

Independent Scrutiny and Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements

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(2022)¹

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Dedication

“This project is dedicated to the memory of Dr Helen Rawden of the VKPP and Link to Change who was an exemplary doctorate student at the University of Bedfordshire. Helen was completely devoted to protecting the dignity of children and supporting them to build confidence into adulthood.”

Citation

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Statement of purpose

This report provides a descriptive account of the Independent Scrutiny arrangements within Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships (LSCPs) across England. It provides examples of who is scrutinising LSCP activity, giving some descriptions of what is being scrutinised and how.

Foreword

“It’s a privilege to have sponsored a project so generously supported by partners across England. I welcome the publication of this report considering the part Independent Scrutiny plays in achieving effective local coordination of services for children and the spotlight it places on influential leadership. Instigated with a modest investment, it has been undertaken in a truly collaborative way at a local and national level.

Working in a permissive legislative framework brings opportunities and challenges. During consultation with local areas, the project team identified a strong desire from local partners to have a means of sharing practice and experiences systematically over a wide geographical footprint. This is not to promote one way of doing things but to provide an opportunity to reflect on the examples of others tackling similar problems, creating an environment where leaders and operational staff can expand their thinking, explore ideas, and reflect on progress to help them develop local approaches to best meet the needs of children in their communities.

Professionals from different agencies meet children and young people in quite distinct circumstances. Combining these insights with what young people tell us about their daily lives has the potential to improve the organisation of local arrangements and service delivery. The project reveals some emerging examples of engaging with young people to provide Independent Scrutiny. Local collaboration on Independent Scrutiny presents a vital opportunity to make the experiences of children and young people count and form the bedrock of future planning.

Leaders are charged with improving the effectiveness of local arrangements. Sir Alan Wood’s 2016 consultation emphasised the importance of independence as a factor that assures objectivity and credibility for multi-agency arrangements. Considering the publication from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel regarding the circumstances leading up to the deaths of Star Hobson and Arthur Labinjo-Hughes, the need for good Independent Scrutiny has never been greater.

It is hoped that the skills and experiences explored in this report can be used and expanded upon as we face the challenges ahead together. This report and the impact of scrutiny itself supports our collective efforts and aspirations to prevent harm and abuse of children. Building trust and confidence between agencies enables professionals to identify how to respond when abuse, neglect and risk of harm is uncovered. Creating an environment where children, families and communities feel they can come forward when abuse has occurred or is threatened so that they can be made safe and that offenders of these appalling crimes can be brought to justice must be at the heart of our work.”

DCC Ian Critchley QPM - NPCC Portfolio Lead Child Protection and Abuse Investigations

“I welcome the opportunity to have been a part of, and to learn from, this project. So many partnerships have shared how they have developed and delivered Independent Scrutiny in their areas. This level of participation and investment by partners should be taken as evidence of how important this topic is to them. I believe this research provides significant learning and reflects the innovation and focus partners have committed to delivering Independent Scrutiny and creating different ways of undertaking this responsibility, including using peer review.

The report raises some important questions about how involved Scrutineers can be in ongoing partnership activity. It is clear from the work that some partnerships benefit from having an Independent Chair providing significant support overseeing coordination of partnership activity. If this is coupled with Scrutineer tasks, it raises a number of important questions about how to both support and scrutinise leadership of LSCP activity.

I am pleased to read about young people taking an active role in scrutiny arrangements. There is a lot to learn from partners who have reached out beyond traditional boundaries for external challenge to, and reflection about, their plans. A wide variety of models of how to undertake scrutiny have developed, with considerable strengths and differences. This piece of research is invaluable in bringing those creative ideas together, offering further opportunity for us to learn from each other about how this important role and function can be achieved.”

Nicky Pace - Independent Scrutineer (Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and Greenwich Safeguarding Children Partnership)

Acknowledgements

We extend thanks to all of those who completed the survey on behalf of their LSCP. We fully appreciate the extent of the high workload faced by members of the LSCP and are very grateful to those who took time to share the details of their work. This energy and enthusiasm for sharing practice is the heart of this report.

Thanks are also extended to Nicky Pace and DCC Ian Critchley for authoring the foreword to this report. Their detailed and embedded knowledge of LSCP activity is extensive and their comments are very welcomed to set the scene for the work.

Thanks to the project steering group who have supported the work from the outset:

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1

**INTRODUCTION &
BACKGROUND**

Introduction

Who we are

1. We are a small team of staff from the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP), The Safer Young Lives Research Centre (SYLRC) at the University of Bedfordshire (www.beds.ac.uk/sylrc) and The Association of Safeguarding Partners (TASP). We are supported by a project group which included Independent Scrutineers and Local Safeguarding Children Partnership business/ programme managers.

What we have done

2. In October 2021 we started a short six-month project to explore what Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships (LSCPs)² in England had scrutinised and how. We drew on the use of the 'Six Steps to Independent Scrutiny' (now called Checklist for Independent Scrutiny) to create questions for a survey to LSCPs.
3. We asked participating LSCPs in England to explain, in a short survey, what they scrutinise and how they undertake scrutiny. We asked for examples that could then be shared across the sector. Ethical approval was given by the Institute of Applied Social Research, University of Bedfordshire and all participating LSCPs have been anonymised through a number coding system.
4. This work follows the introduction of Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018); findings from related reviews of Working Together (2018) (see paragraphs 11 and 13 below) and the publication of a discussion report about Independent Scrutiny 2021³.

Aims, research questions and outputs

5. Our central aim was to begin to share knowledge of Independent Scrutiny of LSCPs: who scrutinises, how and what. The three core research questions were 'who is scrutinising LSCP activity', 'how are LSCP activities being scrutinised?' and 'what is being scrutinised? Our intended audience is those working in and with LSCPs, including Independent Scrutineers and Chairs, and lead safeguarding partners.

² Partnerships have, in the main, adopted the title Local Safeguarding Children Partnership. Others have adopted different titles, including Local Safeguarding Children Boards. **In this report we refer to the term LSCP.** In addition, some LSCPs have also created a Local Safeguarding Children Board within the partnership, where meetings take place between the partnership executive and relevant agencies.

³ Pearce, J., Thorpe, A., with Bather, S. (2021) Independent Scrutiny of Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) Arrangements: Discussion Report. The Association of Safeguarding Partners. www.theasp.org.uk

6. We planned five outputs which can be found [here](#):
 - a. This, the full report summarising findings from the work
 - b. A summary report
 - c. A 7-minute briefing
 - d. The Checklist for Independent Scrutiny
 - e. Case studies to be made available to local partnerships in a range of ways including through TASP and VKPP websites (www.theasp.org.uk; www.vkpp.org.uk) from winter 2022

7. Following the publication of this and the summary report, we will be approaching LSCPs for their collaboration in creating scrutiny case studies for sharing on the VKPP and TASP website (output (d) above). The LSCP would be named so that further information or advice can be sought from them if others wanted to replicate the example in their area. We are hoping that this will build over time so that an Independent Scrutiny Resource is developed on the TASP website.

Background context

8. The brief for this work did not include a literature or policy review of other work on Independent Scrutiny. However, we were aware of key documents that have informed the LSCP sector on Independent Scrutiny. Working Together (2018) requires LSCPs to choose how scrutiny is undertaken, providing five paragraphs to explain the function of scrutiny:

“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.”

While this permissive approach allows LSCPs to choose how to undertake scrutiny, there is an assumption in paragraph 33 of Working Together (2018) that an Independent Scrutineer is appointed. This survey shows how LSCPs have embraced the permissive approach, engaging a variety of ways to undertake scrutiny in line with Working Together (2018) guidance.

9. Our survey was completed through the period September 2021 to March 2022. The findings are limited to responses covering this period only. The aim of the work was to share examples. It was not to pass judgement or to undergo a critical analysis categorising ‘good’ from ‘bad’. The wealth of examples given is an indication of the sector’s eagerness to share and learn together. It is hoped that the findings will be used to support and enhance this approach.
10. Briggs and Harris’s review of LSCP annual reports 2019 to 2020 noted that whilst partnerships recognise Independent Scrutiny as a key feature of arrangements, further assessment of the effectiveness of the methods used is needed. Our work, like that of Briggs and Harris, notes an appetite for further sharing of scrutiny ideas and practices. They identify the importance of partnerships learning from their experiences of scrutiny, as well as focusing on evaluating the overall impact of scrutiny methods. Whilst they note that annual reports described accounts of how Independent Scrutiny functions, it remained unclear to them whether annual reports were scrutinised.
11. Our work sheds some light on this as we received 66 responses to the question ‘Does the Independent Scrutineer (s) scrutinise the annual report?’. Ninety per cent (n= 60) said yes.
12. The Wood Review of New Safeguarding Children Arrangements (2021) noted good examples of scrutiny of performance and arrangements of LSCP activity (Wood, 2021). Wood noted a lack of consistency across all LSCPs, identifying concerns about confusion and conflict due to a lack of guidance. Further factors identified by Wood 2021 were the lack of utilisation of Independent

Scrutineers/Chairs in bringing the three safeguarding partners together to resolve conflicts.

13. There was strong support from across the LSCP sector to explore the nature and function of Independent Scrutiny, with a very high return of 74% of all LSCPs responding to the survey. These returns showed variations in enthusiasm to embrace the changes to scrutiny introduced in Working Together (2018). Some LSCPs have embraced the changes, employing a range of different ways to undertake Independent Scrutiny. Others have described for the benefits of retaining an Independent Chair for the LSCP and have incorporated scrutiny activity within the Chair role (see paragraphs 21 to 24).

What we did and how we have organised our findings

14. LSCPs were asked to answer each question in the survey as it applied to them. This means that data below is noted against the response rate for each separate question.
15. The survey was sent to all 137 LSCPs in England in March 2021. We received replies from 74% of partnerships, with 103 surveys returned representing 105 partnerships⁴.
16. We provide an overview of quantitative and qualitative data about:
 - **who** is undertaking scrutiny, including an overview of the transition from independent LSCB chairing arrangements pre 2018 to the current LSCP Independent Scrutiny arrangements as per Working Together (2018)
 - **how** scrutiny is being undertaken
 - **what** is being scrutinised.

Finally, we suggest some ‘Opportunities for further reflection’.

⁴ Two of the 105 partnerships completed the survey together, accounting for 103 surveys returned. Three of the 105 partnerships were from LSCPs outside the jurisdiction: Islands Safeguarding Partnership, Jersey and Ministry of Defence.

2

**WHO IS
UNDERTAKING
INDEPENDENT
SCRUTINY?**

Who is undertaking Independent Scrutiny?

The Independent Chair of the previous LSCB continuing with a scrutiny role

17. Several LSCPs noted that they are still learning and developing their approach to scrutiny from their own and others' experiences. LSCP 14 and 87 explain that they (at the time of responding) are in the process of deciding how the LSCP should be scrutinised:

“Our Independent Chair has been involved in some Independent Scrutiny particularly through leading case reviews. However, he is not appointed as an Independent Scrutineer. Currently our Independent Scrutiny work is in development and we are writing an Independent Scrutiny programme at the moment” (LSCP 14).

And

“an Independent Scrutineer was commissioned to support the LSCB to move to a SCP and to ensure that governance arrangements were robust. Independence was provided by three professional scrutiny officers, from the CCG, police and children services. This model is currently being reviewed and Independent Scrutiny is being considered and how best to do this” (LSCP 87).

18. Others have held onto their previous Independent Chair of the LSCB to provide continuity and oversight. For example, LSCP 35 noted that they retained their current Chair to oversee the changes but that now they are established, they are looking at how to maintain scrutiny for the longer term:

“for the first two years of the partnership being live we retained our Independent Chair. The Independent Chair undertook a 6 month and a yearly review of the effectiveness of the new arrangements. The Independent Chair left us 5 months ago and, rather than appoint a new chair to role immediately, the partnership is undertaking a governance review. One of the work streams as part of this is what we want our scrutiny arrangements to look like moving

forwards and what we want the role of a Chair or Scrutineer to look like” (LSCP 35).

LSCP 91 also wanted to draw on the experience of their previous LSCB Independent Chair to support them through the transition to adoption of the new arrangements. Following the transition, the Chair then became the Independent Scrutineer for the partnership:

“from 2014 to 2019 we had an Independent Chair who led transition to the new arrangements under WT2018. That role then changed in the first year to become Chair and Independent Advisor, then further revised to Independent Scrutineer” (LSCP 91).

LSCP 51 noted that a Scrutineer was appointed with some chairing functions but that they are subsequently moving to decouple the role:

“The LSCP has an Independent Scrutineer who assumes some chairing functions. Partners plan to decouple the chair and scrutineer role” (LSCP 51).

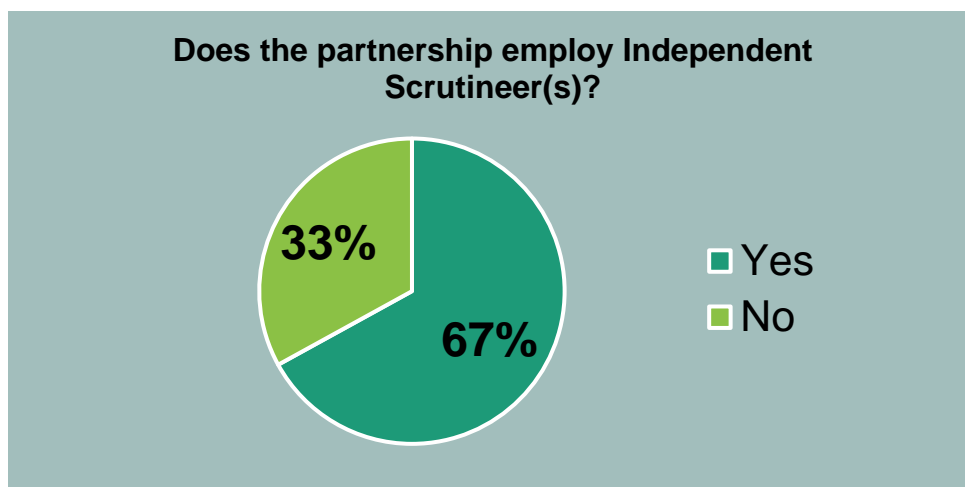
SUMMARY

The above illustrates that LSCPs have wanted to ensure time was given to thinking through how best to accommodate the changes to scrutiny brought about by Working Together (2018). It also notes that the previous LSCB Independent Chair had played an important role in providing continuity and oversight of the safeguarding arrangements, an oversight that many newly formed LSCPs have not wanted to lose for the future. This is demonstrated by the number of LSCPs who have either retained an Independent Chair of the partnership alongside employing Scrutineers or who have combined the role of Scrutineer and Chair (see paragraph 19 onward below).

The employment of Independent Scrutineers

19. Sixty-seven percent (n=67) of 100 LSCPs employ Independent Scrutineers with just over three quarters of these employing one Scrutineer. Thirty-three percent (n=33) said they do not employ Independent Scrutineers. The majority of this 33% have Independent Chairs undertaking scrutiny and three LSCPs have Scrutiny Committees.

Figure 1 - LSCPs employing Independent Scrutineer(s)



Fifty-eight percent (n=37) of 64 LSCPs employ their Scrutineer(s) between one to three years. Sixteen Percent (n=10) employ Scrutineer(s) for one year or less and six percent (n=4) employ them for undertaking short, one-off time limited deep dives (see Figure 2).

20. Of the 67 LSCPs (out of 100 responses) which employ Independent Scrutineers: 76% employ one Independent Scrutineer, 13% employ two Independent Scrutineers, six percent employ three Independent Scrutineers and five percent employ four or more Scrutineers (See Figure 3).

Figure 2 – Length Independent Scrutineer(s) are employed

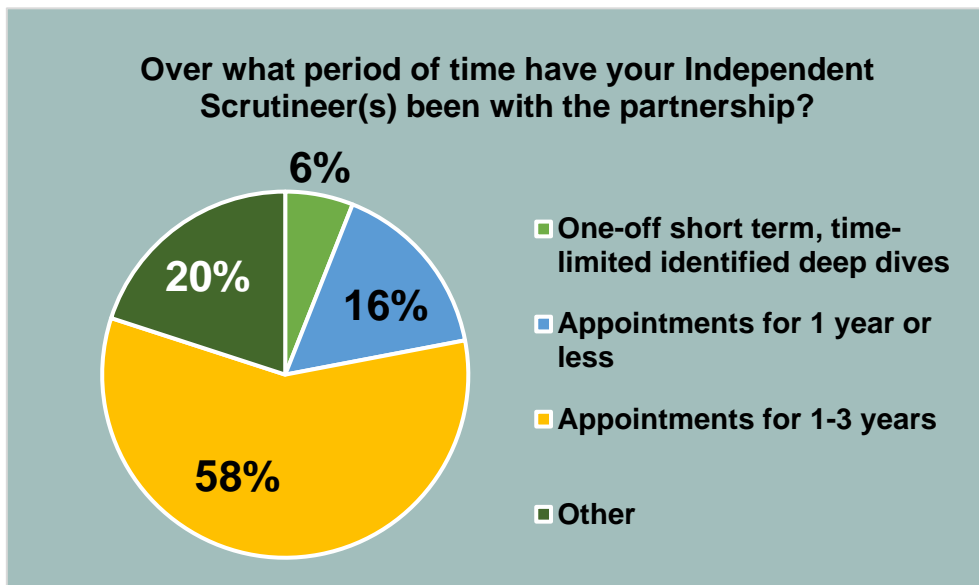
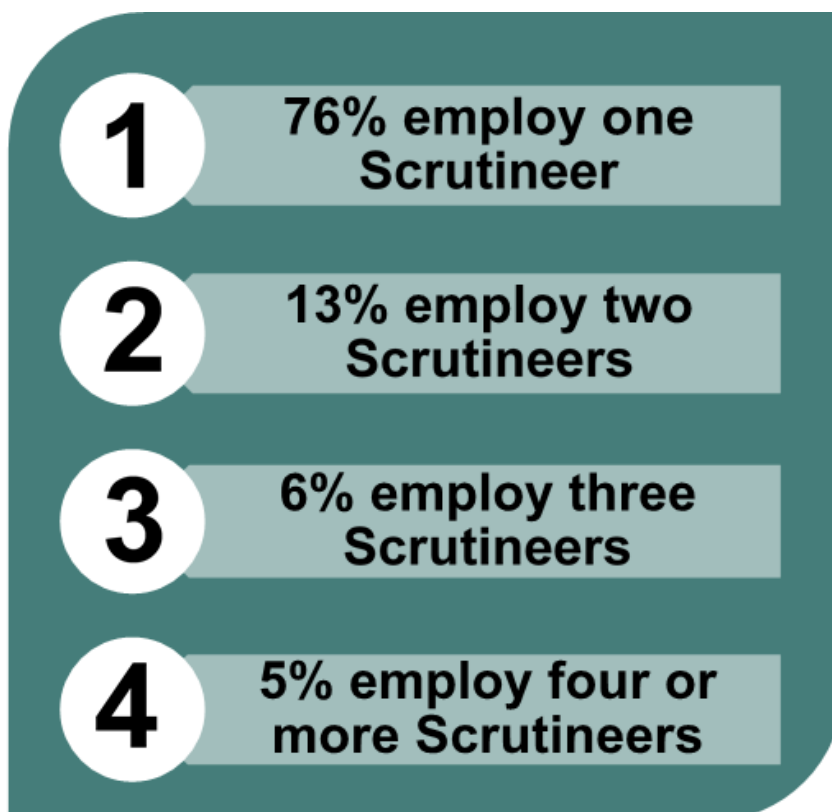


Figure 3 - Number of Scrutineers employed by the sixty-seven percent of LSCPs which employ Independent Scrutineers



Maintaining the role of LSCP Independent Chair with scrutiny duties

21. Fifty-nine percent (n=60) of 101 LSCPs employ an LSCP chair, the majority (90%) of whom also have scrutiny responsibilities. Forty-one percent (n=41) of LSCPs do not have an Independent Chair.

Figure 4 – LSCPs employment of Independent Chairs

59% of 101 LSCPs employ an Independent Chair.
90% of these also have scrutiny duties.

LSCPs who employ an Independent Chair (with or without scrutiny duties) do so to:

- support the three lead safeguarding partners to coordinate LSCP activity
- provide continuity
- hold leadership to account
- embed insight into partnerships activities
- lead some LSCP improvement initiatives
- engage the wider sector with safeguarding children activity.

These LSCPs report that the structures they had in place for chairing and reviewing LSCP progress prior to 2018 were effective.

22. It is described that retaining a Chair can help to bring independent oversight of the executive functioning:

“Chairing the partnership executive brings an independence to that process” (LSCP 21).

The following LSCPs explain why an Independent Chair has been employed:

“partners decided to continue to employ an Independent Chair in order to coordinate all aspects of the partnership and to drive forward a high trust culture of partnership working. It was felt that it would be easier for this to be championed and modelled by an Independent Chair as she or he could positively support improvement in bi-lateral working between some agencies and also sponsor new ways of working, especially positive and quick problem-solving when issues arise” (LSCP 21).

“I chair the safeguarding partnership whose membership is two senior representatives from the local authority, police, and health and myself. I am responsible for independent challenge and scrutiny across all aspects of the partnership work and take a leading role in strategy development and planning” (LSCP 3).

“we have an Independent Chair/Scrutineer providing circa 30 days per year. This provides sufficient capacity to chair the monthly executive group, selective and periodic attendance within place-based meetings /subgroups and relative freedom to examine, field check and scrutinize the operational delivery on a risk basis” (LSCP 101).

“...role of Independent Chair includes holding partner agencies to account through executive board. Independent Chair also attends the local authority improvement board to ensure a co-ordinated approach. Meetings chaired are: executive board, monthly; tri board (includes leads from adult board, SCP, HWB, Community safety partnership); ... partnership relevant agencies meeting; quarterly meeting for the chairs of subgroups; member of Local authority improvement board” (LSCP 70).

“... chair the executive and to attend, observe at and note the contents of and decision made at meetings of every subgroup, on a cycle matched to busy diaries...The role of the chair is to contribute to fulfilling the statutory duties set out in Working Together (2018). It

involves chairing the Board, and the partnership programme steering group (PPSG). There is a themed annual Independent Scrutiny programme, and the Chair is currently acting as an Independent Scrutineer for the contextual safeguarding work stream in the local arrangement and the 3-year business plan. The outcome and impact of scrutiny and challenge activities is included in the annual review of the effectiveness of the local arrangements” (LSCP 72).

“The chair scrutinises all reports submitted to the partnership and board meetings; attends the majority of QA subgroup meetings; contributes to the direction and scrutiny of monitoring and evaluation activity; attends case review subgroup meetings; leads on the partnership annual priority setting development days” (LSCP 62).

23. One LSCP noted how a review across the whole LSCP recognised the important role that the Chair played in providing a single point of contact, in providing cohesion, oversight and scrutiny:

“Several comments were also made about the positive role of the Chair; including how they were approachable and accessible which supported a culture of open and honest challenge and collaboration; how they effectively chaired meetings to ensure that members were encouraged to participate; and the effectiveness of the Chair in holding agencies to account” (LSCP 26).

24. Others note the key role played by the Chair in agreeing LSCP priorities and leading initiatives such as combined LSCP and Safeguarding Adult Board conferences. The Independent Chair of LSCP 60 attends:

“scheduled board and executive meetings; agree strategic priorities for the children and adults business plans; lead on the production of the children and adults annual reports; attend and take the lead at the children and adults annual safeguarding conference; meet regularly with the subgroup chairs to challenge and scrutinise the progress of their agreed priorities” (LSCP 60).

Other Independent Chairs for LSCPs maintain regular contact with councillors and council leaders. For example:

“to chair the strategic partnership on a bi-monthly basis; to meet monthly with deputy statutory safeguarding partners ...to scrutinise activity and hold partners to account; to meet with the chief executive, leader of the council and lead member quarterly to review the effectiveness of the partnership; to produce an annual Independent Scrutiny report that assesses the partnership’s effectiveness against the following criteria” (LSCP 59).

Employing an Independent Chair as well as employing others to undertake scrutiny

25. While some partnerships have retained the role of Independent Chair to include scrutiny roles (as above), 19 of 101 respondents note that they employ both an Independent Chair and Independent Scrutineer(s).

26. As noted by LSCP 16, 39 and 27:

“... as well as a chairWe also employ Independent Scrutineers to visit the partnership once a year with a view to undertaking a deep dive scrutiny review upon the effectiveness of our multi agency safeguarding arrangements” (LSCP 16).

“the partnership employs an Independent Chair who is also the Independent Scrutineer.Other Scrutineers will be drawn from those with experience in child safeguarding, an understanding of local need and the capacity to recognise partnership working...” (LSCP 39).

“The Chair is responsible for chairing partnership meetings, meeting with the executive leads and chief officers of the three statutory partners, providing challenge and support on issues emerging...The Independent Scrutiny team is made up of three Scrutineers. In addition to the chair, the other Scrutineers has discrete chairing responsibilities but come together to consider aspects of the safeguarding system that require further scrutiny... all three

Scrutineers may attend the meetings with the executive leads and the partnership group as part of the governance arrangements” (LSCP 27).

One LSCP explained how they have an LSCP Chair who works alongside a scrutiny group:

“...scrutiny group made up of managers from the statutory partners...The Independent Chair meets with the statutory safeguarding partners four times a year to review the effectiveness of the arrangements ... the safeguarding partners are further held to account by the multi-agency scrutiny group Independent Chair” (LSCP 38).

SUMMARY

The above shows some LSCPs employing an Independent Chair to provide continuity, hold leadership to account, embed insight into partnerships activities, lead some LSCP improvement initiatives and engage the wider sector with safeguarding children activity. It is noted that the role of the Independent Chair is to promote and support the three LSCP partner leads holding them to account where necessary. Some LSCPs recognise that the structures they had in place for chairing prior to 2018 were effective and note that they wanted this maintained. 90% of the Independent Chairs hold scrutiny duties alongside their chairing role.

The Independent Scrutineer holds some chairing duties

27. While LSCPs may not employ a separate Independent Chair, the Independent Scrutineer can hold chairing or facilitation duties. They explain that this gives them hands-on insight into partnership working:

“... Independent Scrutineer is ... chairing partnership meetings, subgroup and rapid reviews; highlighting key areas of focus for the Partnership scrutinising local decision making” (LSCP 44).

“... I will continue to facilitate full partnership days ...” (LSCP 47).

“...To chair the strategic and management executive groups” (LSCP 29).

“to chair the LSCP strategic and case review meetings” (LSCP 90).

“chairs performance meeting; chairs executive meeting...” (LSCP 89).

“Chairs the Performance and Quality Assurance Groups and the Operations and Scrutiny Group of the partnership. Some of these meetings are combined adults and children...” (LSCP 22).

“The Independent Scrutineer is an integral and active member of the partnership and scrutinises the whole of the partnership business. She is a member of both the LSCP executive and the LSCP board and the regional safeguarding group. She supports the development of new initiatives, either by providing advice and expertise, or by chairing groups (task and finish/time limited groups)” (LSCP 52).

28. It is explained that facilitating and chairing some events or some subgroups gives the Scrutineer in-depth knowledge of the functioning and dynamics of partnership multi-agency activity. As noted below, embedding scrutiny within partnership activity was seen as a key element for some LSCPs who, employ different Scrutineers with separate chairing and scrutiny roles:

“...has two Scrutineers: (1) Scrutineer and administrative chair of the steering group and partnership board. Also commissioned by lead partners to undertake specific pieces of scrutiny e.g., effectiveness of partnership board and partnership arrangements... also provide statutory leads with a scrutiny report twice per annum around the work of the partnerships (2) chairs and scrutinises our quality assurance group” (LSCP 13).

Similarly, other LSCPs include chairing and facilitation roles within their Scrutineer’s brief. Talking of their Scrutineer’s role, LSCP 26 notes that:

“Their approach throughout the year has been to act as a constructive critical friend to promote reflection and continuous improvement and to provide support to that improvement. Examples include: chairing the section 11 challenge panels...; determining the need to conduct LSCPRs...; facilitating resolution of agency conflicts; championing local issues at national and ministerial level...” (LSCP 26).

Despite the clarity above of the relationship between scrutiny and chairing roles, there was an example of an Independent Scrutineer holding chairing duties who noted some difficulty in separating the two roles:

“I am the Scrutineer and also act as an Independent Chair, so it’s difficult to specifically separate the roles” (LSCP 71).

Employing ‘expert’ Scrutineers for one off work

29. In addition, or instead of, employing one Independent Chair or Independent Scrutineer, some LSCPs invite subject experts in for specific pieces of scrutiny

of LSCP activity. For example, LSCP 5 notes that they have undertaken scrutiny through recruitment of ‘experts’:

“The Independent Scrutiny and Assurance Framework provides guidance and options for how the partnerships undertake Independent Scrutiny. ...The partnership executive (3 key partners, voluntary sector services, sub group chairs) make the decisions about what is being scrutinised and how ...This year it has included buying in independent experts in the field for specific pieces of work, commissioning Independent Scrutiny from specialist organisations... we’ve asked an Independent Scrutineer from another partnership to review our 12 month report...the partnership’s young advisors triangulate our work through their networks of young people and the 3 strategic partners” (LSCP 5).

LSCP 7 has also moved from employing one Scrutineer to employing different Scrutineers for bespoke pieces of work:

“initially the partnership began with one Independent Scrutineer ... and since then, we have agreed to commission individual Scrutineers for bespoke Independent Scrutineer pieces of work” (LSCP 7).

While LSCP 85 employs different Scrutineers to scrutinise specific work streams:

“the partnership executive has asked each of the three work streams to identify a piece of Independent Scrutiny work for their area of business and three consultants are being commissioned to undertake the scrutiny work for the year 2021-22” (LSCP 85).

An ‘embedded’ scrutiny group: partnership approach to Independent Scrutiny

30. Scrutiny was noted to be most effective if all partner agencies (safeguarding partners and relevant agencies) took responsibility and ownership for scrutiny.

This meant understanding what is being scrutinised and how, integrating learning from scrutiny and reflecting on opportunities and challenges of partnership working. For example, LSCP 30 explained that they had set up a scrutiny working group to involve all partners in oversight of the scrutiny process:

“... whilst the Independent Chair/Scrutineer was leading the process of scrutiny, a partnership approach was encouraged and adopted as full ownership was deemed necessary for longer term improvement and embedding of learning...encouraging and securing membership of the group from all agencies...challenging agencies to review their internal processes for referral and response. The working group pursued the following process:

- Encouraging and securing membership of the group from all agencies
- Independent Chairing of meetings scheduled every 6 weeks or so.
- Joint understanding of the impact of submitting referrals which do not meet limits – on individual agencies and on the child
- Transparent sharing of demand and performance information
- Mutual challenge of understanding of the Thresholds document
- Challenging and identifying alternative means of addressing identified needs more effectively by the referring agency at source – including wider access to Early Help provision
- Challenging agencies to review their internal processes for referral and response
- Challenging individual agency and collective culture in relation to the Partnership principles and objectives.
- Regular review of the outcomes of agreed activity to identify progress” (LSCP 30).

SUMMARY

Further work would gain a stronger insight into the relationship between independent chairing of LSCP activity and the role of scrutinising LSCP activity. The LSCPs above note how merging the role or adding chairing functions to the Scrutineer role provides additional insight into partnership functioning. It was not within the remit of this work to ask whether chairing partnership activity undermines or supports scrutiny activity. What is evident is that many LSCPs see advantage in their Independent Scrutineer having in-depth knowledge of the functioning of LSCP activity, wanting to embed scrutiny into partnership activity and partnership culture on an ongoing, everyday basis.

Chair of the Adult Board scrutinising the LSCP

31. Some Independent Scrutineers and /or Chairs of LSCPs are also employed to chair the SAB or, in some cases, the LSCP and SAB were merged into one board. It was argued that this provides continuity between the LSCP and SAB and supports young people transitioning from children to adult services:

“...we have a joint adult and child safeguarding board; my role as Independent Chair is to oversee the effective running of the joint board ... to have in place the appropriate subgroups to support the board...to monitor that appropriate case reviews are undertaken and learning is disseminated. [...] ensure the production of an annual report...liaise regularly with agency leads” (LSCP 69).

“... it is a dual role with the safeguarding adults board. The main duties are to chair both the board and partnership, lead on rapid reviews, link with partners for challenging and monitoring” (LSCP 77).

Although their scrutiny role is focused on the LSCP, some LSCP Scrutineers attended a range of partnerships and boards to ensure safeguarding children activity is championed.

“The Independent Scrutineer sits on the partnership board, the health and wellbeing board and the community safety board, providing ongoing assurance of all strategic partnership activity, drops in on 4 affiliate boards and is a permanent member and deputy chair of the Quality Assurance Board” (LSCP 2).

“...I liaise with other partnership boards as safeguarding champion, identifying issues that need to be addressed by the board” (LSCP 83).

SUMMARY

Local areas intend to link with other strategic partnership work happening locally to support children and families, including with other public boards and arrangements such as Health and Wellbeing Boards, Adult Safeguarding Boards and Community Safety Partnerships.

As highlighted, some LSCPs incorporate this coordination responsibility with the Independent Scrutineer role. This can also provide independent assessment of the connections and potential gaps in strategic planning for child wellbeing is maintained. Where the SAB and LSCP are merged, or where the Independent Scrutineers chair both the SAB and the LSCP, a detailed insight into transitional safeguarding for young people moving into adult services can be gained.

Employing/engaging with Children and Young People as scrutineers

32. 95 LSCPs responded to the question: Do you involve children and young people in a formal scrutiny role? Twenty-nine percent of these said yes.

Figure 5 – Number of LSCPs which involve children and young people in a formal scrutiny role

29% of 95 LSCPs involve
Children and Young People in a formal
scrutiny role.

The below explores how LSCPs are at the early stages of reaching out to children and young people to 'scrutinise' LSCP activity; how some access children and young people through existing youth groups; and how some have developed a formal process for recruiting and employing young people as scrutineers.

33. Twenty-seven percent of the 95 responses note that they work with lay members in a scrutiny role. This was a well-established practice for LSCBs pre 2018 and has been continued into the new arrangements. This report focuses here on commentary related to engaging with children and young people as scrutineers, as this is less developed and has less of an established history.

LSCPs in the early stages of developing contact with young people as scrutineers

34. While 29% of LSCPs said they did involve children and young people in scrutinising LSCP activity, many noted this was still at the early stages.

LSCP 13 note that Wood (2021: 61⁵) recommended that children and young people are consulted to review LSCP activity and that they are currently developing:

⁵ Wood 2021 noted that the safeguarding partners should assess '• the involvement of children and young people in the scrutiny process.' Wood, 2021: 58) and "identify opportunities for children and young people to feed into the process" (Wood: 2021, 61)

- Further community engagement,
- Improving engagement/links with education/schools (awaiting also DfE commissioned work in this arena),
- Incorporating the child's voice in a meaningful way (cognisant of the Wood Review recommendations)" (LSCP 13).

LSCP 66 also refer to The Wood Review's (2021) focus on accessing children and young people's voice:

"Having reflected on how we have involved young people and received feedback from the young people themselves, we are reviewing how we engage with our local young people. We are mindful of Sir Alan Wood's comment about meaningful engagement and influence of children and young people in his most recent report. With our local young people we are currently reviewing our participation approach. We will be considering how best to include a scrutiny approach in this work, being mindful of the concerns raised in the 2021 Wood report" (LSCP 66).

35. Other LSCPs note the need for future work to involve children and young people in scrutiny of LSCP activity:

"Children, young people and families are involved in their plans and this is an area that we continue to work on and develop as a partnership" (LSCP 29).

"The findings of scrutiny have certainly helped shape the partnership's priority setting and business plan and have helped ensure that the annual report does provide an unbiased and honest appraisal of local safeguarding arrangements. However, I would be keen to develop a different model allowing for greater input to the process from CYP, families and professionals" (LSCP 92).

“There are some areas of delivery which listens to the voice of the child, but this is an area of focus, and the partnership is looking to develop more consistent and sustainable approach” (LSCP 10).

“Challenge to Partnership as to need ... improvement in communication and engagement of children and young people and move to impact rather than process” (LSCP 21).

“...developing systems to allow young people to comment on safeguarding activity within the County and to contribute directly through consultation. Such activity is a developing element of the SCP overall scrutiny process and a regular point of reference for the Independent Chair/Scrutineer” (LSCP 39).

36. LSCP 59 note that the pandemic had a negative impact on their developing work to access young people’s scrutiny of the SCP, but that this is now being re-established:

“Before the pandemic we introduced a young people's safeguarding forum which would enable us to consult with a wide range of young people on a variety of topics. Unfortunately, this has stalled due to the pandemic, but we aim to start it again as soon as possible. It is our hope that from this forum we can identify a wider group of Scrutineers” (LSCP 59).

Contacting young scrutineers through existing LSCP child consultation practices

37. Many LSCPs commented on using existing practices that were up and running to reach out to children and young people as scrutineers. LSCP 1 notes that engaging with children and young people as scrutineers is in its infancy and explain how they are starting by asking children and young people to review LSCP activity through the existing section 11 process:

“The role of children in the partnership is in its infancy with 2021 being the first year we have used them...the SCP ... have recruited

the District Youth Council to assist is developing a model for youth participation through the SCP section 11 process. Young people will be part of the S11 panel and will be able to contribute to the process with their views and opinions on all standards in S11 including the Voice of the Child Standard...The Youth Council in 2021 will also advice and recommend the model of participation in the process and hopefully will work with the SCP to perfect it over 2021/2022 so that there is a defined co production of youth engagement in the S11 process. From there additional areas for engagement can be explored” (LSCP 1).

LSCP 30 are also in early stages of developing their work with young people as scrutineers, starting by drawing on the experience held by their ‘exploitation and vulnerable young people subgroup’ to develop a full partnership participation strategy:

“There are young people representatives on the Exploitation and Vulnerable Young People subgroup. They have now left secondary school and wish to retain involvement in the partnership as they move into tertiary education. Action is planned as part of the participation strategy to recruit further representation from young people in school in the new year. This will sit alongside plans to engage school councils and other young people forums to strengthen local safeguarding arrangements. The first lay member who was a young person expressed an interest in safeguarding as part of the election of a youth mayor. This led to establishing and developing a role and enabling her ethical and appropriate involvement. Further lay members were recruited as they expressed interest as part of safeguarding engagement work be carried out with the young person youth council forum” (LSCP 30).

LSCP 3 are learning from participatory practices undertaken by local schools to further engage children and young people in scrutiny of partnership activity:

“...a well-established network of Children Safeguarding Boards in more than two thirds of its schools. These Boards are run by the children themselves with support from teachers and are consulted with extensively by the Partnership...New arrangements are about to be launched which formal embed this engagement process into the working of the SCB” (LSCP 3).

Accessing young people for consultation through existing youth forums

38. LSCPs note that they are developing young people's scrutiny of LSCP activity through contact with existing youth groups who may already have expertise in youth participation, be able to offer support to the young people approached and who have expertise to share with the LSCP. For example, LSCP 22 note that they have:

“Contacts with already established forums, school councils and school nursing service” (LSCP 22).

LSCP 73 and LSCP 2 note that they draw on other relevant agency engagement with children and young people:

“...plan to use young people as Independent Scrutineers at scrutiny events and are working with agencies to support young people in this role. For example, for the forthcoming scrutiny event for Child Exploitation, we are linking with the participation team at Catch 22, a voluntary organisation that supports young people at risk of exploitation. They already have an established group of young people that offer peer support. We will offer additional support for the young people for the scrutiny event” (LSCP 73).

“Partners as individual agencies actively involve CYP in their plans and this is brought into the partnership developments. We have a lively and influential youth parliament who directly influence our work, particularly the local gangs and county lines problem” (LSCP 2).

LSCP 72 draw on findings from existing surveys:

“Children and young people feed into the partnership through existing mechanisms across the LA, health and police youth voice groups, they always have an opportunity to share their concerns, showcase the work they are doing and feed directly into the work of the partnership and its strategy. Also, the voice of the child through

the (LSCP area) Survey with over 17,000 students sharing their lived experience and views ... The work of the SCP is aligned to the 'Being Young ... Strategy', all aspects of work identified in this strategy are ultimately identified to improve the outcomes for children and young people... The Independent Scrutineer will use the strategy to assist her to check if work has progressed and the strategy is achieving what it sets out to achieve" (LSCP 47).

39. Other LSCPs are also linking with a range of different groups within the LSCP footprint to gather feedback on LSCP activity from young people involved, with the longer-term intension of establishing their own LSCP platform for young people:

"We have developed strategies and processes that can be used to gather the opinions and recommendations of the children, young people, and families. We are liaising with organisations in the district such as LGBTQ+ support groups, Children's Rights, Young Carers and the Our Voice Team to ensure all children's voice and experiences are considered/represented /captured. We are currently developing the formation of a Youth Group Forum with the intention of providing young people a platform to have their voice heard" (LSCP 25).

"They are drawn from our local youth voice and participation groups" (LSCP 94).

"We have used existing forums in Education settings, Youth Justice, Children in Care Councils and the Youth Cabinet" (LSCP 29).

The LSCP having a 'young people's subgroup', or a subgroup that is focused on young people's voices

40. Some LSCPs have either established a young person's subgroup, attended by and joint run with young people, or have created a subgroup specifically to focus on 'the voice of the child':

“In order to secure the voice of children and young people in our arrangements we have created a 'Voice of the Child' Subgroup to our arrangements. This subgroup is chaired by the Principal of the local college. There have been a number of conference type events with young people that have been progressed by this subgroup. The links with schools has been excellent. This work has not progressed as well over the past 2 years because of the pandemic but is picking up again now. The subgroup also has done work to understand all of the engagement with children across the county by partner agencies as each agency has their own method of engagement” (LSCP 58).

“We don't have children and young people as scrutineers per se but as a partnership they contribute in many ways. We have a separate Voice subgroup which helps support how we as a partnership engage with children and young people but also use that information to feedback on pieces of work. We consult with young people on many pieces of work, and we have had young people deliver to our partners about what is important to them and what they have highlighted as issues. Our Scrutineer also meets with children and young people on a regular basis. We also ensure that the voice and lived experience is always considered at partnership meetings and all our terms of reference reflect voice/lived experience of the child. We have developed a voice pledge which aims is to support partners when thinking about voice of the child as well as looking at refreshing our voice strategy which outlines how we engage and work with young people and how they can also be involved with the partnership. In addition, we have a project about adopting a rights-based approach across our city. We have lots of good examples of voice, but we don't have a specific way in which we do engage with young people as we do this in lots of different ways and through different mediums i.e., we do not have one child scrutineer for example” (LSCP 88).

“Scrutiny by young people is conducted by our Young People's Safeguarding Group, the management and coordination of which are led by the LA's youth service. Membership is voluntary and run at youth centres or similar venues. They are tasked on an ad hoc basis throughout the year. They periodically attend both the Executive and the wider Partnership and occasionally undertake discrete reports or pieces of work” (LSCP 53).

Engaging young people in strategic development of the LSCP

41. LSCPs were engaging with questions about how to facilitate children and young people's feedback on the strategic development of the whole LSCP, as opposed to feedback on specific strands of work or specific LSCP agency activity:

"Members noted that agencies often have well embedded engagement processes with children and young people, but this feedback is not shared at board level. One member noted that the "Partnership relies on board members to bring voice of the child. We must listen as a partnership and not listen in isolation" (LSCP 26).

LSCP 44 accesses young people through local schools, dividing their area geographically and focusing on schools in each region. They then have a forum that holds the executive to account once a year:

"The partnership attends a different area of the city every quarter and meets with a different group of children selected by the school... Under Covid-19, use of social media/existing groups. Word of mouth... This Youth Forum holds the Executive Group to account once a year" (LSCP 44).

Independent Scrutineer or Independent Chair accessing young people personally

42. Commentary from LSCPs below explain how the Independent Scrutineer makes direct contact with young people. The Independent Scrutineer of LSCP 10 talks of their:

"...engagement with children, young people, adults and their families/ carers to determine the impact of the partnership and SAB arrangements to ensure that the voice of the child and the adult is at the heart of all aspects of scrutiny" (LSCP 10).

While LSCP 27, 71, 73 and 39 explain how the Independent Scrutineer or Independent Chair with a scrutiny role make contact with children, young people and their families:

“Where possible and/or appropriate the Scrutineer will talk directly to children and young people as part of the process. For example, in the current piece of work on mental health, the Scrutineer has met with representatives from young commissioners, youth advisory boards and the youth parliament to understand how they view the issues and what outcomes would improve their lived experience” (LSCP 27).

“Scrutineer seeks independent feedback from random sample of families and young people ...Locality Safeguarding Groups involving Practitioners Forums develop key lines of inquiry, triangulate information and undertake deep dives and multiagency audits. Findings and key lines of enquiry collated in preparation for scrutiny event. Scrutiny Event involving Partnership members, YP and stakeholders. appreciative inquiry, identifies good practices, areas for improvement and action required. Independent Scrutineer and Partnership Manager pull together Scrutiny Report and Action plan” (LSCP 71).

“... take responsibility for ensuring that the views and experiences of ‘our children’ influence and guide the focus and priorities of the partnership, through regular, direct consultation and engagement” (LSCP 73).

“Ensuring the voice of the child and service users is at the heart of all aspects of scrutiny by directly engaging with children, young people and families and also assessing the effectiveness and impact of single agency and partnership engagement strategies” (LSCP 39).

Recruiting and appointing young scrutineers / youth advisors

43. Some LSCPs are recruiting children and young people to a formal scrutiny role. This involves appointment of scrutineers through a formal recruitment process to a paid position within the LSCP. In all cases LSCPs recognise that this process involves ensuring that there is support and training available for young people; that the young people do not carry a burden of 'representation': being expected to speak for all children; that there is emotional support for young people who are carrying out the role and that information flows back to them about progress and impact of their work. This process involves dedicated time, resource, and targeted funding from the LSCP. If completed effectively, the benefits to both young people and to the LSCP as a whole can be significant.
44. There is a range of ways identified for recruiting young people as scrutineers. LSCP 71 are currently recruiting young scrutineers from the partnership's 'Young Perspectives Board' with a focus on accessing young people who have experience of children's services. LSCP 87 have developed the young inspectors programme where young people are recruited to:

"...undertake inspections of agencies in respect of how they involve children and improve services as the result of children's voice and influence" (LSCP 87).

LSCP 50 are recruiting young people through the local authority's 'Young Inspectors' recruitment team to work closely with the Independent Scrutineer on all scrutiny topics and to ensure their perspective is integrated into future LSCP activity. They have:

"...employed a part time Young Scrutineer to work closely with the Independent Scrutineer on all scrutiny topics and work to ensure this perspective is integrated into future work. The YS also helps to facilitate, feed in from other children and young people, linked to the Local Authority Young Inspectors work" (LSCP 50).

And LSCP 5 undertakes an annual process of appointing young scrutineers:

"We employ them and pay them for their work. New Young Advisors are recruited annually and are recruited from across the spectrum of secondary education establishments" (LSCP 5).

45. Other LSCPs have well-developed processes and experiences of recruitment of and support for young scrutineers. For example, LSCP 17 has an:

“Application process paired with peer advocate recruitment of youth services. This enables broad range of candidates and access for focus groups and voices” (LSCP 17).

LSCP 17 explains that young scrutineers are central to the LSCP governance, learning and improvement mechanisms. The below is quoted in detail as it demonstrates activity brought about through the recruitment of young scrutineers:

“As part of the planning for Transitional Safeguarding Conference which took place virtually in October 2020, the Young Advisors told us about things that worried them and the challenges they faced. They talked to the Independent Scrutineer about the anxiety of leaving education; pressure to succeed; financial difficulties; their mental health, housing stability, changes to personal relationships; and changes to health and social care support.

The Young Advisors reflected on their experience, through the lens of pandemic to create content to share with frontline practitioners. An infographic film was produced summarising the key themes of the Transitional Safeguarding conference. This video was created in collaboration with Research in Practice (RIP) and will be used as introduction to ongoing development work in this area. The video will be available on our website in summer 2021.

Over 2020/21, we were able to expand the workplan with our Young Advisors and weave their voices into our scrutiny and governance mechanisms. They had already chosen a range of topics to explore further to help enhance learning from our local multiagency safeguarding audits. The audit recommendations they reviewed included:

- Adolescent mental health (2019)
- Older children in need of protection (2020)

In early 2020, based on their interests, knowledge, skills and life experience, they chose to review the following areas:

- How frontline services work with young people and their families in relation identity, race and ethnicity?
- What helps service users to engage with frontline workers from statutory and community agencies?

They told us it was important that safeguarding practitioners think about self-identity and belonging (to a school/social community) as fundamental anchors in how they engage with young people.

The CSCP summarised the key messages from Children's Commissioner: Mean Streets report. Our Young Advisors reviewed and provided their voice recorded reflections and comments on the points raised. Learning from this will be taken forward over 2021/22. This process was a new way of digital working which we will aim to sustain when we begin to work more face-to-face.

In conjunction with the youth services, the Young Advisors ran focus groups with young people. Examples include a virtual Girls Club for 13-24 (at a particular clubs work on) Youth in Action to discuss positive mental health during Covid-19; and facilitating discussions on Black young people's experience of youth justice during lockdown.

Young Advisors participated in our SCP section 11 Challenge Panel, chaired by an Independent Scrutineer. They contributed by giving us personal accounts of accessing local youth/ leisure facilities. The section 11 audit by its very nature, lends itself to analysis of safeguarding procedures and processes. Therefore, the involvement of the Young Advisors influenced our discussion by bringing to life the relationship between children and professionals within the context of safeguarding in sport. As a result, the SCP's section 11 Challenge Panel membership has been amended to include SCP Young Advisor(s).

The SCP Young Advisors poems, blog and films are products of their engagement work with young people and cyclical in our development of their role. They will be used for future recruitment campaigns (July 2021) for YOS peer advocates and SCP Young Advisors. The Young Advisors views will be incorporated into the work of the LSCP Vulnerable Adolescents – Risk and Exploitation Strategy Group and Action Plan and will be incorporated in the refresh of the Vulnerable Adolescent Strategy.

SCP Young Advisors have also created a short film on how community environments impact how safe young people feel in

neighbourhoods. This film about Contextual Safeguarding was developed with the Young Advisors and was premiered during a Youth Safety Fortnight 2021. In the film, the Young Advisors talked to us about how education settings and youth services provide a protective and supportive framework and make a practical difference to the lives of young people through helping them acquire skills, confidence, resilience, and social connections. In their focus group on contextual safeguarding, they challenged us for provision of affordable, accessible, warm, bright, safe spaces for young people” (LSCP 17).

LSCP 17 also note that the role and work undertaken by the SCP Young Advisors during the pandemic when they found new ways of hybrid working, permitting them to digitally incorporate the ‘voice of the child’ into the Learning and Improvement framework:

“following positive feedback on our digital safeguarding briefings and infographics, we will develop this approach further over 2021/22 to disseminate learning with time efficiency. Our refreshed safeguarding arrangements will be published in autumn 2021 to reflect how we’ll shape our safeguarding arrangements based on the lessons learnt from embedding the work of the SCP Young Advisors and finding new hybrid means of working” (LSCP 17).

Young people’s input into or/and ownership of an LSCP annual report

46. LSCP activity might be conveyed to young people by LSCP staff writing a young person’s version. For example, LSCP 10 noted that:

“A young person’s version of the yearly report is being prepared to be disseminated through schools. The partnership work around harmful sexual behaviours is included in the report” (LSCP 10).

Alternatively, children and young people themselves contribute to the annual report:

“During 2022 a different approach will be taken to the annual report. There will be direct engagement in scrutiny during 2022 from practitioners and children and young people who will be invited to contribute directly to the annual report.... The newly Chair/Interim Scrutineer and appointed (October 2021) Scrutiny Development Lead have a particular focus on ensuring the voice of children, young people, practitioners and wider communities will be included in the Partnership scrutiny. The Development Lead is in the process of identifying what groups are already established as well as gaps in representation” (LSCP 23).

SUMMARY

Of the 95 responses to the question about involving children as scrutineers, 29% said that they were involving young people in a formal scrutiny role. Many of this 29% noted that they were still in early stages of developing this work, some of whom were prompted by The Wood Review 2021. Of those who are consulting young people as scrutineers, young people were contacted through existing child participation forums, youth groups and forums. Some had created specific subgroups to either directly involve young people themselves, or to ensure that young people’s views were incorporated into LSCP activity.

Young scrutineers are providing insight into children’s experiences of the LSCP activity and are developing their own outputs, such as films, infographics and reports on different safeguarding topics of interest to children and young people. To be effective and ethical, this work needs significant infrastructure and financial commitment to ensure appropriate training and support for the young people involved.

3

**HOW IS
INDEPENDENT
SCRUTINY
UNDERTAKEN?**

How scrutiny is undertaken

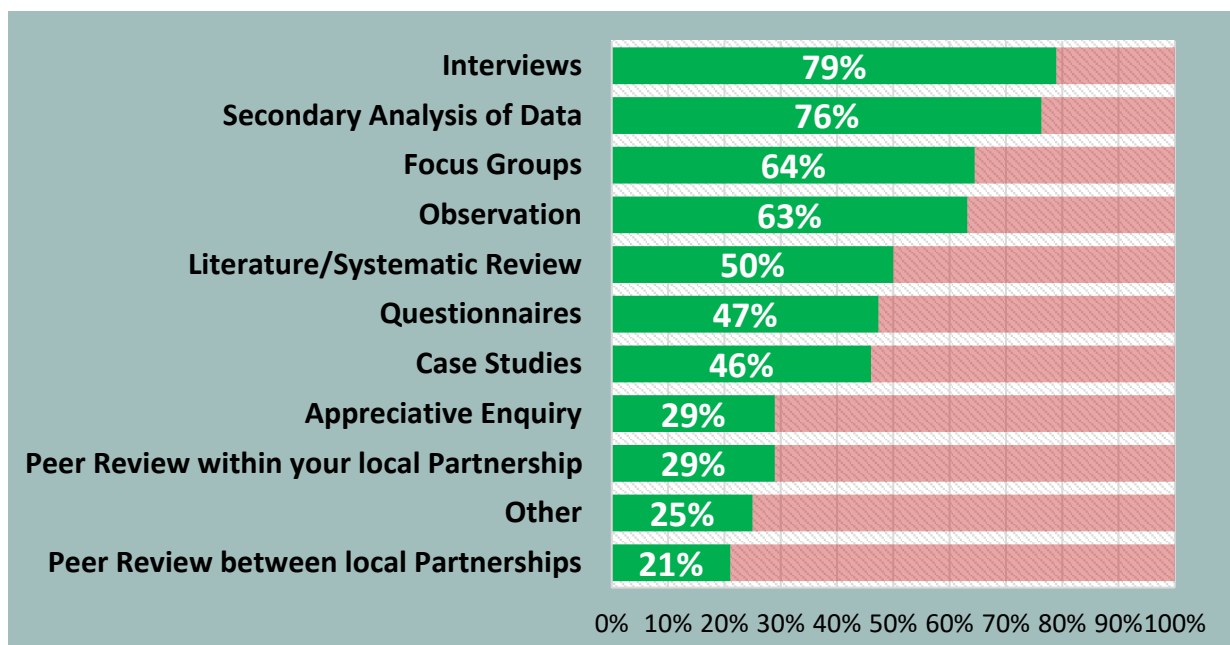
47. This section explores some of the LSCP responses about how scrutiny is done. It reflects methods identified by the 76 LSPPs who responded to the question: what methods have you used to undertake scrutiny?

48. Scrutiny is undertaken through a variety of methods. There was a specific request for a national observatory for examples of how scrutiny is undertaken to be deposited. As a result of this current work, some examples will be recorded on the TASP website (www.theasp.org.uk). Extra resourcing would be needed for developing a full repository to ensure that quality assurance of examples recorded was undertaken:

“Our Partnership is happy to share any of our work to date and the previous Quality and scrutiny Framework that I developed for my previous Partnership is available on-line. Overall we need to develop a National Repository that all Boards can use” (LSCP 71).

49. Data from the 76 LSPPs who answered this question noted a combination of methods. A wide range of methods, or combination of methods are used. The most common are: undertaking interviews; analysing data; running focus groups and undertaking observations. Twenty-nine percent of 76 responses used ‘in partnership’ peer review and 21% used ‘between partnership’ peer review.

Figure 6 - Methods used to undertake scrutiny



Respondents explored how some of these methods are applied in more detail as outlined below.

Peer review within the partnership

50. LSCPs undertake multi-agency peer review processes within the partnership, with relevant agencies and core partners reviewing each other's practice. The TASP website currently hosts an outline of an example of peer review (www.theasp.org.uk). Where two LAs share an LSCP, they have organised peer reviews between the LA areas:

“Peer review through joint partnership...there is a joint partnership between two local authority areas which therefore offers considerable opportunity for innovative challenge and scrutiny models to be developed” (LSCP 57).

LSCP 74 notes that they also undertake peer review with a neighbouring LSCP. When describing how they undertake scrutiny they list a variety of methods, including peer review:

- the appointment of an Independent Chair who provides external scrutiny and challenge;
- by extending the reciprocal peer review agreement with (another partnership) which is currently reviewing our child safeguarding practice review arrangements;
- through the two community /lay members / by commissioning peer reviews;
- through the performance scrutiny committee;
- through the police improvement team which undertakes thematic and geographical reviews; through the clinical commissioning quality committee;
- thought wider system of independent inspection of individual agencies and JTAs (LSCP 74).

Deep dives

51. A number of LSCPs mention their use of deep dives when responding to questions in the survey. LSCP 20 and 41 explain how they undertake their deep dives:

“I undertake scrutiny 'deep dives' - using appreciative enquiry models...I agree scope with partners - I will review cases, meet with frontline staff across agencies, attend meetings connected with topic, visit venues, try to involve service users including children (not always successful). I then write this up, share with participants before presenting to the executive. Recommendations are then agreed, and I monitor / track to completion. It is always about making processes/ working together more effective so that children's outcomes are improved” (LSCP 20).

“we use the intelligence ... to agree with the partners areas of safeguarding that need further consideration. ...we then agree the topic for a 'deep dive'. Deep dives take 3 to 4 months to consider- learning from relevant cases reviewed in the last 2 years; measurements within our data set; multi-agency case audits; and feedback from parents/carers, children and the workforce. Once this activity is complete, we hold a learning event to which all agencies, services and parent/carer board representatives are invited, and they are presented with all of the findings. ...learning is presented alongside a presentation of relevant good practice from other areas of the country and/or research. ...attendees are then invited in groups to consider what is working well and what we need to consider improving. ...recommendations of improvement activity that should be taken forward over the next 6 months either by single agencies or by the multiagency partnership” (LSCP 41).

52. LSCP 7 explained that they have practitioner's forums who undertake the deep dives, findings of which are then used within a scrutiny event:

“Safeguarding Groups involving Practitioners Forums develop key lines of inquiry, triangulate information and undertake deep dives and multi-agency audits. Findings and key lines of enquiry collated in preparation for Scrutiny Event. Scrutiny Event involving

Partnership members, YP and stakeholders.- appreciative inquiry, identifies good practices, areas for improvement and action required. Independent Scrutineer and Partnership Manager pull together Scrutiny Report and Action plan” (LSCP 7).

53. LSCP 72 noted that they are at early stages of developing deep dives and that they follow the Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI) model of enquiry. These take place alongside a number of other methods, including gaining (free of charge) scrutiny from a Local Government Agency advisor and employing Scrutineers as subgroup chairs:

“We are building on our approach to undertake themed deep dives based on the JTAI approach and aligns well with the six principles framework and the process used for undertaking child safeguarding practice reviews. The Independent Scrutiny of our Local Arrangements, using an experienced LGA improvement adviser (free of charge) worked really well. We have also started appointing Independent Scrutineers as subgroup chairs to strengthen the scrutiny and challenge” (LSCP 72).

LSCP 26 explain how they undertake audits focused on safeguarding within schools. Although not termed a deep dive, a similar process is undertaken

“The Annual Schools Safeguarding Audit Report (s175) was presented to the SCP Steering Group for scrutiny and challenge in September 2019. All schools (including maintained, independent, academies, free schools, and colleges) ... are requested to complete the safeguarding audit toolkit on an annual basis – assessing their practice in line with statutory guidance and local good practice. Engagement with the process is strong with 97% of state funded schools returning their audit, despite the added pressure of Covid19. The level of self-challenge within the audits suggests that schools are in general accurately reflecting on their practice. Additional quality assurance is also provided by ... a recently formed DSL Strategy Group, which is formed of DSLs and headteachers from 18 different schools, and the SCP” (LSCP 26).

Scrutiny panels / external review groups / challenge groups

54. LSCPs establish panels or groups with specific briefs to undertake scrutiny. These may be called **scrutiny panels** comprising of representatives from within the partnership scrutinising specific topics/themes of partnership activity. LSCP 9 explains this in detail:

“Scrutiny panels may be by Agency/Organisation (e.g., CCG, children’s services, police) or Thematic Panels (e.g., disability, CSA, Neglect etc.). There is a rolling programme of scrutiny panels – usually 6/year; Organisations may expect to be called to a scrutiny panel every 2-3 years. Thematic panels may be of similar frequency. The QA & Performance group, chaired by the Independent Chair/Scrutineer, monitors the recommendations arising from scrutiny panels...The subjects to be scrutinised are drawn from:

Previous areas of scrutiny focus

Priority areas identified in the annual business planning process across the partnership

Any identified areas of particular concern

Audit findings

Review or SI findings

These are identified by the Independent Scrutineer in conjunction with the identified panel members for a given scrutiny panel. As can be seen by the scrutiny aims, the panel focus is the effectiveness of partner agencies in delivering child protection or in specific areas of safeguarding children practice” (LSCP 9).

LSCP 54 created an ‘external review group’ explaining that:

“... an information sharing agreement was established and a range of documentation about the partnership was shared with the external review team. Conversations were held with the following people to gain their views on and consolidate understanding about the current multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for children in the local area.

- Executive Director of Children’s Services, (lead statutory partner);
- Chief Nurse, CCG (lead statutory partner);
- Detective Chief Inspector, Police (lead statutory partner);
- Independent Chair and Scrutineer, LSCB;
- Business Manager, LSCB;
- Assistant Director, Children’s Social Care, Council;
- Head of Cluster, Probation;
- Designated Doctor and Designated Nurse, CCG;
- Service Manager Safeguarding Children, Council;
- Lay member ;
- Primary schools and secondary schools head representatives.

... findings from the conversations and supporting papers resulted in recommendations that the partnership accepted and actioned” (LSCP 54).

55. LSCP 57 created a ‘challenge group’ to lead and receive findings from scrutiny:

“Membership of the challenge group were agreed including Lead Members and some young people 3. The Panel was made up of alternate key partners and the Independent Chair/Scrutineer” (LSCP 57).

56. LSCP 38 also has a specific Scrutiny Group who receives findings from audits and maintains an audit tracker to follow up progress with actions against recommendations:

“Audit reports are presented to the Scrutiny Group and SCP (partnership) Board to ensure operational and strategic oversight of front-line practice. Progress against recommendations is overseen by the Scrutiny/PQA Group who maintain an Audit Action Tracker.

The SCP undertakes the following scrutiny and assurance activities:

- Single agency audits
- Themed scrutiny events
- Section 175/15 self-assessment Audits by Schools, Colleges and Language Schools
- Section 11 Audit process of self-assessments in Year 1, review of actions plans Year 2, via panels, visits, and conversations.
- Training evaluations, after training and six months after training to evidence impact.
- Case file audits and JTAI Audits to review multiagency working and impact on children.
- Data sets and reports to evidence safeguarding practice and impact.

Exploitation themed audits are commissioned by the SCP Scrutiny Group as part of a broader scrutiny exercise” (LSCP 38).

Following a framework or checklist to identify what is to be scrutinised

57. Seventy-five percent of 88 LSCPs have used the ‘Six Steps for Independent Scrutiny’ model as a framework to refer to undertaking scrutiny. Their comments have been used to amend this model and to create a ‘Checklist for Independent Scrutiny’ (available on the Association of Safeguarding Partners website www.theasp.org.uk).

Figure 7 - Number of LSCPs using the Six Steps for Independent Scrutiny



Some noted that it was a useful guide for analysis:

“useful analysis that is easily understood by all partners and makes overall analysis straightforward and can help prevent bureaucratic navel gazing” (LSCP 18).

“Useful as an underpinning framework to start to pose and ask the right questions” (LSCP 15).

The overall extent to which the Six Steps were used varied. Some LSCPs found them helpful when built into a process of ongoing scrutiny, particularly in the earlier stages of LSCP lifespan:

“the six steps model was used by the Independent Chair/Scrutineer and the safeguarding partners as part of the response to the Wood Review to embed learning as part of a continuous improvement approach. ... The initial self-assessment used a RAG rating to assess evidence and grade as good, adequate, or requiring improvement. ... Which was then subject of wider consultation... the next stage of the work will involve an independently facilitated session... to scrutinise and challenge safeguarding leaders and the executive board’s initial self-assessment judgements in the context of partnership performance... to reach agreement on final RAG rating and prioritise those areas for improvement” (LSCP 61).

“... in year 1 our scrutiny lead led an assessment against 6 steps” (LSCP 8).

“it was helpful to have an in-depth review against the six steps framework – provides a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the arrangements” (LSCP 4).

58. LSCP 11 felt that focusing on Working Together (2018) was sufficient and that a further framework was not needed:

“we focus on WT2018 which incorporates these issues” (LSCP 11).

In particular, they noted the importance of tracking progress against a strategic plan:

“a strategic plan with priorities and measuring whether you deliver it does make a difference” (LSCP 11).

Others suggested that, as LSCPs develop their own frameworks, sharing different examples across the sector would be helpful. For example, LSCP 5 notes use of a scrutiny and assurance framework which decides on what is scrutinised and how:

“We are in the process of developing a framework called a ‘structured learning forum’ in which individual cases will be reviewed directly with the front-line practitioners and other agencies involved in the case. It is in early stages but would be happy to share once complete” (LSCP 64).

SUMMARY

Many Scrutineers find it helpful to have a framework to structure their scrutiny, either using the Six Steps or their own local framework. The comments from this survey have been accommodated into revising the Six Steps and creating an alternative ‘Checklist for Independent Scrutiny’.

4

**WHAT IS BEING
SCRUTINISED?**

What is being scrutinised?

Scrutiny of LSCP leadership

Independent Scrutineer scrutinises LSCP executive leadership

59. Working Together (2018) notes that scrutiny should assess ‘...how well the safeguarding partners are providing strong leadership and agree with the safeguarding partners how this will be reported’ (para 33). LSCPs 61, 64 and 58 employ Independent Chairs who are responsible for scrutinising LSCP leadership and in some cases, modelling this through their own leadership role:

“...ensuring political and managerial leaders are demonstrably accountable for the resourcing and strategic priority given to the safeguarding and wellbeing of children and young people...ensuring the safeguarding partners leadership role is understood” (LSCP 61).

“Independent Chairing of the partnership board; providing professional leadership, challenge, and oversight of safeguarding arrangements; ...and how well the safeguarding partners are providing leadership in ensuring good safeguarding outcomes for children and young people ... This security is to be provided as part of a broader system of assurance which includes the independent inspectorates ‘single assessment of the individual safeguard partners and the JATIs” (LSCP 64).

“the partnership is chaired by an independent appointment...the chair is responsible for scrutinising and challenging local partners ... and how well the safeguarding partners are providing strong leadership” (LSCP 58).

60. LSCPs 10, 57 and 13 employ Independent Scrutineers, as opposed to Chairs, with specific tasks to scrutinise LSCP leadership:

“I am responsible for independent challenge and scrutiny across all aspects of the partnerships work and take a leading role in strategy development and planning ...” (LSCP 3).

“scrutiny provides...an independent, high support constructive challenge perspective... It looks at the leadership, structure of the arrangements and support functions... embed scrutiny activity as a positive learning process” (LSCP 10).

“scrutinises the effectiveness and strength of leadership of the safeguarding partners through individual meetings and specific development sessions” (LSCP 57).

“scrutiny is ... holding statutory partners to account for their responsibilities..... consider whether the partnerships current delivery model is effective in both reforming and driving forward business objectives and priority work... Our terms of reference for the Scrutineer include:

- Are the strategic leadership and governance arrangements robust, effective clear and understood by partners and the wider community?
- Vision and Values: consider whether the SCP’s current delivery model is effective in both reforming and driving forward SCP business objectives and priority work
- Review the extent and impact of partner engagement in SCP activities
- Consider whether current SCP arrangements provide lead partners with assurance via robust and Independent Scrutiny” (LSCP 13).

61. In addition to these roles holding partnership leadership to account, Scrutineers drive change forward and ask for evidence demonstrating continuous improvement:

“Evidence will be submitted to Scrutineers linked to the 6 objectives of the partnership Business Plan which will be scrutinized and which are: - Strengthening leadership and partnership - Tailoring our response to local specific issues - Driving continuous improvement of safeguarding practice - Responding to serious safeguarding cases effectively - Creating a strong feedback loop with children,

families and practitioners - Measuring and evidencing the impact of our work” (LSCP 16).

“Independent Scrutiny ... has driven change in the way that we deliver services to children, young people and families, for example development of a young person’s team in children social care; the implementation of the process in sharing information with health about vulnerable families; establishment of a multi-agency pre-birth team to ensure unborn and new-born babies are safeguarded and ensuring their families receive an improved, compassionate service from professional” (LSCP 52).

62. Supporting leadership to drive change can lead to conflict between partners. Responses noted that Independent Scrutineers and Independent Chairs with scrutiny responsibilities play a key role in resolving differences between partners:

“their approach thought-out the year has been to act as a critical friend to promote reflection and continuous improvement and to provide support to that improvement.... facilitating resolution of agency conflicts” (LSCP 26).

63. There were examples of Independent Scrutineer/Independent Chairs working with the LSCP leadership to oversee the LSCP budget:

“to draw up budget proposals for each year to be presented to the statutory partnership board and manage in year accounts in budget, identifying any risk of budget pressure and potential saving opportunities; to manage and monitor agreed budgets and provide quarterly reports” (LSCP 68).

The Independent Scrutineer input into/ review of the LSCP Annual report and forthcoming LSCP strategic planning

64. Working Together (2018) notes that:

“Safeguarding partners should also agree arrangements for Independent Scrutiny of the report they must publish at least once a year” (para 35).

As noted in para 10 of this report, Briggs and Harris 2021 called for further work on this topic.

65. Our survey asked if the Independent Scrutineer scrutinises the LSCP annual report or contributes to its content. Ninety-one per cent of the 60 respondents noted that the Independent Scrutineer scrutinises the annual report.

Figure 8 – Independent Scrutineer(s) scrutinising the annual report



66. There is a resource implication for the LSCP business unit compiling the annual report. Although no survey has confirmed this, anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of LSCPs expect the detail of the LSCP annual report to be collated, if not written, by the partnership business unit. This survey suggests that the report is then scrutinised by the Independent Scrutineer who may then add their own Independent Scrutineer report or comment in a section of the annual report. For example, Scrutineers for LSCPs 1 and 59 both produce their own annual report to accompany the partnership report:

“...the Independent Scrutineer produces a yearly report of their own that is presented to the executive by the Independent Scrutineer. The yearly report from the Independent Scrutineer is used to offer QA in the form of quotes in relevant sections of the Annual report and the Independent Scrutineer report is included in the Annual report in its entirety as an appendix to the annual report” (LSCP 1).

“to produce an annual Independent Scrutiny report that assesses the partnership’s effectiveness against the following criteria : 1:

determining the physical area of operation covered by the multi-agency arrangements; 2: the authorising vision for multi-agency arrangements, the partnership commitment; 3: the resource framework (cost of the multi-agency strategic decision making body, the cost of agreed initiatives); 4: the method to assess outcomes of multi-agency practice, including how intervention happens if performance falters, and how “independent” external assurance /security will be utilised; 5: the strategy for information and data sharing, including to allow for identification of vulnerable children in need of early help; 6: high level oversight of workforce planning ; 7: multi-agency communication strategy on protecting children ; 8: risk strategy, identifying and adapting to new challenges including new events , and establishing a core intelligence capacity; 9: the model of inquiry in to incidents (criteria 1 to 6)” (LSCP 59).

67. In addition, some Scrutineers input both into the content of the annual report and the subsequent strategic planning:

“Our Scrutineer...reviews the training via the report from our learning and development manager. He attends the SLG and provides scrutiny and challenge at the highest level...working on our annual report, helping to shape the following years strategic plan... provides scrutiny of our rapid reviews” (LSCP 11).

“the Independent Chair/Scrutineer assists in drafting and editing the final report on behalf of the safeguarding partners. The annual report is formally endorsed by the partnership executive board. The Independent Chair/Independent Scrutineer produces a separate accountability report for safeguarding partners and the executive board which is published alongside the annual report” (LSCP 61).

SUMMARY

Scrutineers hold significant responsibility for holding LSCP executive leadership to account, for using scrutiny evidence as feedback to LSCP leadership to drive improvements, driving forward change. In addition, Scrutineers may review budget plans and use. Ninety-one percent respondents noted that Scrutineers scrutinise the content of the annual report and add a scrutiny findings section into the annual report. The quotes above provide examples of how this is done and suggest that further sharing of how scrutiny can enhance LSCP leadership would offer further opportunity to develop and refine this role.

Scrutiny and the role of LSCP ‘relevant agencies’

68. Chapter 3, paragraph 17 of Working Together (2018) notes that ‘Relevant agencies’ are:

“those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider is required to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children”.

A list of relevant agencies is given in Government regulations⁶. LSCPs are to publish which organisations and agencies they will be working with.

69. LSCPs include representative from relevant agencies as chairs and leaders of LSCP subgroups, of specific strands of work and of some reviews of practice for learning events and training. They report running a specific partnership board (alternatively termed a partnership committee or group) where relevant agencies attended meetings with executive leaders of the partnership, sharing information across the sector. Although we did not ask for quantitative data about these topics, returns to the survey noted a range of methods for learning from scrutiny of LSCP relevant agencies.

70. Respondents note that ‘embedded’ scrutiny reaches into all agencies involved with the partnership as opposed to being single agency focused. LSCP 32, 39 and 18 look at their learning as holistic:

“scrutiny is seeking not to focus on individual practice but rather consider why does the service act in this way, although it is recognised that there is also a need to test whether learning has been embedded and what change has resulted” (LSCP 32).

“...promoting culture change throughout the partnerships to embed scrutiny as a constructive process with learning as its outcome” (LSCP 39).

“I scrutinise the entire working of the partnership by reading all of the minutes of all subgroup meetings and the executive committee. I

⁶ The child safeguarding practice review and relevant agency (England) regulations 2018
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/789/schedule/made>

also attend almost every subgroup meeting and occasionally contribute to them” (LSCP 18).

71. There is an onus on embedding learning across the partnership through regular ‘relevant agency’ partnership board/forum/group meetings chaired or facilitated by an Independent Chair and/or Scrutineer:

“The wider safeguarding partners (including relevant agencies) are actively involved in safeguarding children... This was ascertained by the Independent Scrutineer conducting interviews with key strategic leads across the wider partnership and practitioners/managers within relevant agencies. The Scrutineer attended the LSCPs partnership Forum to observe the work undertaken by partnership members in developing partnership responses to safeguarding challenges, and the development of strategic responses” (LSCP 62).

72. Scrutiny was seen to help facilitate engagement with partnership activity. LSCP 26 has an Independent Chair with scrutiny duties and notes how scrutiny has identified relevant agency engagement through a review of the local arrangements, and a programme of interviews with relevant agency representatives:

“The Independent Scrutiny Officer undertakes a review of our local arrangements which contributes to our annual report in a range of ways through... facilitation of a multi-agency strategic leaders and practitioners’ forums... engagement with safeguarding partners and system leaders... The SCP Chair, Business Managers and Lay Members spoke to a total of 14 board members to consider the effectiveness of current partnership arrangements. Specifically, those board members were asked about their role and the support to fulfil the expectations of that role, and the functioning of partnership board meetings... Generally, the feedback was very positive... A few agencies commented that the SCP feels particularly well-functioning and collaborative, with good attendance by agencies. Given the diversity of agencies interviewed, it was encouraging that all members understood and valued their membership of the board, and how this supported the safeguarding of children across the whole system...” (LSCP 26).

73. Scrutiny of the work of the whole partnership activity was undertaken in a variety of ways. LSCP 47 notes scrutiny of partnership activity through the Independent Scrutineer attending partnership subgroup meetings alongside chairing the executive leadership group:

“Our Independent Scrutineer scrutinises the whole partnership, she attends at least one of every subgroup’s meetings undertaken within the partnership across the year ...In addition the Independent Scrutineer chairs the bimonthly Executive meetings and our twice-yearly strategic partnership days” (LSCP 47).

74. Other LSCPs run specific themed events, with a focus on multiagency engagement and shared scrutiny of specific strands of work:

“Relevant agencies were actively involved in the local child exploitation forums that were observed as part of the Independent Scrutiny work and contributed to decision making and planning for safeguarding children in that arena. Relevant agencies completed case audits and were involved in case discussions during the multi-agency case audit practice learning line of sight event” (LSCP 12).

75. Relevant agencies undertake section 11 audits with their LSCP to review their safeguarding protocols and procedures and assess the ways that they record and share data:

“The wider relevant agencies are actively involved in safeguarding through attendance at subgroup meetings, completing Safeguarding Audits; section 11 and 157/175s, involved in attendance at and delivery of multi-agency training and learning events. The LSCP website has been refreshed to include a Learning Hub and resource repository” (LSCP 29).

76. Many LSCPs noted the role of the Scrutineer in challenging relevant agencies to ensure that knowledge and use of policies and procedures were up to date:

“challenging agencies to review their internal processes for referral and response...challenging individual agency and collective culture in relation to the partnership principles and objectives” (LSCP 30).

77. There was some recognition that work, and time pressures faced by relevant agencies (many of whom are managing staff shortages and problems with rapid staff turnover), had a detrimental impact on their capacity to fully engage with LSCP activity. Holding annual events for all to attend and reducing the need for too much bureaucracy was seen as a way to help agencies engage in safeguarding concerns:

“We have a ‘summit’ every year around March. We summarise achievements and agree on the strategic plan at this meeting. We self-evaluate where we are at and where we want to go as a partnership.... We have also increased partners ability to engage positively in the work by reducing bureaucracy, “leaning out” meetings and working hard to establish what is of concern to them so our agendas are relevant and topical. Meetings are very clearly focused on what we need to achieve, identifying a product at the outset so there is a sense of achievement. All meetings related to the strategic plan to ensure people understand that they are working on goals” (LSCP 11).

SUMMARY

How relevant agency engagement with LSCP activity is scrutinised happens through a range of methods. These include the Scrutineer or Chair facilitating and scrutinising regular relevant agency partnership meetings, annual or one-off meetings and learning events; scrutinising multi-agency audits such as section 11 audits; attending or chairing LSCP subgroup activities; and providing direct challenge to support full attendance and engagement with safeguarding activity.

It was not the remit of this work to look at the breadth of engagement with relevant agencies, much of which is informed by contextual safeguarding approaches (www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk) or to assess whether and how local business and private sector providers do engage with LSCP activity. This would be an important strand of work for the future so that LSCPs can share methods and approaches.

Education: a relevant agency

78. There has been considerable debate across the sector about whether education should be identified as a lead core partner in safeguard children, and if so, who is in a strategic position to represent the range of education providers within an LSCP area. The Independent Review of Children’s Social Care (2022) raises this question, advocating that education is included as a strategic leader in LSCP activity⁷. Some LSCPs have included education as a strategic leader within the exec group:

“The Executive group is being widened to include education and voluntary sector representation. This will provide an extra layer of scrutiny to the work being driven by the three statutory partners” (LSCP 23).

“the LSCP made schools the fourth Partner ... Senior Leadership Group and other relevant people were involved in the review” (LSCP 72).

LSCP 67 notes that the Independent Scrutiny identified a number of changes needed at strategic leadership level, including the need for school leaders to be represented at executive level:

“The scrutiny process has highlighted:

- The need for partners at the most senior levels to engage with the strategic partnership agenda, and ensure it remains a priority in each organisation;
- The need to more effectively engage the wider partnership which has resulted in school leaders being represented on the Executive;
- Improvements to the process for considering serious incidents and how lessons are learned” (LSCP 67).

⁷ MacAlister, J (2022) The Independent Review of Children’s Social Care: page 11 to 12

79. LSCPs recognise the breath of education providers and so have established a specific education reference group to oversee safeguarding in educational contexts, which is then subject to scrutiny:

“The challenge from the chair to establish an education reference group to support the 2 education representatives from primary and secondary schools to represent the sector more widely... identifying with colleagues in Education the benefits of establishing a wider reference group to include representatives of governors, early years, further education, independent schools and the supplementary schools sectors; and improving the support to the two education representatives on the Executive” (LSCP 21).

These measures were taken to ensure full engagement with education as a key safeguarding partner holding a central LSCP role. This was done to position education as a central lead in developing safeguarding strategy and to militate against schools feeling that they were being instructed in how to ‘do’ safeguarding:

“Comment from ‘school’ representatives that sometimes schools felt like they were being ‘done to’ rather than informing the debate” (LSCP 26).

The engagement of education as leaders in safeguarding activity became particularly prominent following the publication of ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education’ 2021⁸ and the social movement ‘Everyone’s invited’⁹. LSCPs 21 and 17 noted that they had an immediate response to ‘Everyone’s Invited’:

“Immediate multi-agency partnership response ... included: 1. Children’s services working closely with schools to review their response to reports of sexual harassment and assault to ensure that all appropriate action has been taken and, where disclosures are non-recent, to take action now... the SCP” (LSCP 21).

⁸https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/102191/4/KCSIE_2021_September_guidance.pdf

⁹<https://www.everyonesinvited.uk/>

“sought assurance on the response from MASH and were informed of the key themes coming through the front door which included discussions on students’ sexual behaviour and the extent to which they understand boundaries and consent. Examples of consultation, support and advice provided is evidenced in our AR” (LSCP 17).

SUMMARY

As agencies with a statutory responsibility for children and young people attending their provision, education is recognised as a key safeguarding children partner. This is acknowledged by a number of partnerships incorporating education representatives on the strategic leadership group or through the establishment of a targeted ‘education’ subgroup.

Independent Scrutiny of LSCP outcomes for children

80. There is appetite within the safeguarding children sector to further share information about what outcomes for children are to be achieved, how they are measured and what role Independent Scrutiny has in quality assuring the process. There is a recognition that there are two criteria for outcomes:

- A) System based outcomes for effective LSCP activity in line with Working Together (2018) and
- B) Safeguarding outcomes for children. These are impacted by the work of an LSCP but also by a range of other contextual, economic and social and demographic considerations. This means that assessment of 'improvement' in child safeguarding has to assess a number of variables other than just the LSCP practice. Many LSCPs were cognisant of this and explained how they embrace contextual safeguarding as a means to engage with ecological and environmental, social and economic factors impacting on children¹⁰. These external impacts are, in the main, fully considered by each LSCP when determining desired outcomes for children.

The responses tend to elaborate more on how outcomes for children can be assessed through an appraisal of the systemic working on the LSCP as opposed to focusing on changes in outcomes to individual children. Paragraphs 79 to 82 explain this in more detail. It is recognised that the latter is a complex undertaking with a number of variables outside the control of the LSCP impacting on the child's trajectory.

81. As noted, LSCPs refer to Working Together (2018) as the benchmark against which to measure desired LSCP outcomes. LSCP 76 recognises that tracking outcomes for children through the system to confirm impact is challenging. They suggest that sharing ideas of how to do this across the sector would be valuable:

“As a result of the Independent Chairs/Scrutineers review the partnership is currently re-structuring its way of working which will ultimately lead to improvements in multi-agency safeguarding children's arrangements and therefore better outcomes for children and young people. There is a difficulty in tracking this through the system to confirm impact and any other areas experiences would be valuable to share...” (LSCP 76).

¹⁰ www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk

LSCP 32 also notes the challenges faced when trying to track and demonstrate outcomes for children. They note they are focusing on closing the loop between review recommendations and practise change while they explore the:

“Demonstration of impact of change in practise on service users... They are trying to create ... Greater awareness of blockers in practise for safeguarding partners” (LSCP 32).

LSCP 11 recognise that it is difficult to measure exact impact on individual children and young people, but note the importance of a transparent process of learning and of drawing from the expertise of an experienced Independent Scrutineer:

“We carry out a retrospective analysis of all SPR and RRs to demonstrate impact... Not direct impact on outcomes for children but impact otherwise; Confident in our decisions as we have independent challenge. Transparency and visibility of the partnership with encouragement from the Independent Scrutineer. Our Independent Scrutineer’s knowledge of other partners has help us to continually improve” (LSCP 11).

82. LSCPs note that assessing outcomes is a complex activity, particularly when trying to assess whether LSCP activity is impacting on individual cases. For example, LSCP 27 note that there can be a difference between scrutiny impacting on individual cases as opposed to impacting on cultural change across the partnership:

“Difficult to say at child case level, however, the scrutiny function does have a cultural impact that can be measured over time. For example, the conversations we have about 'wicked issues' such as thresholds, the front door and information sharing are much more nuanced and sophisticated now than they were five years ago. This can be evidenced through children's services improvement journey and Ofsted visits. We have also done some participation work with children and young people - reference the CYP version of the SCP annual report - and they appreciate that we have objective scrutiny in our arrangements to support them feeling heard” (LSCP 27).

83. Scrutineers often access data so that they can demonstrate whether desired outcomes for children have been achieved by relevant agencies. This data provides a basis for challenge across the partnership if needed:

“Developing a data set and refining a data set that tracks the outcomes for children – to ensure there is a multi-agency representation of data that aides the process of safeguarding children. -Challenging the data set from other partners” (LSCP 55).

84. Direct engagement with children and young people as Independent Scrutineers or LSCP advisors is explored in paragraph 34 This engagement enables LSCPs to consider the impact their work is having on representative groups of young people and offers opportunity for young people to be part of identifying desired outcomes for children.

SUMMARY

LSCPs recognise the difference between scrutiny of LSCP system outcomes and scrutiny assessing outcomes for safeguarding individual children. The latter is complex as other variables such as family histories, social, economic, geographic and environmental factors all impact on children’s trajectories.

Scrutiny of data and of quality assurance processes

85. It is recognised that poor information sharing of individual cases and composite data between and within agencies at a strategic level impacts negatively on safeguarding children¹¹. The implication is then that improved information sharing improves child safeguarding. Multiagency data sharing is stressed by LSCP 55 as a key part of information sharing where:

“Audits are brought in from partner agencies with the aim to collect relevant data to scrutinize. We also look at procedures around information sharing and where they can be improved...” (LSCP 55).

86. LSCP 11 and 36 explain how data is used reactively, to illustrate responses to the LSCP strategic plan, and then used proactively to identify areas for future work:

“Data is collated that relates to core child protection, exploitation and relating to the strategic plan only. Our learning and improvement framework is about monitoring the effectiveness of our efforts to deliver the plan, so data is used to demonstrate that” (LSCP 11).

“Our purpose is our focus, not the data. We have a radical model for multi-agency case audit, in its first year and this is very effective. We don’t start with data; we start with ambition” (LSCP 36).

LSCP 36 also scrutinises data to inform progress against set priorities. This data then informs the development of new LSCP priorities:

“the partnership’s scrutiny, audit and review group undertake regular scrutiny of progress towards achieving priority goals through monitoring data, MA audit, single agency inspections, and internal audit. A report is delivered to the executive board on a quarterly basis... priorities are considered against the evidence base of progress, and new areas of concern arising from scrutiny” (LSCP 36).

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/safeguarding-system-needs-to-tackle-stubborn-challenges>

87. Some LSCPs specifically draw on a specialist data analyst to help collect and interpret data from across the partnership which monitors progress against the LSCP strategic priorities:

“Partners contribute to the Performance Scorecard to monitor and assess the impact of progress against the LSCP strategic priorities. The LSCP has also recruited a data analyst to support with this area of work but with a focus around exploitation. There is an annual audit plan as well as peer moderated s.11 every three years. All partners have signed up to the overarching ISA” (LSCP 75).

88. Scrutiny also assesses how well data is understood by the partner agencies, how it gives them insight into children safeguarding issues and how effective their response is:

“There was an existing process for drawing upon headline data relevant to this focus of scrutiny. The partnership sought assurance on how well this data was understood; what it could tell us about the cohorts of children affected; and how effective the local response was...” (LSCP 62).

“The Independent Scrutineer as well as members of the partnership review the SCP data set in both subgroup and Executive meetings to monitor and seek assurance from all relevant agencies” (LSCP 47).

Ongoing data monitoring as part of quality assurance

89. Respondents noted that assessment of data is part of ongoing quality assurance mechanisms. The Scrutineer of LSCP 13 has a role in evaluating how data is being used in audits and reviews, running workshops to explore the challenges presented and to consider the ongoing use of resources:

“...use data and audits as part of QA process. There are challenges around making sure we are looking at the right areas and targeting finite resources in the right areas... the Scrutineer is leading our workshop to evaluate audits” (LSCP 13).

LSCP 2 has an Assurance Board, scrutinised by the Independent Scrutineer, which oversees an annual project plan informed by agency data collection:

“The assurance board leads on scrutiny exercises – a wide variety-working to an annual project plan. The plan is informed by the key statutory assurance exercises including the annual restraint review, and inspection outcomes in terms of impact of action plans, by the key learning and its implementation from CSPRs ... each agency in the partnership shares its own assurance plans and data collection” (LSCP 2).

The impact of Covid-19 on data collection

90. The Covid-19 pandemic made it even more important for data to be shared and reviewed. Findings from data monitoring are, in the main, summarised in the LSCP annual report, but Covid-19 brought about weekly/ fortnightly or monthly reviews of emerging data enabling identification of new risk factors:

“...has aided the SCP to ensure that safeguarding risk factors heightened during Covid-19 are understood and governed by the statutory safeguarding partners” (LSCP 13).

“... Over 2020-21, increased scrutiny of the multi-agency dataset and the accompanying Covid-19 risk register. During the first stages of the pandemic the Scrutineer considered our Partnership response. This led to a Communications campaign across the Partnership” (LSCP 7).

Independent Scrutineers’ membership, or chairing of, quality assurance (or equivalently titled) LSCP subgroups

91. LSCPs with a specific QA, or similarly named subgroup delegate lead responsibility for overseeing performance to them. For example:

“The QA subgroup has the lead role, on behalf of the partnership, for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the work carried out by partners. It does this through regular scrutiny of multiagency

performance data and inspection reports, and through an annual programme of thematic and regular case file audits” (LSCP 26).

Some LSCPs employ Independent Scrutineers with responsibility to oversee or chair the work of this subgroup. For example, LSCP 9 notes that their Independent Scrutineer is:

“chair of the QA and performance,... Chair of scrutiny panels” (LSCP 9).

and with LSCP 22 the:

“Independent Scrutineer chairs the performance and quality assurance groups and the operations and the partnership scrutiny group” (LSCP 22).

LSCP 58 employs an Independent Chair with scrutiny duties. They explain that the Chair’s work gives the Chair opportunity to identify areas that need improvement:

“as the Independent Chair I chair a number of meetings... the scrutiny and performance subgroup of the safeguarding arrangements. This group analyses data across the partnership. The analysis of this multiagency data will identify areas that need further examination by way of audit or deep dive. As Independent Chair I have the freedom to identify such work” (LSCP 58).

SUMMARY

Scrutiny of data produces information used reactively: where the LSCP react to gaps or anomalies in existing data. It can also be used proactively: to inform the development of future initiatives. Some LSCPs employ data analysts to help them use data constructively. Many LSCPs use data sharing as a mechanism for bringing relevant agencies together to better safeguard children. Some Independent Scrutineers chair or ensure regular attendance at Quality Assurance subgroups, or other subgroups where data monitoring and sharing is facilitated.

Scrutiny of learning loops, training and workforce development

Learning from local and national reviews

92. Examples were given of scrutiny examining how learning from local and national reviews is embedded across the LSCP. Many LSCPs have specific subgroups tasked with identifying this learning disseminating it across the partnership. LSCP 12 and 75 talk of using national reports in their thematic review of child exploitation:

“Through one of our key subgroups there is a process in place for identifying and sharing learning from local and national case reviews and the national panel's report 'It was Hard to Escape' informed some of the key lines of enquiry throughout the thematic scrutiny event. The impact for children was considered as part of the thematic assurance event and learning from the event has helped to shape and influence practice to improve outcomes... Areas of good practice and learning have been fed back to those involved the Independent Scrutiny events and disseminated widely across the partnership. The impact of this is that we are seeing earlier identification of the emerging risk from exploitation, consistent relational practice by practitioners with children and families and further development of parents as safeguarding partners” (LSCP 12).

“Our Serious Incident Review Group is our local mechanism for identifying, investigating, and sharing learning from local and national reviews.... Learning is also then reflected back through our multi-agency training pathway” (LSCP 75).

93. LSCP 17 explains how the work of these subgroups is assessed by the Independent Scrutineer:

“The inter-connectivity between the SCP's Learning and Improvement Framework ... and its training strategy supports our aims to ensure provision of a comprehensive and high-quality programme of learning and development for multi-agency staff working with children. The Learning & Development Subgroup is

responsible for ensuring that safeguarding training needs are identified and that an effective training programme is delivered in response. This is developed through the Training Needs Analysis that is regularly reviewed by the multi-agency Subgroup. The group has an overview of emerging safeguarding issues, both locally and nationally, and discusses reviews, new research findings, legislation, national guidance, consultations, and initiatives to ensure these are reflected in the SCP training programme. The SCP delivered 35 training sessions and 1 workshop over 2020-21, training 525 multi-agency professionals. ... The Learning and Development Subgroup is also responsible for ensuring that all agencies are providing regular and good quality single agency training. Each year, SCP partners complete a proforma to provide details and figures of compliance for their single agency safeguarding training. The Independent Scrutineer then reviews and provides a challenge for response. This ensures that high quality safeguarding training is available across the partnership. As a result, the group can compare training programmes, identify any gaps in training provision and support the commissioning of additional courses as a result” (LSCP 17).

94. There were examples of targeted scrutiny audit activity that creates data, reviews local and national learning and runs learning events on a particular topic. The Independent Scrutineer for LSCP 7 undertook a targeted piece of work on school exclusions within the LSCP footprint, drawing on learning from local and national reviews. They were then part of a learning/training event to disseminate findings:

“There was then a half day learning event for practitioners with speakers including the Independent Scrutineer and survivors. An Evaluation was made of the impact of the event for delegates. The Scrutineer presented her report and actions to the Statutory Partners at our Strategic Leadership Group and the report has been published on our website leading to a multi-agency action plan... The report has also been presented to the Community Safety Partnerships ...Development of working parties re school exclusion, which has led to targeted work for vulnerable children in year six, prior to transition to secondary school” (LSCP 7).

95. Many LSCP responses evidenced how learning from local and national reviews informs training and workforce development. LSCP 68 talks of how relevant

agencies safeguarding arrangements can be improved and strengthened through scrutiny that looks and applies learning from local and national reviews:

“There is a process for identifying, investigating and sharing learning from local and national case reviews - the audit examined individual agencies' approach to embedding learning from such reviews within their own organisations...As a result of this scrutiny there is a much clearer understanding of the current single agency child safeguarding arrangements and the opportunities and work on going to further strengthen those” (LSCP 68).

While LSCP 55 notes the Scrutineer role in ensuring that:

“Learning from our case reviews are disseminated through our case review subgroup to the partnership and we also carry out learning events for our partners. Our action plans from reviews are updated frequently and we do ask for evidence from partners before signing off actions as completed” (LSCP 55).

Scrutineer engagement with rapid reviews and CSPRs

96. As well as ensuring that learning from local and national reviews is being integrated into training and workforce development, some Scrutineers play a key role in deciding whether a local rapid review of a serious incident needs to take place, and in scrutinising whether rapid reviews and CSPRs undertaken are following correct procedures. LSCP 73, whose chair also holds scrutiny duties, plays an important role in overseeing local reviews:

“to scrutinise and advise the statutory partners on decisions to undertake child safeguarding practice review in line with WT2018) to scrutinise and provide assurance of the process, learning, outcomes and impact of child safeguarding practice reviews or other learning reviews....provides challenge and scrutiny and responsibility for holding partners to account in respect to SCPRs, rapid reviews and other learning reviews. The chair also holds a mirror up to the partnership with regards to national reviews and other themed reports, providing a focus upon the sufficiency of the arrangements within our partnership” (LSCP 73).

Scrutinising the impact of training and workforce development activities

97. Scrutineers work with their LSCP to assess the impact of LSCP training initiatives and workforce supervision arrangements:

“We have understood how positive practice has affected young people experiencing child exploitation. Front line practitioners have fed back the effect training has had on practice - the identification of safeguarding concerns and how the collation of multi-agency evidence supports the escalation of concerns about children. We've heard how the effectiveness of Safeguarding Supervision has impacted on referrals, risk assessments and support for children and families. We have evidenced how multi agency working through the first lockdown saw innovative practice to safeguard and support hundreds of vulnerable families (identified as having domestic abuse, drug, alcohol, mental ill health issues) through Children Centre and Health Visitor support when schools and nurseries were closed” (LSCP 5).

“As one of our areas of focus, there is a robust training and education programme in relation to child exploitation and the outcomes of this Independent Scrutiny activity has further shaped and influenced our offer” (LSCP 12).

“Whilst the Scrutineer did not attend training events, materials were provided for appraisal, and the Scrutineer undertook a series of interviews with key personnel providing multi agency training, and practitioners across the partnership who had attended multi agency training, in order to complete assessment of wider safeguarding children arrangements” (LSCP 36).

SUMMARY

Scrutiny of learning from local and national reviews can be used to advance partnership engagement, ensuring that learning is disseminated through training and workforce development activities at strategic and operational level. Targeted scrutiny using deep dives and audits on specific topics of local interest can then be used to identify LSCP training needs and can be embedded in learning activities across the LSCP, engaging partners in reflective assessment of their work.

5

**INDEPENDENT
SCRUTINY
ACHIEVING
IMPACT**

Independent Scrutiny achieving impact

Assessment of the impact of scrutiny

98. Although not specifically asked as a question ‘how do you assess the impact of scrutiny?’ some responses to the survey included information about if and how impact was determined.

LSCP 27 and 72 explain how learning from scrutiny is monitored and assessed, providing an overview of the partnership activity as an overall system

“On a practical level, any recommendations from scrutiny are pulled into a composite action plan which we use to monitor the implementation of learning from SPRs, audits and section 11. By holding all the recommendations in one place we maintain an overview of the system and can monitor progress against thematic areas - see our Thematic Learning Framework on the SCP website...We are planning to assess the impact of the scrutiny undertaken since April 2020 in the summer of 2022” (LSCP 27).

“...The approach taken is to draft a terms of reference that is fit for purpose and has clear outcomes of what is achieved. The draft is reviewed by partners and relevant topic experts, and the appointed Independent Scrutineer to ensure that there is clarity from the start of the process. The ToR and tools that are used include criteria for ‘Good’ to provide a benchmark and assist the process. A key principle is that the Independent Scrutineer will be supported to access documentation, systems and people who can provide the evidence that is needed for the scrutiny and challenge. The dissemination of the findings is also considered from the start of the process, and key messages are shared through 7minute briefings, and presentation to partners, and staff briefings” (LSCP 72).

LSCP 51 and 52 note how challenges made by the IS challenges have resulted in changes with improved outcomes for partnership working:

“Direct challenge about the effectiveness of the partnership arrangements – resulted in an acceptance about the fragility of the

partnership arrangements and focused set of business priorities. Challenge about the quality of a rapid review undertaken by statutory partners – resulted in a reflective learning session for those who undertook the review who had the opportunity to reflect on their individual and collective responsibilities. Challenge about the capacity of the Business Unit- initial response was to review after 3 months - Outcome of the review was partners agreed to fund additional capacity. Challenge about the quality of the strategic and business plans – resulted in a more outcome focused plan” (LSCP 51).

“...Independent Scrutiny through a recent CSPR process and the Practitioner Forum has driven change in the way that we deliver services to children, young people and families, for example development of a Young Person's Team in children's social care; the implementation of the SIRS process in sharing information with health about vulnerable families; established a multi-agency pre-birth team to ensure unborn and new-born babies are safeguarded and ensuring their families receive an improved, compassionate service from professionals” (LSCP 52).

LSCP 42 and 44 note that scrutiny of a specific area of work leads to an action plan to be developed with recommendations being addressed:

“The focused scrutiny work undertaken in respect of Contextual Safeguarding has led to a robust action plan being developed which will link in with the priorities of the Operational Groups and ensure the areas identified within the report recommendations are addressed” (LSCP 42).

“Following the analysis of the scrutiny actions are always put in place. For example, following a SCR involving a child not being brought for immunisations the CCG worked closely with GPs to develop Practice Leads and a WNB policy. In a further audit it was identified that this had led to improved practice and identification in GP practices” (LSCP 44).

Achieving impact and outcomes in the partnership culture

99. LSCPs noted that ‘the Partnership’ must have a greater emphasis on the impact of its activity (LSCP 67). They note that the scrutiny can prompt a powerful independent focus on an area of work, but that the actual changes in outcomes are achieved by the partnership overall.

LSCP 39 Note a list of outcomes that have been achieved through deep dives undertaken by Independent Scrutiny. They note that:

“the overall outcomes included:

- Better recognition of the views of schools in relation to specific casework
- Some cases were reviewed and safeguarding improved
- An acknowledgement of the need to respect the professional views and opinions of all services working with families based on their different levels of contact and exposure
- A need to refresh and promote the multi-agency responsibility to use the formal escalation processes when necessary
- This was a direct challenge of the Integrated Care System, but one adopted by the SCP and which focused attention on the practical working arrangements involving schools and children’s social care when working with families
- The legacy case audit had a specific impact on outcomes for children whose casework was subject to the audit but with a stronger message to affect multi-agency working and cooperation going forward” (LSCP 39).

100. Also identifying the impact of scrutiny, LSCP 67 refers to their targeted scrutiny of the custodial state, noting that:

“It is misleading the claim that Independent Scrutiny has on its own, achieved the more important recent changed outputs in respect of safeguarding children in custody as these have been achieved as a result of the combined efforts of a wide number of different bodies. However, we believe our distinctive focus played a part in securing

the adoption of both national and local standing reviewing independent mechanisms for reviewing the use of restraint in custody. The key point here is the addition of a level of independence to such mechanisms. This did not exist previously. More specifically Independent Scrutiny has played a part in:

- The establishment of a forum for children in custody,
- The establishment of Adverse Childhood Experience training for Prison Officers, and
- Supported the development of the ‘Secure Stairs’ model for working with children in custody, the roll out of the new Youth Justice Officer qualification for Prison Officers and encouraged the growth of a ‘child first’ focus in the management of YOIs” (LSCP 67).

101. The awareness that scrutiny alone cannot be attributed to creating change is also noted by LSCP 41, but that lessons from scrutiny can contribute to creating a desired safeguarding children culture across the partnership. They, as LSCP 67, refer to the need for outcomes to be addressed across time through all partnership activity:

“The deep-dives have led to an understanding that recommendations and actions alone don't improve the system. That it's down to creating a safeguarding culture within organisations. Off the back of this we have created a Safeguarding Improvement Hub, where an Action Learning Set method is used with senior managers from all partner agencies to consider the 'wicked issues' that underlie the difficulties in changing practice.... We try to outline these as the impact in our annual report. However real lasting change takes time and so it is difficult to say so early on. We can evidence immediate change in policy, strategy, process etc. but as to the difference this makes to children it will take more time to know the true outcome. What we do know is that we've been able to hear the families voice more through using the deep dive methodology and focus in on the lived experience of the child. This has led to the development of a 'masterclass' on the use of language when working with families and the avoidance of victim blaming. The uptake of this has been huge and already there are signs of change within the way contacts into MASH are written, officer's reports, SW assessments etc. are much more thoughtful in their use of language when describing an event and the impact on the child” (LSCP 41).

102. The effective working of the partnership multi-agency activity is also seen by LSCP 42 to be the important area for focus:

“The approach now in place sees a greater emphasis on ascertaining the extent to which agencies are working together in respect of safeguarding, with greater consideration of partnership effectiveness. We have realised that analysing data which is already scrutinised internally within agencies is not an effective use of resource nor does it give us an indication of the effectiveness of the partnership. Instead, the focus is now on seeking strategic assurance that agencies are working together on key safeguarding issues (known as Priorities and emerging risks) - the ... process has been refined as a result of scrutiny and now there is consistent and defensible decision making” (LSCP 42).

103. Continuing this focus, LSCP 25 note how their Independent Scrutiny helped the whole partnership to assess its values and visions, and the effectiveness of its models of operation, leading to scrutiny focused on the impact of specific aspects of LSCP working against priorities set by the LSCP:

“Our previous Scrutineer supported and challenged our initial thinking around the partnership's operating model, values, vision etc. Our success measures are embedded into the core of the partnership's work and its priorities. The scrutinising of the partnership's first 2 practice priorities has led to a plan to stay working with 3 key priority areas - mental health, adolescent risk, and basic child protection - rather than trying to tackle too many varying priorities. We are also more focused on seeking to measure impact of our partnership's work on practice - the 'so what?' question” (LSCP 25).

104. The onus therefore is on ensuring that there is a whole partnership learning culture is developed. LSCP 17 note the importance of learning from regional and national reviews, with recognition that success in reducing knife crime within the locality was due to the partnership's safeguarding culture:

“The SCP was encouraged to note that the number of youth victims of knife crime with injury has steadily declined since 2018. The Independent Scrutineer expressed that the LSCP success can be attributed to the partnership’s safeguarding culture, which has included the effective sharing of information, joint safety planning and intervention. Outcome: police partners have reported to our Independent Scrutineer that we are the only boroughs to consecutively reduce numbers for three years running. Police colleagues have offered assurance that we are one of the lowest inner-city boroughs nationally, in regard to knife crime. The graph below shows that the overall downward trend in knife crime has continued in 2020-21, However, the SCP retains its focus on youth violence in anticipation of a rise in levels as lockdown eases over 2021” (LSCP 17).

SUMMARY

Independent Scrutiny is best evidenced to impact on LSCP performance when the LSCP leaders drive the creation of an open and reflective learning culture. The impact of scrutiny on outcomes is invariably assessed through analysing change resulting from targeted pieces of work. This is done through continual monitoring of the impact of LSCP activity against agreed priority plans.

6

**OPPORTUNITIES
FOR FURTHER
REFLECTION**

Opportunities for further reflection

105. Whilst working on this project, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published their report “Child Protection in England” (2022) following the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson. The Independent Review of Children’s Social Care (MacAlister 2022) was also published.

It is obvious that LSCP expertise and findings from this project can be used to consider issues raised in both reviews, supporting local areas to improve the design of their local systems.

This project did not extend to a literature review of LSCP plans and reports and they have not been triangulated, compared, contrasted, tested, or evaluated against the local area survey returns. This is an area of work that would benefit from a full literature review.

This project has:

- delivered and shared the first England-wide picture of how Independent Scrutiny is being approached.
- generated a repository of case study examples for LSCPs to use as reference, to be hosted on VKPP and TASP websites.
- revised the initial “Six Steps” framework to become the “Checklist for Independent Scrutiny”, a resource that can be utilised by LSCP executive leaders, scrutineers, and relevant partners to self-assess their approach to Independent Scrutiny and develop enhanced arrangements.

Moving Forward

This project has provided a picture of the range and type of practice currently in place and a platform from which further activity can be commissioned. Future work would develop our evidence base and enable local partners to deliver improved Independent Scrutiny and more effective LSCP arrangements.

These fundamental points and questions have emerged during the project:

- a. High levels of participation from 105 of the 137 LSCPs in this current project should be taken as evidence of the desire to share, build knowledge and confidence as well as co-produce resources. Working Together (2018) identifies that LSCP activity should safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The survey responses give evidence of scrutiny extending from prevention to early help and child protection. How can this range of

approaches to scrutiny become more embedded in local systems and be described in every partnership's annual reporting?

- b. Practice development should build on the momentum of this project through engagement with LSCPs. This has the potential to build confidence and ensure that decision making is informed by the best available evidence using high-quality methods to find out what works. This would contribute towards assurance that Independent Scrutiny is being delivered against the intent of Working Together (2018).
- c. Future commissions must be coordinated between senior leaders from key stakeholders, including the Department for Education, the Home Office, Department of Health and Social Care and the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel together with Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships.
- d. Future national commissions considering Independent Scrutiny would benefit from funding to enable triangulation and evaluation.
- e. How can the executive leaders as local safeguarding partners strengthen their approach to the commissioning of Independent Scrutiny? Reference to the Checklist for Independent Scrutiny could help to ensure proper co-ordination and involvement of all agencies to drive reflective practice and ensure a cycle of embedded and routine learning. This should include monitoring of the impact of LSCP activity against agreed priority plans, national and local learning reviews. This must draw on the expertise of existing LSCP engagement with relevant agencies, and with education as an essential element.
- f. Many LSCPs already involve education as a strategic lead. The report provides examples of the rationale and benefits of this. How can this information be used for future consideration of education as a fourth strategic lead within LSCP arrangements?
- g. Is there system-wide assurance that Local Safeguarding Partners are reporting annually about the impact of their Independent Scrutiny on outcomes for children and how they are providing strong leadership (Working Together 2018 paragraph 33)?
- h. As this project ends how can examples continue to be shared and evaluated, be it through products, case studies, events, and opportunities across a national, regional and sub-regional multi-agency system?

- i. There are interesting examples of local areas engaging with young people as part of their Independent Scrutiny. How can this be expanded across more partnerships and translated into service design? Additional resources would be required to facilitate the safe and ethical engagement of young scrutineers in local scrutiny.
- j. Data shows that some LSCPs see advantage in employing Independent Chairs with scrutiny duties and/or Independent Chairs working alongside Independent Scrutineers. In some cases, the same person holds both roles. Future work could share the rationale for these variations with explanations of how the dual roles are seen to either challenge or support each other. This could demonstrate how safeguarding partners assure themselves that their arrangements for Independent Scrutiny are sufficient.
- k. It could be helpful to have a national outline of desired outcomes for children against which local outcomes can be compared and scrutiny focused. This would need to address how these desired outcomes address other variables such as economic, environmental, and social factors that impact on children alongside their contact with the LSCP. A national set of desired outcomes for safeguarding children would need to be developed through a genuinely multi-agency lens, engaging with all local safeguarding partners, and What Works Centres (or equivalents) representing policing, health partners, education as well as children's social care.
- l. The survey has illustrated that multi-agency information sharing takes place when partnership working is embedded across LSCP subgroups with co-chairs from different agencies, and across multi-agency training and workforce development activities. Achieving good multi-agency information sharing is identified in local and national reviews of serious incidents to be a continuing stubborn problem. How can we learn from scrutiny of these embedded practices to improve information sharing?
- m. The insight gained through this project should be considered by the Department for Education when consulting on the revision of Working Together (2018).