

Brief for Independent Scrutiny London Borough of Lewisham Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP)

Purpose

The purpose of this brief is to outline the requirements of the independent scrutiny function for the Lewisham 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 Lewisham, 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 Lewisham Safeguarding Children Partnership to be a learning system

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 in Lewisham, including arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases.

They 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 and Partnership meetings. In addition, the scrutineer will determine which

activities they think are appropriate or necessary to attend in order assure themselves 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 LSCP. They 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 LSCP activities and they 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.

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 develop an annual work plan in partnership with the Executive and meet with them regularly. The scrutineer will also connect to the governance arrangements for the local authority CCG and police and have regular meetings with elected officials and senior officers of the three safeguarding partners.

The scrutineer will present their independent assessment as part of the Annual Report.

Time commitment:

It is estimated that the role will require up to 24 days per year.

Qualifications and experience

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

- The scrutineer (or any appointed substitute) must be suitably qualified and experienced. This can be broadly interpreted but will generally include intensive knowledge of safeguarding practice and legislation and previous work at strategic level in front line services that safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- The scrutineer must have the ability to use data and other evidence to formulate hypotheses and questions, weigh up complex and sometimes conflicting evidence, reach robust conclusions and convey these both verbally and in writing
- The scrutineer must be authoritative and influential with the skills and experience to be able to hold senior managers across all agencies to account, act as a constructive critical friend and be a key driver in promoting reflection for continuous improvement
- The scrutineer must 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