropriate changes.
- Support the implementation of the findings and outcomes of any safeguarding reviews, providing professional input to the development of any changes to existing models of delivery.
- Confirm, or not, that effective performance management, audit and quality assurance mechanisms are in place within partner organisations which will support the 3 safeguarding partners to fulfil their statutory objectives, and which will enable the partnership to identify and measure its success and impact.
- Ensure that the 3 safeguarding partners provide independent, robust and effective challenge to partners.
- Ensure that the voices of children, young people and their families are appropriately represented and heard in the work of the partnership.
- Through personal example, open commitment and clear action, ensure diversity is positively valued, resulting in equal access and treatment in employment, service delivery and communications.
- Support the development of innovation in the system in respect of relationship based practice.

4. Qualifications and experience

The following qualifications and experience would be required of the person(s) providing independent scrutiny:

- Requirement for the person(s) to be 'suitably qualified' (which could be broadly interpreted, but should include ensuring that the person will have the skills and experience to be able to hold senior managers and elected members to account)
- Not be related to an elected member (or equivalent of any of the partners), nor to an officer who is employed by a partner agency in a role that is relevant to its safeguarding functions

5. Timetable for 2018-19 work

Activity	Date
Partnership Board	29 Oct 2018
Launch activity, Priority 1	30 Oct 2018
Learning Hub 1, Priority 1	30 Oct 2018
Learning Hub 4, Priority 1	28 Jan 2019
Partnership Board	28 Jan 2019
Launch activity, Priority 2	29 Jan 2019
Learning Hub 1, Priority 2	29 Jan 2019
Learning Hub 4, Priority 2	22 April 2019
Partnership Board	22 April 2019
Launch activity, Priority 3	23 April 2019
Learning Hub 1, Priority 3	23 April 2019
Learning Hub 4, Priority 3	15 Jul 2019
Partnership Board	15 Jul 2019

6. Number of days, cost

Number of days anticipated	Up to 15 days per year
Cost	Up to £800 per day plus travel, accommodation and subsistence

7. Timeline for procurement

June 2018	Agree role outline for partners to circulate to their respective networks
August 2018	Closing date for expressions of interest to brief Shortlisting 'applications'
	Conversations with shortlisted applicants Appointment confirmed
September 2018	Induction activity confirmed IT system access etc arranged by operational team
October 2018	Scrutiny function operational

Appendix 1 - section on independent scrutiny function from Working Together 2018 (DfE):

31. The role of 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. This independent scrutiny will be part of a wider system which includes the independent inspectorates' single assessment of the individual safeguarding partners and the Joint Targeted Area Inspections.

32. Whilst the decision on how best to implement a robust system of independent scrutiny is to be made locally, safeguarding partners should ensure that the scrutiny is objective, acts as a constructive critical friend and promotes reflection to drive continuous improvement.

33. The independent scrutineer should consider how effectively the arrangements are working for children and families as well as for practitioners, and how well the safeguarding partners are providing strong leadership and agree with the safeguarding partners how this will be reported.

34. The published arrangements should set out the plans for independent scrutiny; how the arrangements will be reviewed; and how any recommendations will be taken forward. This might include, for example, the process and timescales for ongoing review of the arrangements.

35. Safeguarding partners should also agree arrangements for independent scrutiny of the report they must publish at least once a year (see 'Reporting', below).

(Draft Working Together 2018, pp 78-79)