



SCRUTINY AND ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK 2018/20

V1.4 February 2019 – FINAL VERSION

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1 Overview

The Children's MARS arrangements have been developed to create an environment that is conducive to robust scrutiny and constructive challenge. The arrangements include opportunities to proactively catch local agencies and organisations before they fall as well as a partnership approach to learning and improvement across the multi-agency children's safeguarding system.

Locally, there is a culture of challenge and holding partners to account. There are embedded systems and processes for professional challenge across the safeguarding system and there is evidence of scrutiny and assurance arrangements in place at all levels across our safeguarding partner organisations.

There is an ongoing drive and commitment to ensure continuous improvement leading to better outcomes and experiences for our children, young people and families and North Lincolnshire's early adopter status has provided opportunities to further test and develop innovative approaches to scrutiny and assurance. Through this Children's MARS Board Scrutiny and Assurance Framework (known hereafter as the Framework), a range of mechanisms are in place to ensure scrutiny and assurance including independent scrutiny, which are:

- Section 11 Process
- Agency 'Call Ins'
- Assurance Events
- Line of Sight Practice Learning Events
- Peer Review

These mechanisms provide opportunities for quality assurance, case tracking and deep dives into specific agencies, themes, cohorts and areas of focus.

In the spirit of continuous learning and a responsive approach, we will adapt and review this Framework, which includes independent scrutiny arrangements. This reinforces the local ethos of being forward thinking and outward looking and the ongoing drive towards 'breaking the mould', while ensuring the approach to scrutiny and assurance continues to be transparent and inclusive.

This Framework, which is developed in a contemporary context taking innovative approaches, enables safeguarding partners to:

- have assurance of whether all agencies are fulfilling their responsibilities to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
- have assurance of whether all agencies are joined up and working together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children across the safeguarding system
- have a direct line of sight to frontline practice
- have live conversations with frontline practitioners
- talk with and receive direct feedback from children, young people and families
- test the interconnectedness between performance, practice and the voice of the child, young person and family
- take account of independent scrutiny which helps to determine the effectiveness of our arrangements including arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases
- be confident about the authenticity of the report they will publish at least once a year

This Framework provides clarity regarding our arrangements and outlines who will conduct the assurance function, how arrangements will be reviewed and how any recommendations will be taken forward. This includes the process and timescales for ongoing review of the arrangements to ensure they remain fit for purpose. This Framework also outlines mechanisms for scrutinising our Children's MARS arrangements through individual safeguarding partners organisational scrutiny functions, the outcomes of which can contribute to learning across the wider partnership as well as the individual organisations themselves.

Independent Scrutiny

The role of independent scrutiny is critical to provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of the Children's MARS arrangements, including arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases.

Independent Scrutiny Officer(s) will play a significant role in this Framework, as will safeguarding partners and representatives from selected relevant agencies, to engage in peer review processes and further opportunities for peer review processes at a regional and national level.

Safeguarding partners will be jointly responsible for identifying Independent Scrutiny Officer(s) who should have suitable attributes, skills, knowledge and understanding of the children's safeguarding system. It is anticipated that there will be a small pool of Independent Scrutiny Officer(s) from a range of backgrounds, which will ensure different perspectives and provide a degree of flexibility and capacity to contribute to the scrutiny and assurance arrangements as required.

Local arrangements for independent scrutiny are outlined in section 4.

Independent scrutiny can also assist in the event of a disagreement between the safeguarding partners and/or relevant agencies involved in the Children's MARS arrangements (more details in dispute resolution section within the **Children's MARS Board Memorandum of Understanding**).

The local arrangements for independent scrutiny are outlined in this Framework, including the role of the Independent Scrutiny Officer(s) (also referenced in the **Children's MARS Board Memorandum of Understanding**).

2 Partnership Scrutiny and Assurance Functions

SCRUTINY AND ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK	
<p>Section 11 Process (including signatures of risk framework)</p>	<p>The Section 11 self-assessment is an annual paper exercise to ensure agencies and organisations with a duty under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 are compliant with their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people within their organisation. Agencies and organisations with a duty under Section 11 are detailed in appendix 2.</p> <p>This exercise will be underpinned by the signatures of risk tool, which enables the Children’s MARS Board to identify areas of risk and further development, as well as areas of best practice. The tool considers the following risk domains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and governance • Performance and outcomes • Commissioning and quality • Priorities and partnerships • Resource and workforce management • Culture and challenge <p>There are opportunities to develop bespoke domains for specific areas of focus as identified.</p> <p>We will make use of the Section 11 and signatures of risk framework as part of the preparations for our agency specific assurance events.</p>
<p>Agency ‘Call Ins’</p>	<p>There are opportunities for safeguarding partners to call in agency representatives to assure the Board of the agencies’ section 11 responsibilities, their contribution to the local arrangements or in relation to a specific issue.</p>
<p>Agency Specific Assurance Events</p>	<p>Over a two-year period, there is commitment to undertake an agency specific assurance event for agencies locally identified through Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.</p> <p>These events provide an opportunity for safeguarding partners, Independent Scrutiny Officer(s) and relevant agency representatives to visit specific agencies to ‘walk the floor’ and talk to practitioners. It will also provide an opportunity to meet with children and families. Young people, as scrutineers, are also encouraged and supported to contribute to these arrangements where appropriate. It is an opportunity for the agencies to showcase good practice, indicate how they listen to children and families and to talk about further developments. This gives partners (and young people) a sense of a specific agency contribution to the safeguarding system. We will make use of the Section 11 and signatures of risk framework as part of the preparations for our agency specific assurance events. The outcomes of these will help to shape the focus of the agency specific events, though the format for the events is flexible and exact arrangements will be agreed by the safeguarding partners, Independent Scrutiny Officer(s) and any relevant agencies that may contribute to the assurance event and the identified agency.</p>

The proposed format for the Agency Specific Assurance event is as follows:

- The specific agency identified for scrutiny is endorsed by the three safeguarding partners.
- A proposed date is identified to ensure availability of safeguarding partners, Independent Scrutiny Officer(s), other contributing partners and young people (if the agency identified is one of the safeguarding partners, a representative from that agency will not be involved in the agency specific event).
- A letter will be distributed to the identified agency confirming they have been selected for an agency specific assurance event and the date will be proposed.
- If the Section 11 and signatures of risk framework needs to be updated, it will be distributed to the identified agency (this should be no later than six weeks prior to the proposed date).
- The completed Section 11 and signatures of risk framework will be submitted to the Safeguarding Partners Multi Agency Innovation Hub (this should be no later than three weeks prior to the proposed date).
- Taking account of the outcomes of the Section 11 and signatures of risk framework and any other relevant sources of information, preparatory work will be undertaken by the Safeguarding Partners Multi Agency Innovation Hub to provide opportunities for reflective observations and lines of questioning.
- Programme for the agency specific assurance event will be agreed with the identified agency and safeguarding partners and then distributed to those involved.
- Agency specific event to take place.
- Led by the Independent Scrutiny Officer(s), key highlights, findings and immediate areas for consideration and action will be fed back to the specific agency representatives at the end of the event.
- Led by the Independent Scrutiny Officer(s), a report will be collated to identify areas of strengths, areas for development and any specific areas for consideration and action. This report will take account the findings from the Independent Scrutiny Officer(s), safeguarding partners, any other relevant partners and young people scrutineers.
- The report will be distributed to safeguarding partners for their agreement to distribute it to the specific agency. Any ongoing review work and/or action plan will be presented to the next Children’s MARS Board as appropriate. Key highlights and emerging themes will be communicated across partnership and governance arrangements as appropriate.
- Any identified actions will be followed up by the Safeguarding Partners Multi Agency Innovation Hub and the agency will have a responsibility to incorporate the findings and any action taken into their annual Section 11 and signatures of risk framework.

This is an organic process and specific arrangements for these events will be flexible to take account of learning and local need to ensure quality outcomes for children and families.

<p>Thematic Assurance Events</p>	<p>Over a two-year period, there is commitment to undertake three thematic assurance events that provide an opportunity for the Children’s MARS Board to gain a sense of the safeguarding system pertaining to a specific child protection or safeguarding issue across all safeguarding partners and other relevant agencies.</p> <p>The proposed format for the Thematic Assurance event is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The specific theme is identified for scrutiny by one or more of the safeguarding partners and is endorsed by the three safeguarding partners. • A format for the event will be proposed by the Safeguarding Partners Multi Agency Innovation Hub and endorsed by the three safeguarding partners. This should best reflect opportunities for scrutinising the specific theme. • Dates to be identified to ensure availability of the Independent Scrutiny Officer(s), key contributing partners and members of the Safeguarding Partners Multi Agency Innovation Hub to ensure access to relevant multi-agencies and functions as identified in the proposed format. • Taking account of the specific theme and the proposed areas for consideration, preparatory work will be undertaken by the Safeguarding Partners Multi Agency Innovation Hub to provide opportunities for reflective observations and lines of questioning. • Programme for the thematic assurance event will be agreed with the identified agency and safeguarding partners and then distributed to those involved. • Thematic event to take place. • Led by the Independent Scrutiny Officer(s), key highlights, findings and immediate areas for consideration and action will be fed back to the specific agency representatives at the end of the event. • Led by the Independent Scrutiny Officer(s), a report will be collated to identify areas of strengths, areas for development and any specific areas for consideration and action. This report will take account the findings from the Independent Scrutiny Officer(s), safeguarding partners, any other relevant partners and young people scrutineers. • The report will be distributed to safeguarding partners for their agreement to distribute it to all contributing agencies. Any ongoing review work and/or action plan will be presented to the next Children’s MARS Board as appropriate. Key highlights and emerging themes will be communicated across partnership and governance arrangements as appropriate. • Any identified actions will be followed up by the Safeguarding Partners Multi Agency Innovation Hub <p>This is an organic process and specific arrangements for these events will be flexible to take account of learning and local need to ensure quality outcomes for children and families.</p>
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<p>Line of Sight Practice Learning Events</p>	<p>A practice learning process will be undertaken three times a year that culminates in a line of sight event. This is led by an Independent Scrutiny Officer and panel members who will include safeguarding partners, their representatives and senior representatives from other relevant agencies. The line of sight event will consider five children’s cases in relation to a specific theme, which will be agreed by the safeguarding partners. Following a process of single agency case audits, line of sight panels meet with practitioners to discuss the cases. The event enables partners to engage in active challenge and ensure they have interface with multi-agency practitioners from across the safeguarding system.</p> <p>The expected outcomes of the line of sight events is that it will identify areas of best practice, further improvement relating to multi agency practice and agree strategic action across the partnership pertaining specific themes.</p> <p>There is also an opportunity to schedule ‘pop up’ case discussions as required. These case discussions can be called as a means of resolving issues or barriers identified in a specific case or cases or as an additional scrutiny mechanism linked to a particular theme or area of focus. They will be led by an Independent Scrutiny Officer, if available, or one of the safeguarding partners. Other safeguarding partners will also be in attendance along with representatives from other relevant agencies.</p>
<p>Young Voice Quality Assurance Processes</p>	<p>There is an established Young Inspectors programme that gives young people the opportunity to scrutinise, challenge and influence the services they access. The process also enables agencies to reflect on and improve their provision to better meet the needs of children and young people.</p> <p>The young inspectors team are commissioned by agencies to undertake a young inspectors visit. Agencies are also targeted for an inspection if deemed to be an area of interest by young people (though agencies do not have to take it up). Once the agency confirms their interest, young inspectors undertake a desktop review of the service, including their online communications and distribute staff and service user surveys to the agency for completion prior to the inspection visit. A team of young inspectors undertake the inspection visit that follows a set criteria, though this can also be bespoke to the individual agency. Feedback from the desktop research, observations and findings is compiled into the inspection report, which is written by young people (supported through the Safeguarding Partners Multi Agency Innovation Hub) and the agency is awarded a star rating. The report highlights areas of strengths and areas for consideration and action. The young voice quality assurance process can also be supported through a mystery shopper programme.</p> <p>This will enable young people to reflect on their observations and experiences when accessing local services and will contribute to the Children’s MARS Board’s oversight.</p>

3 Individual Scrutiny and Assurance Functions

There are other mechanisms for scrutinising our Children’s MARS arrangements through individual safeguarding partners organisational scrutiny functions as follows:

<p>Council Democratic Scrutiny and Internal Audit Functions</p>	<p>Scrutiny panels support the work of the executive and the council as a whole. They allow citizens to have a greater say by holding public enquiries into matters of local concern. The scope of scrutiny panels is wide reaching and covers the work of the council, local health services in accordance with the Health and Social Care Act legislation and crime and disorder in accordance with the Police and Justice Act 2006.</p> <p>The role of scrutiny panels is to scrutinise the effectiveness of council policies, strategies and performance, along with executive recommendations and decisions within their scope. They are also required to scrutinise the effectiveness of partnership working with organisations and the impact of policies adopted by organisations where the council has a legitimate interest.</p> <p>All statutory safeguarding partners, selected relevant agencies and other named organisations and agencies would fall within this scope.</p>
<p>Clinical Commissioning Group Governing Body</p>	<p>North Lincolnshire CCG has comprehensive arrangements in place for children’s safeguarding scrutiny and assurance within the CCG and for commissioned services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive quarterly performance and assurance report and an annual report is provided to the Quality, Performance and Finance Committee, a sub-committee of the CCG Governing Body. The Governing Body also receives the annual report. • The LSCB Annual Report and going forward the MARS annual report is presented to and discussed at the CCG Governing Body. • Requirements for assurance regarding safeguarding in commissioned services are required to be set out in the individual contracts for commissioned services. • Major NHS providers are required to provide an annual self-assessment of safeguarding compliance to the CCG, and quarterly safeguarding performance information. Non-NHS providers have been required to provide evidence of compliance on request. From 2019/20, all CCG commissioned providers will be required to provide an annual self-assessment of their safeguarding compliance to the CCG. • The CCG undertakes a planned programme of visits to clinical services during which safeguarding arrangements are scrutinised as part of the wider quality agenda

Humberside Police	<p>Humberside Police has comprehensive arrangements in place for children’s safeguarding scrutiny and assurance within the force and it’s partnership activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A comprehensive monthly performance and assurance report and monthly crime audits examine the quality, quantity and performance position, which is then overviewed at a Force level.• The LSCB Annual Report and going forward the MARS annual report is presented to and discussed at the local and force management meetings.• Daily scrutiny is applied through the local and force level pacesetter meetings to individual safeguarding and crime incidences that have concerns for safety.• The force also conducts force wide scrutiny to its crime recording practices and safeguarding processes through local and independent scrutiny teams, and peer reviews are common practice.
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4 Independent Scrutiny

The role of independent scrutiny is critical to provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of the Children’s MARS arrangements, including arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases. Independent scrutiny is part of a wide system that includes the independent inspectorates’ single assessment of the individual safeguarding partners and the Joint Targeted Area Inspections.

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 North Lincolnshire
- relates to the effectiveness of arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases
- to act as part of a wider system which includes the independent inspectorates’ single assessment of the individual safeguarding partners and the Joint Targeted Area Inspections
- is to provide objectivity, act as a constructive critical friend and promote reflection to promote continuous improvement
- is to 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
- is to report to the safeguarding partners any recommendations from their scrutiny and assurance activities
- is to scrutinise the Children’s MARS arrangements and annual report

This will also help us to ascertain how our Children’s MARS arrangements impact on the outcomes and experiences of children, young people and families.

Arrangements for independent scrutiny are summarised as follows:

INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY	
Independent Scrutiny Officer(s)	<p>Safeguarding partners will be jointly responsible for identifying Independent Scrutiny Officers ISO(s) who should have suitable attributes, skills, knowledge and understanding of the children’s safeguarding system. It is anticipated that there will be a small pool of ISO(s) from a range of backgrounds, which will ensure different perspectives and provide a degree of flexibility and capacity to contribute to the scrutiny and assurance arrangements as required.</p> <p>ISO(s) will play a significant role in this Framework and there are opportunities for safeguarding partners and representatives from relevant agencies to engage in peer review processes and further opportunities for peer review processes at a regional and national level</p> <p>Through leading and contributing to the following elements of this Framework, the ISO(s) will ensure an independent scrutiny perspective relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 11 Process • Assurance Events • Line of Sight Practice Learning Events

	<p>This provides the ISO(s) with an opportunity to scrutinise the children’s safeguarding system at all levels, including front line practice and with a direct interface with children, young people and families.</p> <p>The ISO’s will also be required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scrutinise the arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases • scrutinise how well the safeguarding partners are providing strong leadership • contribute to reciprocal peer review arrangements where arranged • prepare reports pertaining their scrutiny activities • attend Children’s MARS Board meetings to present their findings • prepare their own annual report that will outline their scrutiny activity and any impacts and outcomes arising from it, a summary of which will be referenced in the Children’s MARS arrangements annual report • scrutinise the Children’s MARS arrangements and annual report prior to publication • attend to represent an independent scrutiny perspective within individual safeguarding partners’ scrutiny arrangements, if required. <p>In all meetings and representations, ISO(s) will communicate ownership of their independent and objective perspective.</p> <p>In the event of any dispute between the safeguarding partners and/or relevant agencies or any local disputes relating to multi-agency practice, the ISO(s) may also assist with the dispute resolution process. See Dispute Resolution section in the Children’s MARS Board Memorandum of Understanding.</p>
<p>Peer Review</p>	<p>There is a commitment to exploring a reciprocal peer review model sub regionally, regionally or nationally.</p> <p>If the reciprocal model is implemented, it is envisaged that this independent scrutiny function will be undertaken on an annual basis.</p> <p>This could involve an ISO(s), safeguarding partners or utilise senior representatives from relevant agencies to provide peer challenge to other local areas multi agency safeguarding arrangements and vice versa. In considering a reciprocal approach, we anticipate learning from peers who scrutinise our children’s safeguarding system, but also learn through scrutinising others.</p> <p>In the event of a peer review, the scope would need to be clarified and a terms of reference agreed to ensure the best outcomes for all parties concerned.</p>

Other	<p>Other areas for consideration include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work alongside Partners in Practice• Audit/scrutiny across directors of regional local authorities/chief officers of regional CCG's/chief officers across Humberside• Learn from others in terms of practice – doing social work differently• Safeguarding partners could contribute to other agencies scrutiny and assurance arrangements by chairing processes to provide a different perspective or dip testing/deep dives• Or different internal arrangements where managers dip test/deep dive each others areas <p>It is envisaged there will be a flexible approach to using these mechanisms as deemed appropriate.</p>
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5 Learning and Improvement

The key element of our scrutiny and assurance process is on learning and improvement.

Each of the safeguarding partners have allocated portfolio areas which reinforces their commitment to innovation, driving change, sharing learning and delivering on agreed actions leading to better outcomes. The lead for scrutiny and assurance is the Director of Nursing and Quality, Clinical Commissioning Group.

The Safeguarding Practice Learning and Improvement Group (SPLIG) will have representation across the three safeguarding partner organisations and other selected relevant agencies. The group will be responsible for co-ordinating the outcomes of scrutiny and assurance activity, as appropriate and agreed by the safeguarding partners and will devise action plans, monitor, implement and review areas for development to ensure we positively impact on our commitment towards continuous improvements across frontline practice.

The SPLIG will continue to give oversight to the action plan until completion. The action plan will be finally signed off by the safeguarding partners at the Children's MARS Board.

In addition, the group will conduct non-statutory multi agency local learning reviews where a cases does not meet a criteria of a Safeguarding Practice Reviews and disseminate learning from these and local and national child safeguarding practice reviews, inspection reports, other national reports and research.

There are also learning and improvement opportunities through the Multi Agency Audit Group (MAAG) which feeds into the Safeguarding Practice Lead Officers Group. The MAAG meets on a monthly basis to provide multi agency audit and quality assurance of practice at key points along the safeguarding pathway.

There will be other opportunities to share learning across the partnership through learning and development events in order to improve practice. Learning regarding practice and process will also be shared both regionally and nationally as appropriate i.e. through the early adopters programme.

Overall, the learning will contribute to further strengthening the safeguarding system, multi agency practice and the nuanced approaches that services can develop.

NOTE - As an early adopter, we will listen, learn, review and adapt as we implement our Local Arrangements, supported by this Scrutiny and Assurance Framework. As such, the specific details of the scrutiny and assurance functions are subject to change in year and will feature in the review of Local Arrangements, which will be republished in June 2019.

APPENDIX 1 – Scrutiny and Assurance Framework Annual Planner

November 2018 to October 2019

November 2018	
December 2018	
January 2019	Section 11
February 2019	Thematic Assurance event
March 2019	Agency Specific Assurance event
April 2019	Agency Specific Assurance event
May 2019	Line of Sight Practice Learning event
June 2019	Thematic Assurance event
July 2019	Thematic Assurance event
August 2019	Agency Specific Assurance event
September 2019	
October 2019	Line of Sight Practice Learning event

November 2019 to October 2020

November 2019	
December 2019	
January 2020	Section 11 revised
February 2020	Line of Sight Practice Learning event
March 2020	Agency Specific Assurance event
April 2020	Thematic Assurance event
May 2020	Agency Specific Assurance event
June 2020	Line of Sight Practice Learning event
July 2020	Agency Specific Assurance event
August 2020	Agency Specific Assurance event
September 2020	
October 2020	Line of Sight Practice Learning event

Note(s):

This annual planner is indicative only, therefore it is subject to change and other activities and events may be built into the planner in year as appropriate.

APPENDIX 2 – Agencies and Organisations with a duty under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, places duties on a range of organisations, agencies and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

From a local perspective, Section 11 places a duty on:

- North Lincolnshire Council including children's and other types of services - children's and adult social care services, youth offending service, public health, housing, sport, culture and leisure services, licensing authorities and youth services
- North Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group, General Practitioners, NHS England North (Yorkshire and Humber) and the independent health sector, i.e. other independent health providers including Virgin Care Sexual Health Services, Thames Ambulance Service
- Northern Lincolnshire and Goole Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust
- East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust
- Humberside Police, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and British Transport Police
- National Probation Service (North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire)
- Community Rehabilitation Company (Humberside, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire)

These organisations and agencies should have in place arrangements that reflect the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Note - other organisations, agencies and individuals have a duty under Section 11, though these are not applicable within this area as they are not evident within the local footprint e.g. Directors of Secure Training Centres.

Further details regarding the role and responsibilities of local safeguarding partners and Section 11 organisations and agencies are articulated in the **Children's MARS Board Memorandum of Understanding, appendix 2.**