



Scrutiny and Assurance Framework

September 2023

Contents

- 1 Overview
- 2 Partnership Scrutiny and Assurance Functions
- 3 Individual Scrutiny and Assurance Functions
- 4 Independent Scrutiny
- 5 Learning and Improvement

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. 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 (joint safeguarding self-assessment between Children's MARS and Safeguarding Adults Board)
- Schools, Colleges and Alternative Education providers safeguarding audit
- Early Years Private Voluntary and Independent providers safeguarding audit
- Childminder safeguarding audit
- Agency 'call ins'
- Agency specific assurance events
- Thematic assurance events
- Practice learning line of sight events
- Multi Agency Reflective Practice Forum (MARPF)
- Partnership audits
- Voice quality assurance processes

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 is set within the context of the **Children's MARS Board Memorandum of Understanding** and the **Children's MARS Information Sharing Agreement for learning through Scrutiny and Assurance activity** which is available on the Children's MARS website.

Other multi-agency events and forums for learning through scrutiny and assurance may be convened under the auspices of Children's MARS Board. This activity will remain compliant with the **Children's MARS Board Memorandum of Understanding** and the **Children's MARS Information Sharing Agreement for learning through Scrutiny and Assurance activity**.

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) play a significant role in this Framework, as do 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 are jointly responsible for identifying Independent Scrutiny Officer(s) who should have suitable attributes, skills, knowledge and understanding of the children's safeguarding system. 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 (joint safeguarding self-assessment between Children’s MARS and Safeguarding Adults Board)</p>	<p>The joint safeguarding self-assessment is an annual paper exercise to ensure agencies and organisations are compliant with their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people under Section 11 of the Children’s Act 2004, and safeguard adults with care and support needs under the Care Act 2014.</p> <p>Agencies and organisations with a duty under Section 11 are detailed in Children’s MARS Local Arrangements Appendices.</p> <p>This joint safeguarding self-assessment enables individual agencies to articulate if and how they discharge their safeguarding responsibilities and to identify areas of best practice as well as areas of risk and further development including associated actions.</p> <p>The joint safeguarding self-assessment process is co-ordinated between the Children’s MARS team and the Safeguarding Adults Board team. A summary of the outcomes and composite of the individual agency action plans are made available to both the Children’s MARS Board and Safeguarding Adult’s Board. Progress against the identified actions is collated and presented to both Boards six months thereafter.</p> <p>There are opportunities to further develop the joint safeguarding self-assessment tool, including bespoke specific areas of focus as identified.</p> <p>We will make use of joint safeguarding self-assessment as part of the preparations for our agency specific assurance events.</p>
<p>Schools, Colleges and Alternative Education providers safeguarding audit</p>	<p>The Schools, Colleges and Alternative Education providers safeguarding audit is an annual paper exercise to ensure schools, colleges and alternative education providers fulfil their statutory responsibilities as detailed in the Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance.</p> <p>This audit process is underpinned by a self-assessment tool which supports schools, colleges and alternative education providers to demonstrate they are meeting their statutory responsibilities, to identify best practice and actions being taken and/or actions required.</p>

	<p>The outcomes from the audit are formally recorded within the individual settings (by governors and senior leadership team) and shared with the local authority. Schools, colleges and alternative education providers are supported and challenged to implement actions by the local authority.</p> <p>The composite outcomes from all audits are shared with the Children’s MARS Board and the outcomes are used to shape training, education and practice developments.</p>
<p>Early Years Private Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers safeguarding audit</p>	<p>The Early Years PVI providers safeguarding audit is an annual paper exercise to ensure providers fulfil their statutory responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.</p> <p>This audit process is underpinned by a self-assessment tool which supports Early Years PVI providers to demonstrate they are meeting their statutory responsibilities, to identify best practice and actions being taken and/or actions required.</p> <p>The outcomes from the audit are formally recorded within the individual settings and shared with the local authority. Early Years PVI providers are supported and challenged to implement actions by the local authority.</p> <p>The composite outcomes from all audits are shared with the Children’s MARS Board and the outcomes are used to shape training, education and practice developments.</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. This can be done through the Children’s MARS Board, any underpinning partnerships/groups or bespoke meetings or events.</p>
<p>Agency Specific Assurance Events</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 joint safeguarding self-assessments (Section 11) as part of the preparations for our agency specific assurance events, along with any other pertinent information i.e. inspection reports.</p> <p>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</p>

by the safeguarding partners, Independent Scrutiny Officer(s) and any relevant agencies that may contribute to the assurance event and the identified agency.

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 joint safeguarding self-assessment (Section 11) 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/updated joint safeguarding self-assessments (Section 11) will be submitted to the Children's MARS team (this should be no later than three weeks prior to the proposed date)
- Taking account of the outcomes of the joint safeguarding self-assessment (Section 11) and any other relevant sources of information, preparatory work will be undertaken by the Children's MARS team 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 letter will be collated to clarify the summary of findings including areas of positive practice and areas for improvement and further consideration. The content of this letter will take account the findings from the Independent Scrutiny Officer(s), safeguarding partners, any other relevant partners and young people scrutineers
- The letter will be distributed to the safeguarding partner scrutiny and assurance portfolio lead for their agreement to distribute it after which it will be sent to the specific agency lead for their information and action. The letter will also be shared with any commissioners of the agency's services
- The letter will be presented to the next available Children's MARS Board

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any identified actions will be followed up by the Children’s MARS team in collaboration with the lead safeguarding partner and progress will be reported into the Children’s MARS Board thereafter • The agency will have a responsibility to incorporate the findings and any action taken into their next annual joint safeguarding self-assessment (Section 11) <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>
Thematic Assurance Events	<p>Thematic assurance events 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 Children’s MARS team 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 Children’s MARS team 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 Children’s MARS team to provide opportunities for reflective observations and lines of questioning • Programme for the thematic assurance event will be agreed with the identified agency representatives and safeguarding partners and then distributed to those involved • Thematic event to take place • Led by an Independent Scrutiny Officer(s) or one of the safeguarding partners/their delegated representative, 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 • The outcomes of the assurance event will be considered at the next available Safeguarding Practice Learning and Improvement Group (SPLIG) who will develop an action plan that will be monitored until completion. Outcomes and progress against the action plan will be fed into the Children’s MARS Board via the SPLIG chair as appropriate

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key highlights and emerging themes will be published on the Children’s MARS website and distributed across the partnership <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>
<p>Practice Learning Line of Sight Event</p>	<p>A practice learning process will be undertaken three times a year that culminates in a line of sight event. Each event will consider a number of children’s cases in relation to a specific theme, previously agreed by the safeguarding partners.</p> <p>The Children’s MARS team works with partners to identify the cases and following a process of single agency case audits, line of sight panels meet with practitioners to discuss the cases.</p> <p>The event is led by an Independent Scrutiny Officer and panel members who will include safeguarding partners, their representatives and senior representatives from other relevant agencies.</p> <p>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>Following the line of sight event, the overview and action plan will be formalised by the Independent Scrutiny Officer in collaboration with the Children’s MARS team. The outcomes will be considered at the next available SPLIG and the action plan will be monitored until completion. Outcomes and progress against the action plan will be fed into the Children’s MARS Board via the SPLIG chair as appropriate.</p> <p>Key highlights and emerging themes will be published on the Children’s MARS website and distributed across the partnership.</p> <p>Case Specific Practice Learning Line of Sight Events</p> <p>Safeguarding partner representatives from any of the three safeguarding partner organisations can request a practice learning case specific line of sight event as a means of identifying learning and areas for development across the partnership.</p>

	<p>Following agreement between the safeguarding partner representatives to undertake a case specific line of sight event, a request should be made to the Children’s MARS team to convene the event. The Children’s MARS team will notify the three safeguarding partners that an event is being held.</p> <p>To reflect the agencies involved in the case, safeguarding partner representatives will be invited to attend by the Children’s MARS team, along with representatives from other relevant agencies.</p> <p>The case specific line of sight event will be led by an Independent Scrutiny Officer, if available, or one of the safeguarding partners/their representative if required. A group of panel members will be formed who will include safeguarding partners, their representatives and senior representatives from other relevant agencies.</p> <p>Agencies involved will be required to undertake a case audit, the outcomes of which will be submitted to the Children’s MARS team and made available to the Independent Scrutiny Officer (or safeguarding partner/their representative) and the panel members ahead of the meeting so they can familiarise themselves with the case information and prepare lines of enquiry.</p> <p>Member(s) of the Children’s MARS team will also be in attendance at the meeting and will work with the Independent Scrutiny Officer (or safeguarding partner/their representative) to write up learning and actions.</p> <p>Following the event, the overview and action plan will be formalised by the Independent Scrutiny Officer in collaboration with the Children’s MARS team. The outcomes will be considered at the next available SPLIG and the action plan will be monitored until completion. Outcomes and progress against the action plan will be fed into the Children’s MARS Board via the SPLIG chair as appropriate.</p>
<p>Multi-agency reflective practice forum (MARPF)</p>	<p>The MARPF meets on a four weekly basis and provides a reflective practice forum for managers and practitioners working with families to review the quality of practice and intervention across the partnership. The MARPF core group set the agenda for the reflective practice forum, focusing on particular aspects of the child's journey or a particular theme.</p> <p>The MARPF particularly (although not exclusively) focus upon the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality and impact of early help for the family • the quality and impact of any interventions from targeted services (both informal and formal) • the interface between targeted services and children's social care • the work of the Integrated Multi Agency Partnership

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality and impact of work for children in need and children on a child protection plan • the impact of the multi agency support around the family <p>Thematic areas of practice based on prior multi agency audit and quality assurance may be considered at the request of the Children’s Help and Protection Pathway Group (CHaPP) or the SPLIG.</p> <p>The indicative format for the MARPF is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MARPF holds a core group meeting, which selects the cases for discussion, any areas of specific interest/focus and identifies the practitioners who are involved in the case • The practitioner’s meeting is held 4 weeks after the core group meeting • The Children’s MARS team provide an agenda containing the case details and specific areas of interest/focus to the core group and practitioners involved with the family. The meeting invite will also be extended to the identified practitioners • Partnership representatives and attending practitioners are requested to ensure that they are adequately prepared for the meeting including a response to the specific areas of interest/focus • The MARPF practitioner’s meeting takes place. Within the meeting, reflective discussions are held in order to provide quality assurance of practice at key points along the family’s journey with particular focus (although not exclusively) upon safeguarding intervention within targeted services, the interface between services and to ensure agencies are compliant with national and local guidance and legislation • The reflective discussion will be recorded by the Children’s MARS team on an Overview, Learning and Improvement Record and a copy is provided to all agencies involved • Any immediate actions identified during the meeting, for individual practitioners or agencies, will be fed back to the individual workers by the group member from that agency. The outcome along with confirmation that any required actions have been completed will be fed back to subsequent MARPF meetings • A quarterly overview report of findings and actions will be provided to the SPLIG for consideration and action as required
<p>Partnership audits</p>	<p>The Children’s MARS partnership groups may identify the need for specific multi-agency or single-agency audits relating to emerging themes or multi agency practice. The audits will be undertaken by an appropriate lead officer or a multi-agency partnership group as agreed by the requesting partnership group and/or the Children’s MARS Board.</p>

	<p>Strengths, good practice and learning stemming from audits will feed into the requesting partnership group and/or the Children’s MARS Board as appropriate.</p>
<p>Voice and engagement quality assurance processes</p>	<p>Our scrutiny and assurance activity takes account of the voice, views and experiences of children, young people, families, practitioners and managers who may also be directly involved.</p> <p>There are established mechanisms in place where children, young people and families can have their say, share their views and experiences, challenge and support local decision makers and shape and influence strategic planning, commissioning and service provision at an individual, service and strategic level.</p> <p>Emerging issues, themes, impacts and outcomes of engagement are fed into partnership arrangements as appropriate. Some representatives from voice and public engagement partnerships, groups, networks and forums attend partnerships and boards to represent people’s views and experiences.</p> <p>Family Voice Representatives</p> <p>The Children’s MARS Board have supported the development of dedicated ‘Family Voice Representative’ roles to provide support and challenge to ensure our information, support and services for children and families are co-produced, leading to better outcomes. The aim is to empower those with lived experience to work with us to achieve our ambitions under the auspices of the One Family Approach.</p> <p>The Family Voice Representatives main responsibilities are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help to review services and how they work, including written documents and plans • offer their ideas about how things could be improved • work with colleagues to set up and run events such as conferences and functions • help to review how services work together to help families and offer their ideas about what works well and what can be improved for the future • to attend meetings, to share ideas and updates to help other areas outside of North Lincolnshire to understand what we are doing and how it could work in other areas • help to develop training for staff working with children and families by sharing ideas and experience of what works and what could be improved • work with colleagues to interview people who want to work for us and help us to decide who would be the best people for the job

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>The Annual Report of the Children’s MARS Local Arrangements is presented to and discussed at Cabinet and Children and Education Scrutiny Panel.</p>
<p>Integrated Care Board</p>	<p>The Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) has comprehensive arrangements in place for children’s safeguarding scrutiny and assurance within the ICB and for commissioned services as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive performance and assurance report and an annual report is provided to the ICB Quality Committee, a sub-committee of the ICB • The Annual Report of the Children’s MARS Local Arrangements is presented to and discussed at the ICB Quality Committee • 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 ICB, and quarterly safeguarding performance information. Non-NHS providers have been required to provide evidence of compliance on request. All ICB commissioned providers will be required to provide an annual self-assessment of their safeguarding compliance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ICB undertakes 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 its 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 Annual Report of the Children’s MARS Local Arrangements 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

4 Independent scrutiny

The role of independent scrutiny is critical to provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of the Children's MARS Arrangements.

Local arrangements for independent scrutiny will:

- provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in North Lincolnshire
- provide assurance that there is effective identification and review of serious child safeguarding cases
- 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
- 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
- provide objectivity, act as a constructive critical friend and promote reflection to promote continuous improvement
- report to the safeguarding partners any recommendations from their scrutiny and assurance activities
- scrutinise the Children's MARS Local Arrangements and annual report

This will also help us to ascertain how our Children's MARS Local 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>Independent Scrutiny Officer(s) - ISO(s) - play a significant role in the Children's MARS Board Scrutiny and Assurance Framework.</p> <p>Safeguarding partners are jointly responsible for identifying ISO(s) who should have suitable attributes, skills, knowledge and understanding of the children's safeguarding system. 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>Through leading and contributing to the following elements of this Framework, 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>

The ISO(s) will conduct work requiring independent scrutiny up to 15 days per year, as outlined in this Framework. There may be other opportunities to engage in other functions and specific activities which will be negotiated via mutual agreement, e.g. chairing a rapid review meeting to consider whether a case meets the criteria for a child safeguarding practice review.

The ISO(s) main responsibilities are to:

- provide independent scrutiny and evaluation pertaining to agency specific and thematic assurance events
- provide independent scrutiny and evaluation pertaining to practice learning line of sight events
- scrutinise the arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases
- scrutinise how well the safeguarding partners are providing strong leadership
- have a direct interface and engage with children, young people and families to determine the impact of the local arrangements
- have a direct interface with front line practitioners in order to have an informed perspective on practitioners skills, knowledge and practice which enables them to fulfil their responsibilities within the local arrangements
- prepare written reports in relation to scrutiny and assurance activity
- attend and contribute to the Children's MARS Board and other partnerships, events and meetings to present findings
- contribute to reciprocal peer review arrangements where arranged
- attend to represent an independent scrutiny perspective within individual safeguarding partners' scrutiny arrangements, if required
- attend and contribute to inspection activity as appropriate
- scrutinise the Children's MARS arrangements and annual report prior to publication
- in the event of any dispute between the safeguarding partners and/or relevant agencies or any local disputes relating to multi-agency practice, the Independent Scrutiny Officer may also assist with the dispute resolution process. See Section 9 - Dispute Resolution in the [Children's MARS Board Memorandum of Understanding](#).

In all meetings and representations, ISO(s) will communicate ownership of their independent and objective perspective.

ISO(s) should have the following knowledge, skills and experience:

- Worked at a senior level in an organisation which has safeguarding responsibilities (e.g. health, social care, education, police)
- Experience of safeguarding at a strategic board level

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level knowledge and experience of working across the children’s multi agency safeguarding system • Understand the complex circumstances in which practitioners work together to safeguard children including the impact of management, supervision, resources, skills and training • Experience of communicating and engaging with practitioners, partners, children, young people and families • Ability to communicate at all levels using various mechanisms, including written and presentation skills • High level understanding of relevant legislation, guidance and policy frameworks within which multi agency services operate and the critical levers for change • High level understanding of relevant inspection frameworks • Awareness of political environment • Reflective, analytical and evaluation skills • Ability to distil information and findings from a range of sources in order to inform their report on the scrutiny and assurance activity • Be able to handle information securely and take account of information governance processes • Be able to communicate ownership of their independent and objective perspective in all meetings and representations <p>ISO(s) will use their creativity and innovation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • utilise and identify opportunities to develop innovative ways of communicating and engaging with children, young people families, safeguarding partners organisations and other agencies • formulate evidence based recommendations and opportunities to enhance the local safeguarding system • work flexibly and meet deadlines in a changing environment
<p>Peer Review</p>	<p>There is a commitment to exploring a reciprocal peer review model sub regionally, regionally or nationally. 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>

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 Place Nurse Director, North Lincolnshire Health and Care Partnership.

The 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 multi agency scrutiny and assurance activity as appropriate.

The outcomes of single agency scrutiny and assurance activity (e.g. joint safeguarding self-assessments (Section 11) and agency specific assurance events) will be the responsibility of the Children's MARS Board and individual safeguarding partners, where appropriate.

The SPLIG 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 any action plans until completion and outcomes and progress against the action plan will be fed into the Children's MARS Board via the SPLIG chair as appropriate.

As part of this, the SPLIG, supported by the Children's MARS team, will contribute to developing communications and disseminating messages across the partnership arrangements and via the Children's MARS website and social media as appropriate.

In addition, where deemed appropriate by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group, the SPLIG will also monitor action plans relating to non-statutory Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews where a case does not meet a criteria of a serious child safeguarding incident. The SPLIG will lead on developing and disseminating 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 MARPF which feeds into the SPLIG.

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.

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

We will listen, learn, review and adapt as we implement our Children’s MARS Local Arrangements, supported by this Framework. As such, the specific details of the scrutiny and assurance functions are subject to change in year and the Framework will be republished as required. It will also feature in the annual report of the Local Arrangements.

**North
Lincolnshire
Council**

