

North East Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership



Scrutiny & Assurance Framework

Revised June 2026

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Overview

The North East Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership Board (NEL SCPB) arrangements have been developed to create an arena conducive to robust scrutiny and constructive challenge that aims to improve outcomes and experience for children and families, support staff to strive for excellence in practice, and to hold a mirror up to ourselves through a lens of transparency. The arrangements include opportunities to proactively support local agencies and organisations to grow and improve, as well as a partnership approach to learning and multi-agency safeguarding system growth and development.

The ongoing drive and commitment for continuous improvement is to ensure better outcomes and experiences for our children, young people and families, and strong arrangements for our staff. This Safeguarding Children Partnership Scrutiny and Assurance Framework (known hereafter as the Framework) supports, enables and acknowledges a range of mechanisms to support the SCP to undertake scrutiny and assurance. These mechanisms enable holistic, proactive and responsive approaches to scrutiny and assurance, providing opportunities for data and intelligence gathering, and triangulation along with the sharing of good practice, in the spirit of continuous learning and improvement, and are as follows

- Section 11 process (Safeguarding Self-Assessment)
- Thematic Assurance Events
- Schools, colleges, Alternative Education Providers Safeguarding Audit
- Early Years Providers Safeguarding Audit
- Agency Call ins
- Agency Specific Assurance Events
- Practice Learning Events
- Delegated Safeguarding Partner/ Chief Officer SCP Subgroup Observation Assurance
- Agency call ins
- Individual Scrutiny and Assurance Functions
- Independent Scrutiny

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.

Other multi-agency events and forums for learning through scrutiny and assurance may be convened under the auspices of NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership Board. 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 practice learning event 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 local 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. The Framework is aligned to the SCP Governance Structure, SCP priorities and key areas of focus for the partnership. This Framework also outlines mechanisms for scrutinising our Safeguarding Children Partnership Board 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 Safeguarding Children Partnership Board 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 Safeguarding Children's Partnership Board arrangements. The local arrangements for independent scrutiny are outlined in this Framework, including the role of the Independent Scrutiny Officer(s).

2 Partnership scrutiny and assurance functions

SCRUTINY AND ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK	
Section 11 process - Safeguarding Self-Assessment	The 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. Agencies and organisations with a duty under Section 11 are detailed in NEL Safeguarding Children's Partnership Board Local Arrangement Plan. 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. The safeguarding self-assessment process is co-ordinated by the NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership team. A summary of the outcomes and composite of the individual agency action plans are made available to both the Children's Partnership Board. Progress against the identified actions is overseen by the SCP Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development Group and are collated and presented to both Boards six months thereafter. There are opportunities to further develop the joint safeguarding self-assessment tool, including bespoke specific areas of focus as identified. We will make use of the safeguarding self-assessment as part of the preparations

	for our agency specific assurance events.
Thematic Assurance Events	Thematic assurance events provide an opportunity for the NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership 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. The proposed format for the Thematic Assurance event is as follows: • 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 NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership 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 Safeguarding Scrutiny Officer(s), key contributing partners and members of the NEL Children Partnership 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 NEL Children partnership 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 (SPLAD) who will develop an action plan that will be monitored until completion. Outcomes and progress against the action plan will be fed into the NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership Board via the SPLAD chair as appropriate • Key highlights and emerging themes will be published on the NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership website and distributed across the partnership 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.
Schools, Colleges and Alternative Education Providers Safeguarding Audit	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. 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. 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. The composite outcomes from all audits are shared with the NEL SCPB and the outcomes are used to shape training, education and practice developments.
Early Years Providers Safeguarding Audit (Childminders/ Nurseries)	An annual audit is undertaken in respect of the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements within both childminder and nursery provision. This audit process is underpinned by a self-assessment tool which supports childminders and nursery providers to demonstrate that they are meeting their statutory responsibilities, identify best practice, and highlight actions being taken and/or required. The criteria within the audit is aligned to the requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The composite outcomes from all audits are shared with the NEL SCP Safeguarding Children Partnership Board and the outcomes are used to shape training, education and practice development.
Agency “Call ins”	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 NEL SCPB, any underpinning partnerships/groups or bespoke meetings or events.
Practice Learning Event	The practice learning process provides an opportunity for the NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership Board to gain a sense of the safeguarding system pertaining to a specific child protection or safeguarding theme across all safeguarding partners and other relevant agencies. A practice learning process will be undertaken three times a year that culminates in a practice learning. Each event will consider a number of children, across the levels of the local threshold Document in relation to a specific theme, previously agreed by the safeguarding partners, aligned to the SCP priorities and key areas of focus. The themes for the practice learning events are aligned to the SCP priorities and key areas of focus and are updated on an annual basis as part of the scrutiny and assurance framework action plan which is overseen by the Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development (SPLAD) Group. The NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership team works with partners to identify the children and following a process of single agency case audits, practice learning event panels meet with practitioners and their managers to discuss the identified children. 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. The event enables partners to engage in active challenge and ensure they have interface with multi-agency practitioners from across the safeguarding system.

The expected outcomes of the practice learning event 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.

Following the practice learning event, the key learning will be collated by the SCP team in collaboration with the involved Independent Scrutiny Officer. The outcomes will be considered at the next available SPLAD Group and the action plan will be monitored until completion. Outcomes and progress against the action plan will be fed into the NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership Board via the SPLAD Group chair as appropriate.

A 7-minute practice learning briefing, drawn from the children and families discussed will be shared with attendees from the event and published on the NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership website.

Child Specific Practice Learning Events

Safeguarding partner representatives from any of the three safeguarding partner organisations can request a practice learning child specific practice learning event as a means of identifying learning and areas for development across the partnership.

Professionals should discuss the child with their agency's Delegated Safeguarding Partner or a senior manager if they are not from one of the three safeguarding partner organisations. The details of the child and circumstances should be provided in a practice learning request form and submitted to the SCP team. Each delegated safeguarding partner will discuss the child with the other two delegated safeguarding partners.

Following agreement between the delegated safeguarding partners to undertake a child specific practice learning event, a request should be made to the NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership team to convene the event. The NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership team will notify the three safeguarding partners that an event is being held.

To reflect the agencies involved with the child, safeguarding partner representatives will be invited to attend by the NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership team, along with representatives from other relevant agencies.

The child specific practice learning 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.

Agencies involved will be required to undertake a single agency case review form, the outcomes of which will be submitted to the NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership 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 child's information and prepare lines of enquiry.

Member(s) of the NEL Safeguarding Children partnership 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.

Following the event a 7-minute practice learning briefing, drawn from the children and families discussed is shared with attendees. It will not be published on the

	NEL SCP website. An overview of the event and any identified areas for development and actions is progressed through partnership governance arrangements with key themes reported to the SCPB. Actions are monitored until completed and formally signed off by the board.
Delegated safeguarding partner/ chief officer SCP subgroup observation assurance	Aim: For safeguarding lead agency representatives to have oversight through observation around the effectiveness of the local arrangements aligned to the SCP Governance Arrangements. To support Leads awareness: • Terms of Reference (TOR) to be shared for identified subgroup When attending allocated subgroup, the attending Lead to consider the following key points and share responses post meeting with SCP via NELC Safeguarding Lead Agency Subgroup Feedback : • What went well during this session? • What could be improved or strengthened for future sessions? • Do you have any further comments, learning points, or suggestions? A quarterly report of the findings/ learning will be reported to the respective subgroup the observation was in relation to, the impact and learning from all observations and associated actions will be overseen by the SPLAD Group and reported to the SCPB on a quarterly basis.

3 Individual scrutiny and assurance functions

There are other mechanisms for scrutinising our Safeguarding Partnership arrangements through individual safeguarding partner's organisational scrutiny functions as follows:

NELC Council Democratic Scrutiny and Internal Audit Functions	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. 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. All statutory safeguarding partners selected relevant agencies and other named organisations and agencies would fall within this scope. The Annual Report of the NEL Safeguarding Children's Partnership Local Arrangements is presented to and discussed at Cabinet and Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel.
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Integrated Care Board	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 arrangements as below: • 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 NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership 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. • The ICB undertakes visits to clinical services during which safeguarding arrangements are scrutinised as part of the wider quality agenda
Humberside Police	Humberside Police has comprehensive arrangements in place for children's safeguarding scrutiny and assurance within the force and its partnership activity. • 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 NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership Board Annual Report is presented to and discussed at the local and force management meetings. • Daily scrutiny is applied through the local and force level pacesetter meetings to individual safeguarding and crime incidences that have concerns for safety. • The force also conducts force wide scrutiny to its crime recording practices and safeguarding processes through local and independent scrutiny teams, and peer reviews are common practice.

4 Independent Scrutiny

The role of independent scrutiny is critical to provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of the NEL safeguarding Children Partnership Board 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 NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership Local Arrangements and annual report

This will also help us to ascertain how our Safeguarding Children Partnership 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)	Independent Scrutiny Officer(s) - ISO(s) - play a significant role in the NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership Board Scrutiny and Assurance Framework. 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. 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. 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 practice learning event 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 NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership 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 NEL safeguarding Children Partnership 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 8 - Dispute Resolution in the NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership 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 • 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 ISO(s) will use their creativity and innovation to: • 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
Peer Review	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. 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. 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.

5 Learning and improvement

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

The Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development Group (SPLAD) is responsible for co-ordinating the outcomes of scrutiny and assurance activity that are multi-agency in nature. It will monitor, implement and review areas for development to ensure we positively impact on our commitment towards continuous improvements across frontline multi-agency practice.

In undertaking the oversight and critical evaluation of learning and improvement, the group will give specific consideration to compliance with Working Together 2023 and other relevant legislation and guidance, key messages from research, case law, and national guidance, and compliance with local procedures including the Helping, Supporting and Protecting Children in Families in North East Lincolnshire (threshold document).

It will contribute to and have oversight of the areas of focus identified by the Safeguarding Children partnership Board.

The NEL SCP SPLAD 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 NEL Safeguarding Children's Partnership Board and individual safeguarding partners, where appropriate.

The SPLAD 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 SPLAD will continue to give oversight to any action plans until completion and outcomes and progress against the action plan will be fed into the NEL safeguarding Children partnership Board via the SPLAD chair as appropriate.

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

In addition, where deemed appropriate by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group, the SPLAD 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 SPLAD 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 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.