Cumberland Safeguarding Children Partnership

Quality Assurance and Scrutiny Framework

Cumberland Council

Cumbria Constabulary

NHS North East & North Cumbria

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1. Introduction

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 (DfE, 2023) sets out statutory guidance about how we safeguard and meet the needs of children and young people. Our plans for meeting this statutory responsibility are laid out in the **Cumberland Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CSCP) arrangements**.

In Cumberland, we recognise that safeguarding children cannot be achieved in isolation. All our partners are committed to working together to provide leadership and joint accountability to provide protection, support and representation for those in greatest need. This means that we will understand our communities, how we are currently performing to be the best that we can be, and to share this to develop our services and staff to generate improvements.

Legislation stipulates that for safeguarding arrangements to be effective, there needs to be a rigorous and effective independent scrutiny function to provide challenge to the safeguarding partners and evaluate how effective the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are.

This document outlines how the partnership will manage the performance of safeguarding children services in Cumberland, assure itself of the quality and impact of those services and enable their continuous improvement. This work will be supported through the work of the sub-groups and the partnership Business Team. It also describes how independent scrutiny, will challenge us as a 'critical friend' and provide an objective overview of the effectiveness of our arrangements to safeguard and protect children.

2. Purpose

Working Together 2023 stipulates that 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.

The purpose of our Quality Assurance and Scrutiny Framework is to help us deliver continuous improvement in the quality of services delivered by partners for children and young people, by knowing ourselves better and having evidence of the impact of what we do through effective performance management, quality assurance and scrutiny. The framework has been developed to:

- Ensure partners meet statutory requirements.
- Ensure consistency of safeguarding practice.
- Identify and share good practice.
- Challenge appropriately and effectively hold each other to account.
- Ensure children and young people's outcomes are improved.
- Provide evidence of effective partnership working.

This enables us to know that what we are doing is supporting better outcomes for children, young people and families in Cumberland.

Principles

Our Scrutiny and Assurance Framework is based on a number key principles that guide our approach to understanding how well our safeguarding system is delivering for the children of Cumberland. These principles are:

- **Child Centred Practice.** A child centred approach requires professionals to ensure they are working with children and young people rather than working alongside them. The partnership will ensure that children and young people have opportunities to participate and collaborate in the work of the Partnership and that the voice of children is embedded in multi-agency practice.
- **High support high challenge.** Systems that develop and promote a culture of high support and high challenge will enable working environments where growth and learning is accelerated.
- **Promoting Practice leadership.** Leadership is distributed across the partnership and inherent in effective leadership is the desire and willingness to learn and develop both individually and organisationally. Involving practitioners in the continuous learning process of quality assurance and scrutiny in a supportive and challenging way, will build practice leadership capacity across the partnership.
- **Restorative approach.** An important shift in the quality assurance and scrutiny process will be to adopt the approach of 'working with' rather than 'doing to'. The emphasis on collaboration will not only apply to practitioners but also to children and families and wider stakeholders, who will all be involved in the quality assurance process and scrutiny events. This will lead to strengthening relationships not only across the partnership but also with children and families.
- **Promoting a culture of continuous learning.** The reflective and analytical approach to quality assurance and scrutiny underpinning this framework will create the environment for learning, recognising the way systems influence each other and the benefits of working together rather than in individual agencies. Shared learning enables systems to solve problems more efficiently.

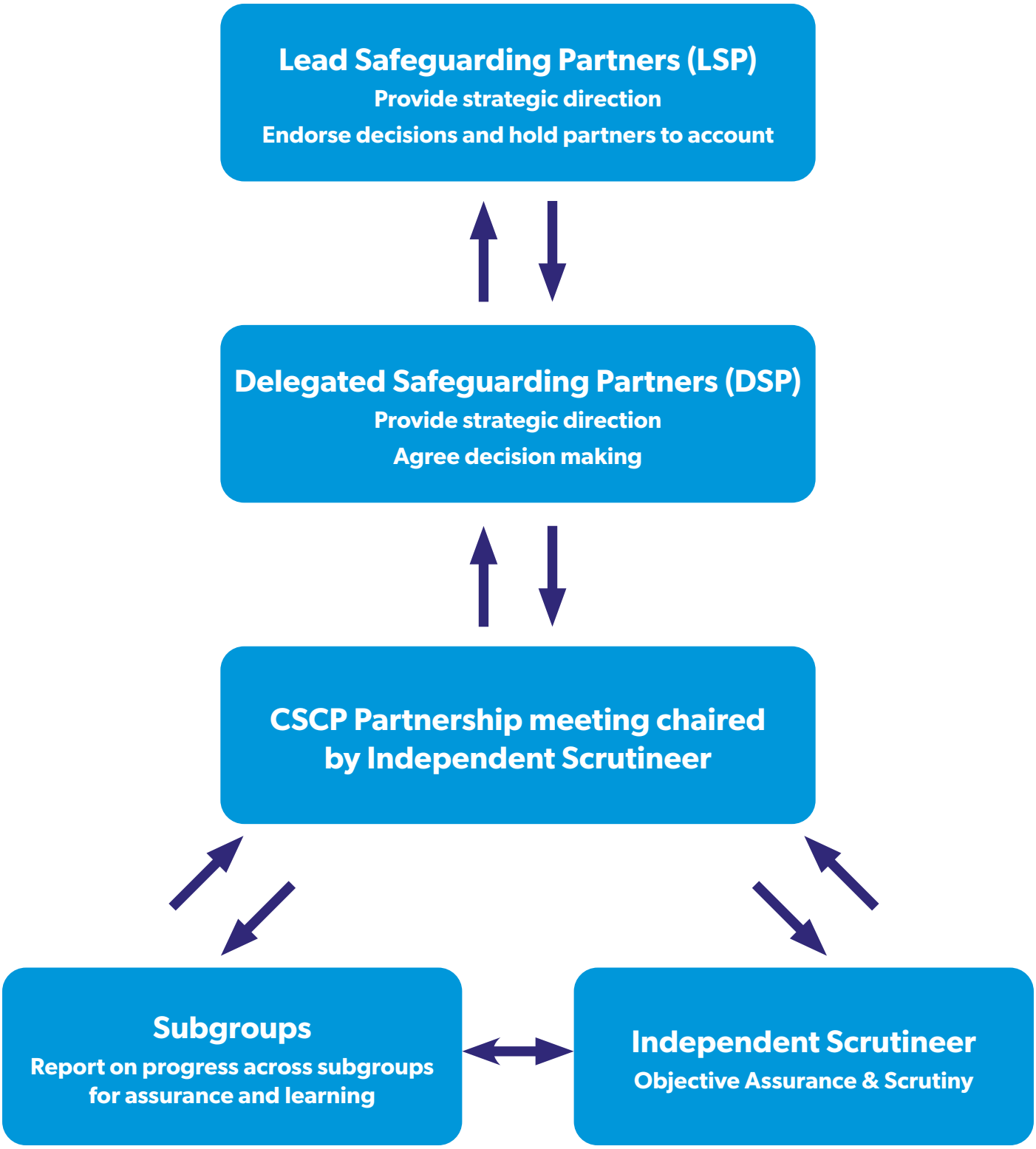
3. Governance And Accountability

The partnership has delegated responsibility for the operational oversight and delivery of Quality Assurance. This includes:

- Monitoring performance utilising a full range of Quality Assurance Processes.
- Escalating areas of concern arising from Quality Assurance activities to the CSCP Partnership meeting.
- Building a good understanding of how safe children are in Cumberland and where we need to improve.
- Utilise Performance Management to identify trends and understand the context which may impact on performance.
- Using local intelligence, focussed analysis and national best practice to inform our approaches, strategies and plans to improve performance and outcomes for children and their families.
- Providing evidence of the quality and impact of our work on the outcomes of children and their families in Cumberland which will feed into the scrutiny events.
- Reflecting on practice; listening, learning and leading on improvements.
- Testing the impact of improvement work on an ongoing basis.

The relationship between the subgroups is important to highlight. The Case Review Subgroup is responsible for ensuring the recommendations from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and local learning reviews are completed. The Missing, Exploited and Trafficked subgroup is responsible for quality assuring and driving the partnership approach to child exploitation. The Workforce Learning and Development subgroup is responsible for ensuring that learning from quality assurance and scrutiny is embedded in practice.

All the subgroups are accountable to the CSCP Partnership Meeting, the Chairs will provide an annual progress reporting, escalate risk and provide assurance to the CSCP on the work of the group using the agreed reporting template. Subgroups need to ensure where there are direct links with learning and assurance to other subgroups, this is reported in a timely manner to improve outcomes for Cumberland children.



The responsibilities of individual agencies in relation to dissemination of learning, scrutiny and assurance activities is outlined in Terms of Reference (TOR) for each group and reinforced through the role descriptors for chairs and members of sub-groups and for members of the Partnership.

4. Approach To Quality Assurance And Scrutiny

There are four specific elements to this framework:

- ✓ Feedback from Professionals.
- ✓ Feedback from Children and Young People and Families.
- ✓ Quantitative Information.
- ✓ Qualitative Information.

The evidence gathered from the four elements of this framework provides the structure by which CSCP scrutiny and challenge takes place. The 4 specific elements have activity associated with them which are explored in more detail below.

Feedback from Professionals

We make use of a number of mechanisms to engage with staff including:

- ✓ Surveys of all staff from across the partnership are conducted by the CSCP and any relevant outputs from this are used by the partnership.
- ✓ Feedback from practitioners through engagement with the independent scrutineer as part of the scrutiny process.
- ✓ CSCP Practitioner Forums are partnership forums. These two multi-agency forums offer staff the opportunity to discuss best practice, share innovative ideas and discuss specific issues raised through other mechanisms (such as feedback from the staff surveys or learning from multi-agency audits). They provide an opportunity to increase practitioner awareness and hear their voice.
- ✓ Education Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSLs) Networks (Early Years, Primary and Secondary Education) also offer DSLs the opportunity to discuss best practice, share innovative ideas and discuss specific issues raised through other mechanisms. They provide an opportunity to increase DSL awareness and hear the specific educational voice.

Feedback from CYP and Families

We understand the importance of listening to stakeholders and the valuable insight and learning opportunities presented by direct feedback.

We have developed a range of mechanisms for gaining input and feedback from Children and Young People and their Families, and these arrangements are summarised below:

- ✓ Direct voice of the child gathered via the multi-agency audit process.
- ✓ Feedback from compliments or complaints.
- ✓ Engagement and feedback from children and families as part of Scrutiny learning events.
- ✓ Engagement, input and feedback from children and young people.

Quantitative Information

We use a range of quantitative information to build our intelligence base. The CSCP Partners Improving Practice subgroup will receive performance scorecard that provides an overview of multi-agency practice, which will be used to assure the partnership of the effectiveness of our multi-agency arrangements and to ensure that our partnership priorities and activities are data driven. We will be working with our regional colleagues regarding plans for a Northwest multi-agency data dashboard centred upon the following four areas of commitment:

Sub regional overarching analysis of public health, deprivation, demand on systems to scene set

Commitment 1 Children's needs are identified early and effectively responded to	Commitment 2 Children are protected from risk of harm	Commitment 3 Children are effectively safeguarded, and their welfare promoted	Commitment 4 Multi-agency partners work together and hold each other to account
Measure now: • Early Help lead professionals by agency • Contacts by agency • Early Help numbers – (Family Help) • Child in Need numbers – Family Help) • Number of children awaiting specialist health assessments/provision	**Measure now:** • Referrals by agency (check RIG) • Conversion Rate contacts to referrals • Contacts and referrals with identified factors • Strat/S47/Conversion in reporting period • Educational Attendance and EHE	**Measure now:** • Use of Police Powers of Protection • Number of children subject of CPP • Repeat CP in two years • FGC Offered/Held • Number of Children subject to Public Law Outline • Initial Health Assessments	**Measure now:** • Referrals for serious reviews and referring agency • Partner attendance at executive (including education as a strategic partner)
Develop: • Family help plans (care reforms) • Family help needs measures • Mental Health (Child/Parental)	**Develop:** • Extra Familial Harm (CCE/CSE/Online Harm) • Neglect • Domestic Abuse • Child Sexual Abuse • Serious Youth Violence	**Develop:** • Multi-agency child protection team data • How we understand belonging for children • Family Group Decision Making	**Develop:** • Training delivered • Children seen by partners • Child and parental influence tracker

Voice and experience of children and families- belonging, loving homes and thriving families

Other CSCP sub-groups also have individual scorecards these include: The Cumberland Children Advice and Support Service (CCASS) Programme Board and the Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Children (MET) subgroup.

Where possible we will use regional and national comparators (other areas that are like Cumberland) to benchmark our performance and ensure we are performing in a way that matches or exceeds the averages. We will use this information to set targets to ensure continuous improvement.

When we agree to collect particular information and design a new performance indicator, we will first baseline our performance and then use this, and comparator information to ensure we set realistic but stretching targets.

The performance will be presented in monthly or quarterly scorecards, which are reports showing detailed performance for the past year, with quarterly performance for previous years, with comparator information where available, against milestones and the target. The report has detailed commentary from the responsible officer that describes how any under-performance is being addressed. This information will be used by the CSCP Partners Improving Practice subgroup to manage and monitor performance to ensure we can act quickly where performance is not as expected.

Qualitative Information

Quality Assurance activity is well-embedded within the CSCP through mechanisms such as multi-agency audit, the bi-annual Section 11 and Section 175 audit, the JTAI preparation group and peer reviews. A summary of qualitative information sources is below:

- The CSCP partner agencies are all subject to inspection. We share learning from inspections and work together as partners to ensure we use this valuable intelligence in our planning.
- The Partners Improving Practice subgroup can undertake focussed pieces of assurance work, such as thematic practice deep dives, which feed into the wider scrutiny challenge process.
- CSCP subgroups can undertake themed audits e.g. the MET subgroup undertake CE and missing themed audits. The findings of these audits are reported to the Partnership – and further shared with frontline staff through regular newsletters, the CSCP Practitioner Forums, DSL Networks, the website and is further used by the Workforce Learning and Development subgroup of the CSCP to be reflected in any training or briefings and to ensure our policies remain appropriate and supporting good practice.
- Section 11 and Section 175 audit is conducted bi-annually with regular questions so that we can track progress and other supplementary questions based on key issues identified through other intelligence mechanisms.
- Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) both local and national provide a valuable source of learning and lessons learned are published on the CSCP website and disseminated appropriately within individual agencies. Implementation of the recommendations is monitored via the CSCP Case Review Group.
- The Child Death Overview Panel provide regular updates and an annual report to the Partnership, this helps identify recommendations for action to reduce the number of preventable deaths.

5. Independent Scrutiny

As outlined in Working Together, Independent scrutiny is part of a wider system that includes the independent inspectorates' single assessment of the individual safeguarding partners and the Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI).

The role of independent scrutiny to:

- 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.
- To report to the safeguarding partners any recommendations from their scrutiny and assurance activities.

Cumberland Safeguarding Children Partnership has appointed an Independent Scrutineer to support implementation of its arrangements through impartial challenge and advice. The Independent Chair scrutinises local child practice review decisions, monitors and, where appropriate, challenges progress against the delivery of the partnership's business plan.

Lead Partners, supported by the Delegated Safeguarding Partners will drive business delivery, providing direction for the partnership.

The Delegated Safeguarding Partners appointed the Independent Scrutineer as Chair of the

Partnership meeting to continue to drive business delivery and provide direction for the partnership.

The Independent Scrutineer will lead the Partnership's planned scrutiny learning events and provide reports reflecting on the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding practice and make clear recommendations; to assist the partnership to improve safeguarding outcomes for children and families in Cumberland. The Independent Scrutineer may be tasked with undertaking smaller pieces of scrutiny and assurance work regarding a specific, distinct issue or areas of business to provide assurance to quickly provide assurance or highlight areas of concern to the partnership.

Approach to scrutiny

The role of the Independent Scrutineer is a key component of our approach to quality assurance and scrutiny; however this is not the only tool. Scrutiny should be holistic in order that we can challenge, learn and drive improvements as a partnership. Scrutiny in Cumberland Safeguarding Children Partnership will be a multifaceted with a systemic approach that brings together and triangulates evidence of single and multi-agency practice, identifies what is working well and where there are concerns in relation to multi-agency practice both at an operational and strategic level.

The scrutiny approach will provide a more in-depth analysis to evaluate the impact of the partnerships work and measure how effective current multi-agency work is, at safeguarding children and improving their outcomes.

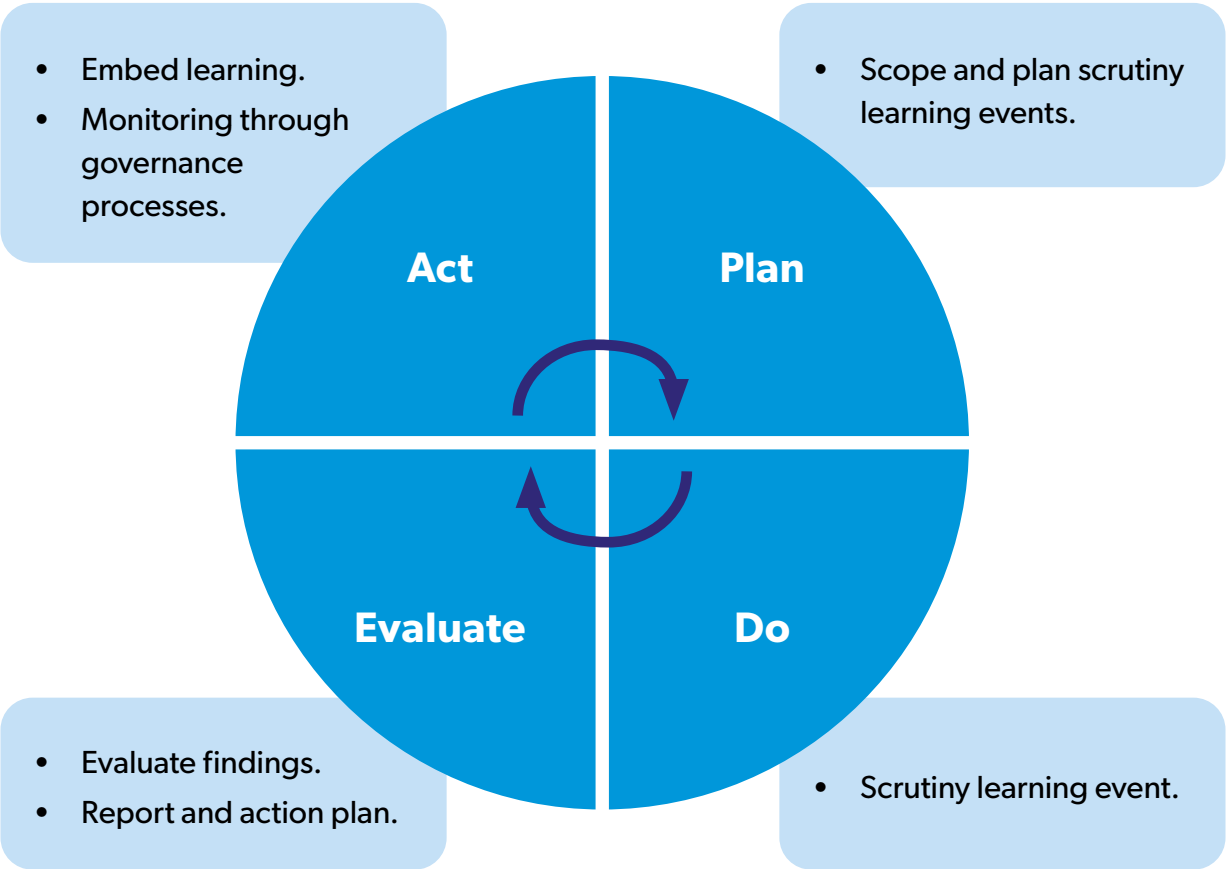
From the analysis of the findings, the Independent Scrutineer will provide a report which makes a judgement on the effectiveness of multiagency safeguarding practice in the areas undergoing scrutiny. The report will identify good practice and make recommendations for improvement, including any learning required to ensure professionals are effectively improving outcomes for children and young people.

The attached Schedule of Assurance and Scrutiny Appendix A sets out the overarching plan to ensure the partnership meets the requirements as set out in Working Together and meets the objectives set in the business plan.

Appendix A – The Scrutiny Learning Process

The Scrutiny Learning Process

The scrutiny process is outlined in detail below:



Planning

The planning stage includes the scoping for the scrutiny learning event and the collation and triangulation of evidence prior to the scrutiny event.

a. Scoping – this will need to occur four months prior to the event

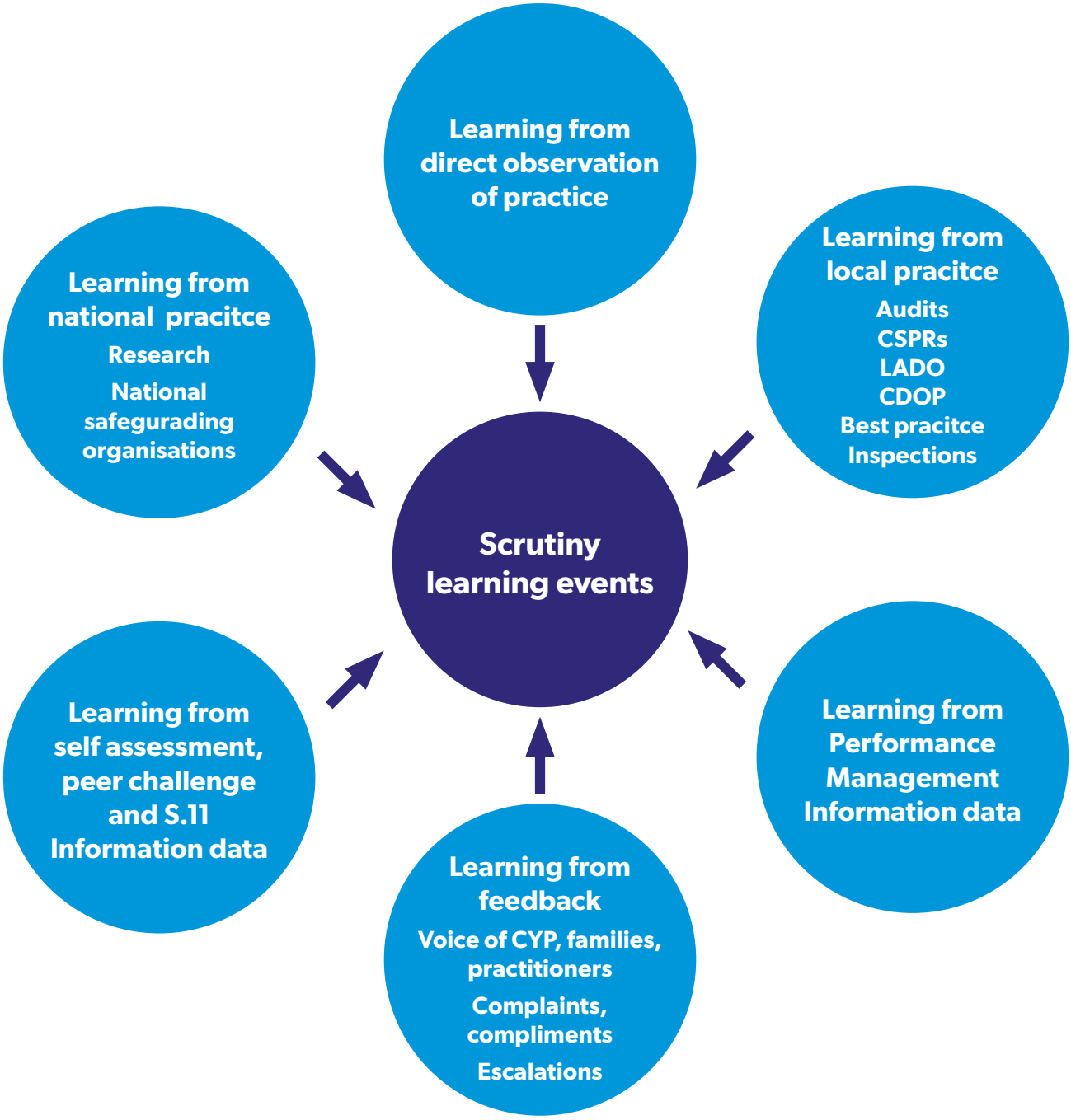
- The areas to be evaluated and measured within the scope of each scrutiny learning event will be identified.
- The evidence be gathered, analysed and presented via the area safeguarding groups (or other identified mechanisms e.g. audit, direct practice observation and data analysis will be clarified).
- A plan of who will do what, timescales for completion and who will be present at the scrutiny learning events will be agreed.
- The success measures for the scrutiny learning event will be discussed.

b. Collating scoping evidence – 1 month before scrutiny event

- The finding and themes of all related audit and assurance work is collated and analysed.
- The themes from the feedback events with young people, parents, practitioners and key stakeholders is collated and analysed.
- The performance information relating to the learning event is analysed and the context understood.
- The key areas both good and those requiring improvement, will be examined in depth at the scrutiny learning event are agreed.
- Any gaps are identified and decisions about how any gaps be addressed during the scrutiny learning events e.g. calling an agency in to provide more information will be clarified.
- External information that can provide essential benchmarking e.g. national learning, research, evidence from statistical neighbours will be analysed to support the scrutiny learning events.
- The analysis and triangulation of practice, benchmarking, feedback and performance will identify the key lines of enquiry for the scrutiny learning event.

Practice Scrutiny learning events

- The events can take various forms e.g. a one-off event or a range of events.
- The events will use the key.
- The events will seek to understand all the factors that support best practice and what prevents best practice from being embedded across the Partnership.
- A high support and high challenge culture will be required for learning events to be most effective.



Outputs from practice Scrutiny learning events

The Independent Scrutineer will provide a report including a judgement on the effectiveness of practice to improve outcomes for children.

- The report will highlight good practice, explains how the systems worked well together to embed this good practice and makes recommendations to ensure the partnership can learn from this and develop it further.
- The report will identify area for concerns, makes recommendation on how these must be improved, the timescales required and who will be responsible.
- A high-level action plan is produced which is owned and developed by the appropriate subgroup/s.
- Action learning is developed to ensure that any change in practice identified from the scrutiny events is embedded in practice.

Overall effectiveness of the partnership

The role of the Independent Scrutineer can help assist the partnership to consider its overall effectiveness. Recent scrutiny activity has focussed on partnership priorities. A piece of work to consider the effectiveness of the partnership could be helpful in the future once the new partnership arrangements are sufficiently embedded to be robustly challenged.

A scrutiny learning event would provide an overall evaluation of the effectiveness of the partnership. It would follow a similar process to the practice scrutiny events identified above but would also include the following:

1. Self-evaluation completed by leads and independent chair/scrutineer- this could also be a peer evaluation or elements of both.
2. Feedback from leads, subgroup chairs and the partnership on effectiveness of scrutiny events
3. Evaluation of the effectiveness of subgroups including membership, work plans and analysis of progress to deliver the CSCP business plan.
4. Feedback from practitioners, children and young people and parents on the impact of partnership work - the themes may include for example workforce development and the effectiveness of methods of engagement with children and young people.
5. An evaluation of the annual report and any recommendation for improvements
6. The effectiveness of the S.11 process and any recommendations for improvement
7. A review of the recommendations and actions plans from the two practice scrutiny events to ensure the recommendations and actions have been followed through and an evaluation of what difference this has made to practice
8. Any other emerging areas for the partnership

The output from the Overall effectiveness scrutiny learning event will include:

1. The Independent Scrutineer will provide a report including a judgement on the overall effectiveness of the safeguarding partnership
2. The work of the Independent Scrutineer will provide information which, alongside other wider pieces of work, may help to inform future priorities and feed in to the business plan for the following year.