



# **Bath and North East Somerset Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership**

## **Think Family and Community**

## **Independent Scrutiny Arrangements**

## Overview

Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) Partners value the voice of independent scrutiny and challenge of our new safeguarding and community safety arrangements. Our new scrutiny arrangements are set out below; they will ensure local systems and practice are effective and work for children, adults, families and communities as well as for practitioners. Independent scrutiny will:

- Provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of services to protect people and communities
- Assist when there is disagreement between the organisations responsible for community safety and safeguarding in the agencies involved in the arrangements
- Support a culture and environment conducive to robust scrutiny and constructive challenge to improve outcomes for children, adults, families and communities.

We will focus our scrutiny arrangements on a positive learning culture where everyone involved welcomes scrutiny and actively participates in it; trusting and learning from each other as well as taking accountability.

Effective Independent Scrutiny relies on:

- Robust and curious analysis of performance information
- Learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews, Domestic Homicide Reviews and Children's Practice Reviews, multi-agency audit and reflective learning discussions
- Understanding the lived experience of local children, adults, families and communities
- Understanding the frontline experience, strengths and challenges of frontline staff and volunteers

## Local Independent Scrutiny of the Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership

### 1. Independent Chair

We will retain an Independent Chair at the Executive and Operational meetings, as we consider that there is benefit in having our Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership meetings chaired by an individual who:

- ✓ is not the representative of any single agency
- ✓ is able to bring their experience of acting as a critical friend
- ✓ encourages appropriate challenge
- ✓ holds agencies to account

### 2. Independent Scrutiny Officers

We will identify suitable independent scrutiny officers who will have attributes, skills, knowledge and understanding of the systems to fulfil this role.

It is anticipated that they will be from a range of backgrounds in order to ensure different perspectives and provide a degree of flexibility and capacity to contribute to the scrutiny and assurance arrangements as required.

3. Involvement of Children, Adults and Communities

We are committed to involving children, adults and communities in having an active role in local arrangements; we want to hear the voice of those directly affected. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Children's Equality Group; Children's In Care Council and Youth Forum
- Citizens Panels
- Carers and Young Carers organisations
- Your Health, Your Voice (BaNES NHS CCG patient and public involvement meetings)

4. Involvement of Lay Members and HealthWatch

Lay Members have played a critical role in the LSCB and LSAB and we want to ensure this role is part of the scrutiny arrangements going forward. Lay Members challenge whether our actions are improving outcomes, and ask questions which help agencies review their approach and practice; HealthWatch plays a key role in providing an independent perspective from those who use the service and therefore act as a vital source of scrutiny.

5. Elected Members

We will continue to ask Portfolio Holders, Cabinet and other Elected Members to scrutinise the work of the new arrangements. Scrutiny Panels and Health and Wellbeing Board will also provide that challenge, as well as the new Health and Care Board.

6. Ofsted, CQC and other Government Agencies

We will review reports from external sources and use their findings to scrutinise the work in BaNES and its effectiveness.

**Programmes of Scrutiny:**

In addition to the above we will develop a new Assurance Framework which will include:

- An annual programme of independent case file audits. This will take the form of both single agency and multi-agency audits targeted at specific issues.
- We will commission Independent Authors to conduct Safeguarding Children Practice Reviews, Safeguarding Adult Reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews as required and we will undertake learning reviews when appropriate.

- We will complete statutory self-assessments and where appropriate validate these in order to carry out our legal requirements eg for agencies working with children and families there is a Section 11 assessment to be completed, and for schools a specific self-assessment, Section 175; for agencies working with adults we will continue with the self-assessment programme shared with North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Bristol and Somerset.
- Informal sessions with an organisation if requested.
- We will hold Enquiry / Assurance / Line of Sight Events.
- We will monitor and review performance information and will commission bespoke reports to explore identified issues, including undertaking Peer Reviews and Deep Dives as appropriate.
- Hold Focus Groups as needed.
- Request assurance reports from Commissioning and Scrutineers for specific purposes.
- Agree key performance indicators and outcomes with all agencies involved in the arrangement.

Finally we will review our scrutiny arrangement each year and we will publish the learning from the range of independent scrutiny in our annual report. This will include:

- Whether all agencies are fulfilling their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of people at risk of harm;
- Whether all agencies are joined up and working together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, adults, families and communities, right across the safeguarding system;
- A review of the inter-connectedness between performance, practice and voice of people.

### **Regional Independent Scrutiny for Safeguarding Children**

In addition to the local arrangements set out above we have committed to collaborate with the regional Avon & Somerset Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (ASSSP) in order to develop a safeguarding children scrutiny framework for 2019-2021.

The ASSSP have developed a regional approach on behalf of the five local areas in the Avon and Somerset Constabulary footprint. This system will enhance local delivery of scrutiny and will co-ordinate the approach, introducing efficiency and opportunities for shared learning, and reduce duplication across the five areas.

Therefore, an Independent Scrutiny Co-ordinator has been appointed by the ASSSP in order to provide the support and facilitation of assurance activity to all these local areas within the Avon and Somerset geographical footprint. The arrangements will be assessed on how effectively they are working for children, young people and families, as well as practitioners, and how well the safeguarding partnership is providing strong and effective leadership.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **The role of Independent Scrutiny**

- Provide a rigorous and transparent assessment of the extent to which appropriate and effective systems and processes are in place in all partner agencies in order to fulfil their statutory duties, ensuring that children are protected and that appropriate safeguarding strategies are developed and embedded.
- Evaluate arrangements for the operation of the requisite local area partnership, including the purpose, effectiveness and functions of board meetings, and recommend and implement appropriate changes.
- Support the implementation of the findings and outcomes of any single or multi-agency safeguarding / Domestic Homicide Reviews.
- Confirm or not that effective performance management, audit and quality assurance mechanisms are in place within partner organisations which will support the partners to fulfil their statutory objectives, and which will enable the partnership to identify and measure its success and impact.
- Ensure that the three safeguarding partners provide independent, robust and effective challenge to all partners.
- Ensure that the voices of children and other members of the community as relevant are appropriately represented and heard in the work of the partnership.
- Support a culture and environment conducive to organisational learning, improving outcomes for our most vulnerable.

### **The role of the Independent Scrutiny Co-ordinator**

- Draw evidence from activity to contribute to hypothesis development / review.
- Act as a critical friend to partners, providing support and facilitation of challenge.
- Ensure mapping of scrutiny / assurance functions for each 'place'.
- To co-ordinate the effective scrutiny of each local arrangement according to their Terms of Reference.
- To draft an Annual Report on each local area's arrangement
  - For the local area Board in the first instance;
  - To the ASSSP enabling support and challenge by highlighting good practice, issues and concerns.
- Co-ordinate and train (with support) a pool of local reviewers from a variety of disciplines.
- Co-ordinate reviewers and lead reviews.

- Ensure independence in co-ordinating review teams.
- Ensure each local area review considers the contribution of all statutory and key partners through a variety of disciplines.
- Ensure that the voices of children, young people and their families are appropriately represented and heard throughout, including the use of Youth Forums, Youth Scrutineers and Youth Panels, and any other local groups as appropriate.