



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

## **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements 2025/26**

<b>Status</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>By Whom</b>
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## Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

Protecting children from abuse, neglect and exploitation requires multi-agency join up and cooperation at all levels. Local organisations and agencies that work with children and families play a significant and often statutory role when it comes to safeguarding children.

Many of these organisations and agencies have a duty<sup>16</sup> to ensure their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The way in which these organisations and agencies work together is known as multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASAs). Robust arrangements help to ensure that information about a child and their family is shared effectively, risk of harm is correctly identified and understood, and that children and families receive targeted services that meet their needs in a co-ordinated way.

Strong, collaborative leadership and timely decision-making are crucial to the effectiveness of multi-agency working and to identify and address system issues. The three safeguarding partners are responsible and accountable for this in their local areas.

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 statutory safeguarding partner in relation to a local authority area in England is defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 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

These three partners have a joint and equal duty to make arrangements to:

- work together as a team to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area
- include and develop the role of wider local organisations and agencies (see Working Together 2023 section on Relevant agencies) in the process

Every local authority, ICB and constabulary in England must be covered by a multi-agency safeguarding arrangement.

The purpose of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements is to ensure that, at a local level, organisations and agencies are clear about how they will work together to safeguard children and promote their welfare. This means:

- there is a clear, shared vision for how to improve outcomes for children locally across all levels of need and all types of harm
- when a child is identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm there is a prompt, appropriate and effective response to ensure the protection and support of the child
- organisations and agencies are challenged appropriately, effectively holding one another to account
- the voice of children and families combined with the knowledge of experienced practitioners and insights from data, provides a greater understanding of the areas of strength and/or improvement within arrangements and practice
- information is sought, analysed, shared, and broken down by protected characteristics to facilitate more accurate and timely decision-making for children and families, and to understand outcomes for different communities of children
- effective collection, sharing and analysis of data, enables early identification of new safeguarding risks, issues, emerging threats, and joined-up responses across relevant agencies
- senior leaders promote and embed a learning culture which supports local services to become more reflective and implement changes to practice
- senior leaders have a good knowledge and understanding about the quality of local practice and its impact on children and families

## Geography

Although the geographical boundaries for the three safeguarding partners may differ in size, multi-agency safeguarding arrangements should be based on local authority areas. Arrangements can cover two or more local authority boundaries by agreement and where this is in place local authorities can agree to delegate their safeguarding duties to a single authority.

The geographical area of a local multi-agency safeguarding arrangement can be changed over time. Where changes are proposed, these should be agreed by all safeguarding partners, communicated clearly to relevant agencies and staff, and reflected in published arrangements.

As police and health boundaries often cover multiple local authorities, they are usually part of more than one multi-agency safeguarding arrangement. Reflecting this, engagement and collaboration through multi-agency safeguarding arrangements can extend beyond the geographical borders of their local area (for example, regionally or across different strategic arrangements and boards). There is an expectation that lead safeguarding partners should decide how best to contribute to the local arrangements they are responsible for.

There are interdependencies between local arrangements and other strategic partnership work happening locally to support children and families. This will include but not be limited to other public boards, including Health and Wellbeing Boards, Adult Safeguarding Boards, Channel Panels, Improvement Boards, Community Safety Partnerships, the Local Family Justice Board, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Strategic Management

Boards, local drug partnerships, domestic abuse partnership boards, Corporate Parenting Board, Youth Offending Management Board and, where relevant, Violence Reduction Units. It is for local areas to decide how best to coordinate these boards and partnerships to reflect local need.

Local safeguarding arrangements will need to reflect health and care infrastructure such as ICBs, Integrated Care Systems, local maternity and neonatal systems, provider collaboratives, primary care networks and NHS specialised commissioning arrangements.

It is particularly important that all partners collaborate to ensure that children are placed as close to home as possible and are able to continue to access services in their local area which support their safety and wellbeing.

## **Strategic leadership and accountability**

Strong, joined-up leadership and clear accountability is critical to effective multi-agency safeguarding, bringing together the various organisations and agencies. It is therefore important that the head of each statutory safeguarding partner agency plays an active role in these arrangements. They (hereafter 'lead safeguarding partner' or 'LSP') have been named because they are 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

In relation to the police, the LSP is already defined as the Chief Officer of Police. For local authorities, the LSP should be the Head of Paid Service, also known as the Chief Executive, and for ICBs the LSP should be the Chief Executive.

Each LSP is responsible for discharging their own statutory and legislative duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. As leaders of their organisations and the statutory safeguarding partners, it is for LSPs to assure themselves that their local arrangements are effective and keep children safe. This includes systems of assurance and accountability within each of their organisations, including inspection findings.

LSPs are jointly responsible for ensuring the proper involvement of and oversight of all relevant agencies, and should act as a team, as opposed to a voice for their agency alone. They should meet sufficiently regularly to undertake the following core functions: Through what mechanism and how often is for local decision.

## **Joint functions of lead safeguarding partners**

1. Set the strategic direction, vision, and culture of the local safeguarding arrangements, including agreeing and reviewing shared priorities and the resource required to deliver services effectively.

2. Lead their organisation's individual contribution to the shared priorities, ensuring strong governance, accountability, and reporting mechanisms to hold their delegates to account for the delivery of agency commitments.
3. Review and sign off key partnership documents: published multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including plans for independent scrutiny, shared annual budget, yearly report, and local threshold document.
4. Provide shared oversight of learning from independent scrutiny, serious incidents, local child safeguarding practice reviews, and national reviews, ensuring recommendations are implemented and have a demonstrable impact on practice (as set out in the yearly report).
5. Ensure multi-agency arrangements have the necessary level of business support, including intelligence and analytical functions, such as an agreed data set providing oversight and a robust understanding of practice.
6. Ensure all relevant agencies, including education settings, are clear on their role and contribution to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

LSPs should be clearly named in published arrangements and are accountable for the effectiveness and outcomes of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in their area.

In cases where the boundaries of the police and ICB extend over multiple local authority areas, LSPs may decide to meet at a more regional level so they can discuss all arrangements within their remit and ensure consistency of funding and resources.

LSPs should demonstrate how the experiences of children and families shape the delivery of local arrangements. They should consider in particular how those with protected characteristics engage in service design.

The LSP holds responsibility for the implementation of recommendations and learning from serious incidents, local child safeguarding practice reviews and national reviews whether or not they originate within their local area, although elements of monitoring these can be delegated.

Delivery of multi-agency safeguarding functions and processes should be delegated to enable the LSPs to focus on their joint functions and maintain strategic oversight.

## **Delivering multi-agency safeguarding arrangements**

Each LSP should appoint a delegated safeguarding partner (DSP) for its agency who should be named in arrangements.

DSPs<sup>1</sup> should be sufficiently senior to be able to speak with authority, take decisions on behalf of the LSP and hold their sectors to account. The DSPs should have the authority to carry out these functions, while ultimate accountability remains with the LSP as the individual responsible for the delivery of the statutory duties of the safeguarding partners.

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<sup>1</sup> Working Together 2023 states that for the DSP role, it is expected that, for the police, there might need to be delegation based on local context. The responsibilities of the delegate should be no lower than that of Area Commander, Head of Public Protection or equivalent.

The DSP should have oversight of the quality and compliance of the delivery of agreed shared priorities. They should have processes in place to provide assurance that multi-agency practice is reviewed and operating well. Where this is not evident, they should have the capacity and resource from their own agencies to engage, respond and improve operational systems and practice.

DSPs and LSPs should have regular interaction and communication to ensure that the LSP has sufficient oversight and detail on key topics and issues to maintain their statutory responsibilities. Where a key decision needs to be made that will impact arrangements and/or services, this should involve the LSP. DSPs should escalate risks and issues they cannot resolve between them to the LSPs for resolution. This will ensure that accountability is clear, that strategic decisions are achievable and deliverable, and that progress is driven at all levels.

DSPs should meet sufficiently frequently to undertake the following joint functions:

1. Delivery and monitoring of multi-agency priorities and procedures to protect and safeguard children in the local area, in compliance with published arrangements and thresholds
2. Close partnership working and engagement with education (at strategic and operational level) and other relevant agencies, allowing better identification of and response to harm
3. The implementation of effective information sharing arrangements between agencies, including data sharing that facilitates joint analysis between partner agencies.
4. Delivery of high-quality and timely rapid reviews and local child safeguarding practice reviews, with the impact of learning from local and national reviews and independent scrutiny clearly evidenced in yearly reports
5. The provision of appropriate multi-agency safeguarding professional development and training
6. Seeking of, and responding to, feedback from children and families about their experiences of services and co-designing services to ensure children from different communities and groups can access the help and protection they need

To support delivery of these functions, LSPs should appoint one of the DSPs as the partnership chair for the multi-agency arrangements. This role needs to be jointly agreed by the LSPs and in doing so given the full backing of all three partners. The role should be regularly reviewed, and any changes updated in published arrangements. The role can be rotated between the DSPs if deemed appropriate by LSPs. This is intended to mirror the joint and equal responsibility for the arrangements and increase shared understanding of the system. The function should facilitate partner discussions, working in conjunction with independent scrutiny which provides rigour and challenge.

The purpose of the partnership chair will be to provide greater continuity across local areas and act as the conduit between the DSPs and LSPs, providing feedback and escalating collective risk and issues to LSPs as necessary. It will allow for a single point of contact for the partnership but should not cut across existing formal complaints procedures. The functions of the partnership chair are separate and distinct from the functions of independent scrutiny. This arrangement removes any need for a local area to maintain another chair or independent chair.

## Functions of the partnership chair role

- To develop strategic links, support and hold to account all LSPs in fulfilling their safeguarding duties for children
- Ensure that local arrangements are designed to work collaboratively and effectively by encouraging and supporting the development of partnership working between the LSPs, DSPs, independent scrutiny role and MASA sub-groups
- Chair the meetings of the DSPs, including any additional meetings convened as a response to specific and exceptional circumstances, with the help of the business manager and independent scrutiny role
- Offer appropriate challenge to ensure that the partners are accountable, and that the local arrangements operate effectively

Strong leadership and clear accountability are crucial for effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. To strengthen accountability, local safeguarding arrangements should separate the roles of partnership chair and independent scrutiny and be clear about the three distinct functions within effective local safeguarding arrangements:

- the partnership chair has authority, is decisive and enables resource allocation, with risk escalation to lead safeguarding partners at the executive
- a business management function with adequate resources and capacity to support the partnership chair
- a rigorous and effective independent scrutiny function providing challenge to the safeguarding partners (see below section on independent scrutiny)

The DSPs should ensure that, with the support of, the business management and independent scrutiny function (see below section on independent scrutiny) the following activities and assurance will be delivered:

- oversee and be responsible for the analysis, intelligence, and timely collection of data to support functions, such as:
  - getting an accurate local picture of how effectively services are being delivered through regular communication across relevant agencies
  - advising the statutory safeguarding partners of the key challenges and emerging priorities
  - coordinating the joint multi-agency strategic plan, ensuring that statutory safeguarding partners and their delegates feed into and own the plan in the local area
  - overseeing the quality of practice and local outcomes for children and families
- review and promote consistent understanding and application of referral and intervention thresholds across agencies so that the right children receive the right support at the right time
- coordinate the views of children, and families about the services they receive and feed key learning, issues, and good practice to the LSPs
- support effective engagement with relevant agencies in their local area so that they understand their roles and responsibilities, which includes strengthening the input from education providers at operational and strategic level decision-making
- use learning from local practice and serious incident notifications to prompt reflection and analysis of where improvements need to be secured and action taken
- strengthen system conditions for effective multi-agency child protection work

- chair, attend or be reported to on regular multi-agency operational meetings and subgroups, to ensure common threads across the arrangements. Partnerships should decide the regularity of meetings at both a LSP and DSP level

## Relevant agencies

Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider are required to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children. A list of organisations that meet the criteria to be included as a relevant agency is set out in the [regulations](#).

Strong, effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements should be responsive to local circumstances and engage the right people in a collaborative way. This approach requires flexibility from all relevant agencies, to enable joint identification and response to existing and emerging needs, and to agree priorities to improve outcomes for children.

The LSPs should set out in their published arrangements which organisations and agencies they require to work with them as relevant agencies. It is expected all local education and childcare providers working with children up to the age of 18, including alternative provision, pupil referral units and further education will be included because of the pivotal role they play in children's daily lives and amount of time they spend with them.

Early years provision within schools and maintained nurseries are relevant agencies and help to safeguard some of the most vulnerable children. There are also other providers such as nurseries and childminders whose role within local arrangements should be considered. All early years providers should have regard to this guidance and the [Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework](#). School-aged children may also attend a childcare setting or an out-of-school activity, and where children are home educated these settings are particularly significant. Therefore, LSPs should also consider including voluntary, charity, social enterprise (VCSE) organisations, childcare settings, and sports clubs in their published arrangements.

Local arrangements are expected to change over time to ensure they continue to work effectively for children and families, to keep pace with changing demographics and evolving social and economic challenges. Any changes should be reflected in updated published arrangements.

When identified by the LSPs as a relevant agency, an organisation must act in accordance with local safeguarding arrangements. As part of this, the organisation should:

- have a clear understanding of its responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children locally, and how it will discharge them
- co-operate with safeguarding partners to improve, implement, and monitor effectiveness of the local safeguarding arrangements
- share information and data about safeguarding issues and concerns affecting the children involved in their organisation to contribute to local priorities

- ensure local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are fully understood, and rigorously applied within their organisation

LSPs should consult with relevant agencies when developing safeguarding arrangements. This will ensure relevant agencies are aware of the expectations placed on them. Relevant agencies should actively promote and enforce the arrangements they have contributed to shaping.

Where a relevant agency has a national remit, such as the British Transport Police and Cafcass, LSPs should be clear on how these agencies should collaborate, what any agency's individual responsibilities are, and how they might contribute towards local safeguarding arrangements. Where a body or organisation is not named in Relevant Agency regulations, such as a territorial or special police force, LSPs may still wish to consider inviting them to contribute to local safeguarding arrangements by agreement.

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

In setting out how they will work with relevant agencies, the LSPs 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.

DSPs and relevant agencies should be in regular communication about local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and their effectiveness. It is for the LSPs to determine when their list of relevant agencies should be reviewed. Local safeguarding arrangements should be shared with and be easily accessible to all partners and relevant agencies. Relevant agencies should be provided with information about how to escalate concerns and how any disputes will be resolved. This should include details of the independent scrutiny and whistleblowing procedures.

## **Working with schools, colleges, early years and other education providers**

Schools, colleges, early years and childcare settings, and other educational providers (including alternative provision) all have a pivotal role to play in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. Their insight and co-operation are vital to the successful delivery of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. People working in education settings play an important role in building relationships, identifying concerns and providing direct support to children. They may be the first trusted adult to whom children report safeguarding concerns. LSPs should give careful consideration to naming all local schools, colleges and education providers set out in the 2018 Regulations as relevant agencies. The statutory guidance 'Keeping children safe in education' and 'Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework' set out the safeguarding duties and expectations on schools, colleges and other education providers and should be read alongside this guidance.

LSPs should create an environment which enables all schools<sup>2</sup> (including independent schools and academy trusts), colleges, early years, and other education and childcare providers in the local area to be fully engaged, involved and included in local safeguarding arrangements. This means making sure that the views and contributions of education and childcare providers are articulated at the highest level of decision-making. Although it may be challenging for a single education or childcare leader to speak on behalf of all local providers, LSPs should have an education representative at strategic discussions representing the education sector. These local leaders will bring insights on the experiences of children locally, and on how arrangements impact on the education and childcare system.

Most local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements include systems to ensure engagement and collaboration at the operational level, such as through education sub-groups and networks, practitioner forums involving designated safeguarding leads, and nominated education representatives. Some safeguarding partners already recognise the need to ensure education providers have a voice at the strategic decision-making level and reflect this in their structures. Published arrangements and yearly reports should outline how education providers are engaged and consulted with at both the operational and strategic levels, how this then impacts on decision-making, what it means to be a relevant agency in their local area, and how they can escalate an issue.

Education providers, including multi-academy trusts, have a responsibility to play their full part in local safeguarding arrangements, including where their footprint extends across several local authority areas. This includes, but should not be limited to, responding to safeguarding audits of quality and compliance, as requested by the local authority and/or local safeguarding partners. This is to ensure that policies are consistent with the local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and relevant legislation and/or regulations. They should also provide staff and governor training that meets local and national safeguarding requirements. Education providers where required should report their audits to their governing bodies and proprietors to be shared as requested by the LSPs. Training for designated safeguarding leads and designated teachers should include shared understanding about different levels of need and how these need to be responded to. Education providers also play a vital role in sharing and contributing to key information about children, including attendance data, exclusions, concerns about abuse, neglect, exploitation, and wider social and environmental factors including extra-familial contexts, which are a key aspect of keeping children safe.

Where the LSPs have concerns about the safeguarding arrangements in a school, independent school or an academy, [‘Schools causing concern’ guidance](#) should be followed.

Ofsted registered education and childcare providers’ culture and their approach to safeguarding will be considered as part of all Ofsted inspections. While safeguarding is not graded separately, Ofsted will always make a written judgement in reports about whether the arrangements for safeguarding children are effective.

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<sup>2</sup> Statutory guidance [Keeping children safe in education](#) defines “all schools” as “maintained, non-maintained or independent schools (including academies, free schools, and alternative provision academies), maintained nursery schools and pupil referral units”

## **Working with voluntary, charity and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations and sports clubs**

Many voluntary, charity, social enterprise (VCSE) organisations and sports clubs (see Working Together 2023 on organisational responsibilities) provide education and activities for children as part of their work. Similar to staff in schools and colleges, the staff and volunteers working with children in these settings will often play an important role in building relationships, identifying concerns, and providing direct support to children; they can often be the first trusted adult to whom a child reports abuse. Therefore, many of these organisations will have a crucial role to play in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

LSPs should consider the value of including VCSEs in their local arrangements, regardless of whether they are named in the 2018 Regulations. Where LSPs choose to name these organisations as a relevant agency in published local arrangements, it is important that they are engaged in developing these safeguarding arrangements and, where applicable, made aware of their statutory duty to co-operate with them. Beyond these local arrangements, non-statutory guidance [‘Keeping children safe in out-of-school settings’](#) sets out the safeguarding arrangements that these providers should have in place, including expectations on how to manage safeguarding concerns, and the importance of familiarising themselves with local arrangements and referral routes.

### **Information requests**

Sharing of information between organisations and agencies within a multi-agency system is essential to improve outcomes for children and their families.

Safeguarding partners may require any person, organisation, or agency to provide them, any relevant agency for the area, a reviewer or another person, organisation or agency, with specified information. This should be information which enables and assists the LSPs to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area, including local and national child safeguarding practice reviews.

The person or organisation to whom a request is made must comply with such a request. If they do not, 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.

Safeguarding partners should have an agreement in place which outlines how information is shared safely and effectively between themselves and other relevant agencies.

### **Independent scrutiny**

Safeguarding partners must ensure that there are arrangements for effective independent scrutiny in place for their local area.

## Functions of independent scrutiny role

- Provide safeguarding partners and relevant agencies with independent, rigorous, and effective support and challenge at both a strategic and operational level
- Provide assurance to the whole system in judging the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements through a range of scrutiny methods
- Ensure that statutory duties are being fulfilled, quality assurance mechanisms are in place, and that local child safeguarding practice reviews and national reviews are analysed, with key learning areas identified and effectively implemented across the safeguarding system
- Ensure that the voice of children and families is considered as part of scrutiny and that this is at the heart of arrangements through direct feedback, informing policy and practice
- Be regarded as a 'critical friend' and provide opportunities for two-way discussion and reflection between frontline practitioners and leaders. This will encourage and enable strong, clear, strategic leadership
- Provide independent advice when there are disagreements between agencies and safeguarding partners and facilitate escalation procedures
- Evaluate and contribute to multi-agency safeguarding published arrangements and the annual report, alongside feeding into the wider accountability systems such as inspections.

Independent scrutiny should drive continuous improvement and provide assurance that arrangements are working effectively for children, families, and practitioners. It should also consider learning from local child safeguarding practice reviews, national reviews and thematic reports. The independent scrutineer or scrutiny group should be able to demonstrate knowledge, skills and expertise in the area being scrutinised and consequently add value to the work of local agencies.

Scrutiny should be evidence-based, and feedback should be considered and acted upon by safeguarding partners. Scrutineers should consider the impact that the LSP and DSP make through their strategic oversight, if they are providing strong leadership, and the functioning of local arrangements.

Independent scrutiny contributes to the wider system of accountability which includes the independent inspectorates' single agency inspections, including Inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS), and Police Forces assessment of their effectiveness, efficiency, and legitimacy (PEEL), as well as Joint Targeted Area Inspections, National Child Protection Inspections and annual reporting arrangements (see section below on Reporting).

The decision on how best to implement a robust system of independent scrutiny is to be made locally, and LSPs should be assured that the system in place leads to objective and rigorous analysis of local arrangements.

Statutory partners and relevant agencies should review progress against agreed priorities and identify areas for scrutiny, with a focus on achieving outcomes for children.

Scrutiny should be based on sharing and analysis of local and national data, intelligence, and information. This could include the development of multi-agency dashboards, joint needs assessments, multi-agency audits, reviews, and mapping of what is already being scrutinised by the statutory safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, identifying the gaps and aligning with agreed priorities.

Independent scrutiny can be delivered through a range of methods and structures. Local areas may choose to have an individual or an externally commissioned group delivering their scrutiny. Furthermore, scrutiny may be embedded within the structure of the arrangement or set apart from it. Scrutiny work can be undertaken through interviews, focus groups, data analysis, observations, and peer review. Scrutiny should take account of the voice and experience of children and their families.

The approach to independent scrutiny should be clearly set out and accessible. The published arrangements should state how independent scrutiny is delivered locally and by whom, how the arrangements are reviewed and how regularly, which areas will be scrutinised, and how any recommendations will be taken forward. This might include the process and timescales for ongoing review of the arrangements, and the effectiveness of learning following serious incidents. In the yearly report, the LSPs should review the impact and learning from scrutiny and how they are responding to the findings to improve the effectiveness of arrangements (see section below on Reporting).

## **Funding**

The LSP should agree on the level of funding needed to deliver the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. This includes consideration of business and analytical support, independent scrutiny, infrastructure, and core functions including local children safeguarding practice reviews, multi-agency training and learning events. It is the responsibility of the LSP to ensure that adequate funding is allocated and spent in line with agreed priorities.

Funding contributions from the statutory safeguarding partners should be equitable and agreed by the LSP. Funding for the arrangements should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that they can meet the financial needs of the arrangements.

The funding should be transparent to children and families in the area, and the individual contributions of safeguarding partners and relevant agencies should be clearly set out in reporting.

## **Reporting**

Safeguarding partners should be transparent in how they co-ordinate, deliver and fund services for children and families locally. In order that others can hold the safeguarding partners to account there are two mechanisms for reporting on service delivery and leadership:

- publication of arrangements
- a yearly report

Both documents should:

- be contributed to and signed off by all LSPs
- clearly demonstrate the links between them
- be easily accessible

## 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 safeguarding partners, their delegates and partnership chair are
- geographical boundaries, including if the arrangements operate across 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, schools (including independent schools, academies, and free schools), colleges, early years and childcare settings, and other educational providers (including alternative provision) 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 share information and data safely and effectively, using arrangements that clearly set out the processes and the principles for sharing
- 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 multi-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, including how to escalate concerns and how any disputes will be resolved, including whistleblowing procedures
- how the local threshold document in place aligns with the arrangements

The published arrangements should be easily available and updated when there are key changes, such as changes to the LSPs, to the yearly priorities or the list of relevant agencies. Any updates to the published arrangements should be sent to the Department for Education.

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

## Yearly report

Safeguarding partners must jointly report on the activity they have undertaken in a 12-month period. That reporting should be transparent and easily accessible to families and professionals. The focus of these reports should be on multi-agency priorities, learning, impact, evidence, and improvement. Reports must include:

- what partnerships have done as a result of the arrangements, including on child safeguarding practice reviews
- how effective these arrangements have been in practice

In addition, the report should also include:

- the contribution of each safeguarding partner to the functioning and structure of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

- any themes emanating from aggregated methods of scrutiny, for example, reviews and scrutineer activity and multi-agency audits
- evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families
- an analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities
- an analysis of learning from serious incidents
- a record of key decisions and actions taken by the safeguarding partners in the yearly cycle, including in relation to implementing the recommendations from any local and national child safeguarding practice reviews and the impact this has had
- ways in which the safeguarding partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision
- the breakdown of costs in delivering the arrangements for that period, including the financial contributions of individual partners, any changes to funding and an assessment of the impact and value for money of this funding
- evidence of how safeguarding partners are ensuring the adequate representation and input of education at both the operational and strategic levels of the arrangements
- an overview of how data is being used to encourage learning within the arrangements and evidence of how information sharing has improved practice and outcomes
- a review of the impact and learning from independent scrutiny arrangements to ensure the leadership is strong and the arrangements are leading to the desired and necessary impact
- any updates to the published arrangement with the proposed timescale for implementation
- evidence that national reforms have been implemented, taking into account key decisions and actions taken by safeguarding partners in response to reforms, and any issues or concerns encountered within the yearly cycle

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 Youth Custody Service, and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

Safeguarding partners should make sure the report is widely available. A copy

should be sent to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel who will review it to identify any issues that may need escalation to a national level and Foundations (What Works Centre for Children and Families), given its focus on learning within 7 days of publication. To allow for consistency across local areas, these should be submitted and published by the end of September every year, starting from 2024, and should be reflective of work undertaken the previous financial year (April to March). If partners fail to submit the yearly report this may be escalated to the Secretary of State.

## **Dispute resolution process**

Safeguarding partners and relevant agencies must act in accordance with the arrangements for their area and will be expected to understand each other's differences of views and resolve such differences locally. LSPs should therefore agree a system to resolve disputes and issues between partners within multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

This may be applied to isolated issues or incidents as well as any intractable recurring ones.

At all stages LSPs and their delegates should make use of key stakeholders in their local systems, that might include Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), Mayors, lead members, and/or independent persons, who can be brought to the table to assist them to settle on a solution.

If the issue remains unresolved between the three safeguarding partners and their local networks the next stage of escalation is to the Secretary of State.