



# **Children's MARS Policy and Procedures**

## **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements**

**December 2022**

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## Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

Local organisations and agencies that work with children and families play a significant role when it comes to safeguarding children.

To achieve the best possible outcomes, children and families should receive targeted services that meet their needs in a co-ordinated way. Fragmented provision of services creates inefficiencies and risks disengagement by children and their families from services such as GPs, education and wider voluntary and community specialist support. There is a shared responsibility between organisations and agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area.

As set out in Working Together 2018 many local organisations and agencies have a duty under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to ensure that they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their functions.

The responsibility for this join-up locally rests with the three safeguarding partners who have a shared and equal duty to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area.

In North Lincolnshire, the children's multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are known locally as the Children's Multi-Agency Resilience and Safeguarding (MARS) Arrangements. This plan of arrangements sets out how the safeguarding partners will work together and with other agencies, to identify and respond to the needs of children in North Lincolnshire. For further information, see [North Lincolnshire Children's MARS Local Arrangements](#).

## Safeguarding partners

A *safeguarding partner* in relation to a local authority area in England is defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018<sup>1</sup> and the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) As:

- (a) the local authority
- (b) an Integrated Care Board for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area
- (c) the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area

The three safeguarding partners should agree on ways to co-ordinate their safeguarding services, act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others, and implement local and national learning including from serious child safeguarding incidents.

To fulfil this role, the three safeguarding partners must set out how they will work together and with any relevant agencies. Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: Working Together 2018 references clinical commissioning groups which were replaced by Integrated Care Boards from July 2022 as a result of the Health and Care Act 2022

whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider may be required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children with regard to local need.

The purpose of these local arrangements is to support and enable local organisations and agencies to work together in a system where:

- children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted
- partner organisations and agencies collaborate, share and co-own the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children
- organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively
- there is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats
- learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice
- information is shared effectively to facilitate more accurate and timely decision making for children and families

In order to work together effectively, the safeguarding partners with other local organisations and agencies should develop process that:

- facilitate and drive action beyond usual institutional and agency constraints and boundaries
- ensure the effective protection of children is founded on practitioners developing lasting and trusting relationships with children and their families

To be effective, these arrangements should link to other strategic partnership work happening locally to support children and families. This will include other public boards including Health and Wellbeing boards, Adult Safeguarding Boards, Channel Panels, Improvement Boards, Community Safety Partnerships, the Local Family Justice Board and MAPPAs.

## **Leadership**

Strong leadership is critical for the new arrangements to be effective in bringing together the various organisations and agencies. It is important therefore that the lead representative from each of the three safeguarding partners plays an active role. The lead representatives for safeguarding partners are: the local authority chief executive, the accountable officer of a clinical commissioning group, and a chief officer of police.

All three safeguarding partners have equal and joint responsibility for local safeguarding arrangements. In situations that require a clear, single point of leadership, all three safeguarding partners should decide who would take the lead on issues that arise. Should the lead representative delegate their functions they remain accountable for any actions or decisions taken on behalf of their agency. If delegated, it is the responsibility of the lead representative to identify and nominate a senior officer in their agency to have responsibility and authority for ensuring full participation with these arrangements.

The representatives, or those they delegate authority to, should be able to:

- Speak with authority for the safeguarding partner they represent
- Take decisions on behalf of their organisation or agency and commit them on policy, resourcing and practice matters
- Hold their own organisation or agency to account on how effectively they participate and implement the local arrangements

## **Geographical area**

The geographical footprint for the new arrangements is based on local authority areas. A single local authority area cannot be covered by two separate safeguarding partnerships. Every local authority, integrated care board and police force must be covered by a local safeguarding arrangement. Local arrangements can cover two or more local authorities. Where more than one local authority joins together, the local authorities can agree to delegate their safeguarding partner duties to a single authority. Each local authority must continue to fulfil its statutory and legislative duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The same applies for clinical commissioning groups and chief officers of police (in respect of their safeguarding partner duties only).

The administrative geography of safeguarding partners can be changed over time. Where changes are proposed, these should be agreed by the three safeguarding partners, communicated clearly to relevant agencies and practitioners, and reflected in the next yearly report.

## **Relevant agencies**

Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider is required to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children. Strong, effective multi-agency arrangements are ones that are responsive to local circumstances and engage the right people. For local arrangements to be effective, they should engage organisations and agencies that can work in a collaborative way to provide targeted support to children and families as appropriate. This approach requires flexibility to enable joint identification of, and response to, existing and emerging needs, and to agree priorities to improve outcomes for children.

The safeguarding partners must set out in their published arrangements which organisations and agencies they will be working with to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and this will be expected to change over time if the local arrangements are to work effectively for children and families. A list of relevant agencies is set out in the [regulations](#).

When selected by the safeguarding partners to be part of the local safeguarding arrangements, relevant agencies must act in accordance with the arrangements<sup>2</sup>. Safeguarding partners should make sure the relevant agencies are aware of the expectations placed on them by the new arrangements. They should consult relevant agencies in

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<sup>2</sup> Children Act 2004 Section 16G

developing the safeguarding arrangements to make sure the expectations take account of an agency's structure and statutory obligations.

Where a relevant agency has a national remit, such as the British Transport Police and CAF/CASS, safeguarding partners should be clear on how these agencies should collaborate and take account of that agency's individual responsibilities and potential contributions towards a number of local safeguarding arrangements. The involvement of health providers and commissioners will be different in each local area and local safeguarding partners should consider how they will secure the clinical expertise of designated health professionals for safeguarding children within their arrangements.

The published arrangements should set out clearly any contributions agreed with relevant agencies, including funding, accommodation, services and any resources connected with the arrangements.

In setting out how they will work with relevant agencies, the safeguarding partners should be clear how they will assure themselves that relevant agencies have appropriate, robust safeguarding policies and procedures in place and how information will be shared amongst all relevant agencies and the safeguarding partners.

Many agencies and organisations play a crucial role in safeguarding children. Safeguarding partners may include any local or national organisation or agency in their arrangements, regardless of whether they are named in relevant agency regulations. Organisations and agencies who are not named in the relevant agency regulations, whilst not under statutory duty, should nevertheless cooperate and collaborate with the safeguarding partners particularly as they may have duties under section 10 and/or section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

Safeguarding partners should communicate regularly with their relevant agencies and others they expect to work with them. It is for the safeguarding partners to determine how regularly their list of relevant agencies will be reviewed. The local arrangements should be shared with all partners and relevant agencies, and information should be given about how to escalate concerns and how any disputes will be resolved. This should give details of the independent scrutiny and whistleblowing procedures.

## **Schools, colleges and other educational providers**

Schools, colleges and other educational providers have a pivotal role to play in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. Their co-operation and buy-in to the new arrangements will be vital for success. All schools, colleges and other educational providers have duties in relation to safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. The statutory guidance '[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)' should be read alongside this information.

The safeguarding partners should make arrangements to allow all schools (including multi academy trusts), colleges and other educational providers, in the local area to be fully engaged, involved and included in the new safeguarding arrangements. It is expected that local safeguarding partners will name schools, colleges and other educational providers as

relevant agencies and will reach their own conclusions on how best locally to achieve the active engagement of individual institutions in a meaningful way.

Once designated as a relevant agency, schools and colleges, and other educational providers, in the same way as other relevant agencies are under a statutory duty to co-operate with the published arrangements.

## **Information requests**

Organisations and agencies within a strong multi-agency system should have confidence that information is shared effectively, amongst and between them, to improve outcomes for children and their families. Safeguarding partners may require any person or organisation or agency, to provide them, any relevant agency for the area, a reviewer or another person or organisation or agency, with specified information. This must be information which enables and assists the safeguarding partners to perform their functions to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area, including as related to local and national child safeguarding practice reviews.

The person or organisation to whom a request is made must comply with such a request and if they do not do so, the safeguarding partners may take legal action against them.

As public authorities, safeguarding partners should be aware of their own responsibilities under the relevant information law and have regard to guidance provided by the Information Commissioner's Office when issuing and responding to requests for information.

## **Independent scrutiny**

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.

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 promoted reflection to drive continuous improvement.

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. 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.

Safeguarding partners should also agree arrangements for independent scrutiny of the report they must publish at least one a year.

## **Funding**

Working in partnership means organisations and agencies should collaborate on how they will fund their arrangements. The three safeguarding partners and relevant agencies for the local authority area should make payments towards expenditure incurred in conjunction with local multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding and promoting welfare of children.

The safeguarding partners should agree the level of funding secured from each partner, which should be equitable and proportionate and any contributions from each relevant agency, to support the local arrangements. The funding should be transparent to children and families in the area, and sufficient to cover all elements of the arrangements, including cost of local safeguarding practice reviews.

## **Publication of arrangements**

Once agreed, local safeguarding arrangements must be published and must include:

- arrangements for the safeguarding partners to work together to identify and respond to the needs of children in the area
- arrangements for commissioning and publishing local child safeguarding practice reviews
- arrangements for independent scrutiny of the effectiveness of the arrangements

They should also include:

- who the three local safeguarding partners are, especially if the arrangements cover more than one local authority area
- geographical boundaries (especially if the arrangements operate more than one local authority area)
- the relevant agencies the safeguarding partners will work with, why these organisations and agencies have been chosen, and how they will collaborate and work together to improve outcomes for children and families
- how all early years settings, schools (including independent schools, academies and free schools) and other educational establishments will be included in the safeguarding arrangements
- how any youth custody and residential homes for children will be included in the safeguarding arrangements
- how the safeguarding partners will use data and intelligence to assess the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families, including early help
- how inter-agency training will be commissioned, delivered and monitored for impact and how they will undertake any multi-agency and inter-agency audits
- how the arrangements will be funded
- the process for undertaking local child safeguarding practice reviews, setting out the arrangements for embedding learning across organisations and agencies
- how the arrangements will include the voice of children and families



- how the threshold document setting out the local criteria for action aligns with the arrangements

For further information, see [North Lincolnshire Children's MARS Local Arrangements](#).

## **Dispute resolution**

Safeguarding partners and relevant agencies must act in accordance with the arrangements in their area and will be expected to work together to resolve any disputes locally. Public bodies that fail to comply with their obligations under law are held to account through a variety of regulatory and inspection activity. In extremis, any non-compliance will be referred to the Secretary of State.

## **Reporting**

In order to bring transparency for children, families and all practitioners about the activity undertaken, the safeguarding partners must publish a report at least once in every 12 month period. The report must set out what they have done as a result of the arrangements, including on safeguarding practice reviews, and how effective these arrangements have been in practice.

In addition, the report should also include:

- evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families from early help to looked-after children and care leavers
- an analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities
- a record of decisions and actions taken by the partners in the report's period (or planned to be taken) to implement the recommendations of any local and national child safeguarding practice reviews, including any resulting improvements
- ways in which the partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision

Safeguarding partners should make sure the report is widely available, and the published safeguarding arrangements should set out where the reports will be published.

A copy of all published reports should be sent to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care within seven days of being published.

Where there is a secure establishment in a local area, safeguarding partners should include a review of the use of restraint within that establishment in their report, and the findings of the review should be reported to the Youth Justice Board.

The three safeguarding partners should report any updates to the published arrangements in their yearly report and the proposed timescale for implementation.