

Brief for Independent Scrutiny – Greenwich Safeguarding Children Partnership (GSCP)

Purpose

The purpose of this brief is to outline the requirements of the independent scrutiny function for the Greenwich Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Background

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 replaced Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) with a new statutory framework requiring clinical commissioning groups, police and local authorities to determine local arrangements for the protection and safeguarding of children in their area.

The legislation stipulates that arrangements must include scrutiny of effectiveness.

The role of independent scrutiny

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) gives further guidance and states that scrutiny should be:

- Objective
- Act as a constructive critical friend
- Promote reflection to drive continuous improvement

In Greenwich, the role is designed to provide critical challenge to:

- Provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of services to protect children
- Assist where there is a disagreement between agencies
- Support the Greenwich Safeguarding Children Partnership to be a learning organisation

Independent scrutiny will be provided by a single individual (or designated substitutes) with a view to generating learning for system improvements.

The independent scrutineer will be required to provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children Greenwich, including arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases.

S/he should consider how effectively the arrangements are working for children and families as well as practitioners and how well the safeguarding partners are providing strong leadership.

In order to make these judgements, the scrutineer will be invited to attend all Executive Partnership and Development, Monitoring and Challenge Partnership meetings.

In addition, the scrutineer will determine which activities s/he thinks are appropriate or necessary to attend in order assure him/herself of the quality of the arrangements and will therefore have the option to attend any subgroup meeting, task finish group meeting, audit activity, quality assurance or learning and development activity organised by the GSCP. S/he will have access to any papers from those meetings or activities.

The scrutineer will ensure that hearing and learning from the voice of the child and service users is at the heart of GSCP activities and s/he can speak with and receive direct feedback from children, young people and families to test the interconnectedness between performance, practice and the voice of the child, young person and family.

The scrutineer will work with the Executive and the Development, Monitoring and Challenge Partnership as they:

- Develop the use of evidence, performance information and evaluation to ensure we have an integrated data set across all partners that will support a unified approach across the complex landscape of safeguarding.
- Develop a schedule of multiagency audits, including s11 and deep dives, focussed on learning from case reviews and priority areas identified by the partnership including evidence on what works well.

- Involve staff at all levels in practice and improvement as practitioners in all agencies have an in-depth knowledge and understanding about how our systems work in practice.
- Include an awareness of the lived experience of children, young people and families. The scrutineer will work closely with existing forums but also seek opportunities through audits and deep dives to hear the voice of the child and family.

The scrutineer will have regular meetings with the Leader of the Council, the Lead Member, the Chief Executive of the Council, the managing Director of NHS Greenwich CCG and the Borough Commander for the Police South-eastern Basic Command Unit.

This should give the scrutineer the opportunity 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 and to allow the scrutineer sufficient evidence to judge:

- Are appropriate and effective systems and processes in place in all partner agencies to fulfil their statutory duties and ensure that children are protected and that appropriate safeguarding strategies are developed and embedded?
- How effective are the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in getting a clear line of sight on single agency and multi-agency practice?
- Are the structures for the operation of the safeguarding partnership purposeful, efficient and effective?
- Are evidence, performance information and evaluation used to develop an integrated data set that supports a unified approach across the complex landscape of safeguarding?
- Do the arrangements enable space for reflection and learning from practice?
- Is the partnership able to evidence that they are having a positive impact on multi-agency working and/or front-line practice?

- What has gone well and what is the evidence to support this?
- What has potential but it is too early to assess impact?
- Are there concerns or issues that need addressing?

The scrutineer will present his/her assessment as part of the Annual Report.

Time commitment:

It is estimated that the role will require up to 30 days per year.

Qualifications and experience

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

- Requirement for the person (or any appointed substitute) to be suitably qualified and experienced. This can be broadly interpreted but will generally include knowledge of safeguarding practice and legislation and previous work in front line services safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- The person will have the skills and experience to be able to hold senior managers 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.