

# RESPONSE TO THE INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY OF THE CALDERDALE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP 12-MONTH REPORT

December 2021

Responding to the independent scrutiny of the 12-month report undertaken by Chris Miller, Trustee for The Association of Safeguarding Partners (TASP) and Independent Scrutineer of Harrow Safeguarding Children Partnership.

## Context

The Calderdale Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP) published their [12-month report](#) in October 2021 and asked Chris Miller, who has no direct links with any Calderdale agencies, to independently scrutinise the report. In order to gain a more holistic view, the [CSCP Position Statement about its work with the Education sector](#) was also provided for examination. The Independent Scrutiny of the 12-month report can be found below.

## CSCP Response

The members of the CSCP concurred with the findings in the Independent Scrutineers report and found the feedback to be valuable and aligned with the local improvement journey.

More specifically, there are several key areas the partners will be taking forward. Namely, the CSCP will ensure the following areas are featured in business planning and processes in Calderdale:

1. Explain clearly how Independent Scrutiny is delivered in Calderdale, through the [Independent Scrutiny and Assurance Framework](#), and through subsequent Annual Reports.
2. Consider good practice from other partnerships and how the CSCP could strengthen and enhance families' contribution to safeguarding and quality assurance processes.
3. Develop and make clear how the CSCP engages with professionals and leaders from the wider partnership and how they can further contribute to the work of the CSCP.
4. Ensure the 2021-2022 and future reports are aligned with the learning and findings from this independent scrutiny.

This model of independent scrutiny will be shared with The Association of Safeguarding Partners (TASP) for partnerships across the country to consider as a new example of how multi-agency partnerships could be externally reviewed.

# Independent Scrutiny of the Calderdale Safeguarding Children Partnership 12-month report

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Safeguarding Partners in a Local Authority Area (the Partners) are required to publish their arrangements for safeguarding children (the Arrangements) <sup>1</sup> and at least annually are required to publish a report on what the Partners have done under the Arrangements and whether they have been effective<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.2 The report, although a matter for the Partners as to style and broad content is required to meet certain standards.<sup>3</sup>
- 1.3 The ***What Works Centre for Children's Social Care***<sup>4</sup> in its most recent review of annual reports has suggested that the Partners should have their annual report independently scrutinised<sup>5</sup>.
- 1.4 This independent review of Calderdale's annual report describes the extent to which it complies with the requirements of annual reports as set out in Working Together 18 (WT).<sup>6</sup>

## 2. General

- 2.1 The Calderdale Annual report 2020-2021 supported by a position statement on the engagement by the education sector with the Calderdale Safeguarding Children Partnership (The Reports) describes a healthy partnership which acts cooperatively, is transparent and open, works effectively with children and families and learns. It is also a partnership that knows where it still has work to do and plans for the future.

## 3. How the Reports are assessed

- 3.1 This assessment covers six areas that the Partners have agreed require to be assessed and each is graded in one of three ways:
  - **Good** – This indicates that the report provides good evidence
  - **Additional Evidence Required** – This indicates that the report contains some evidence of what is required, but does not fully satisfy the obligations of WT or the Children Act
  - **Much Evidence Required** - This indicates that the report contains little evidence of what is required to satisfy the obligations of WT or the Children Act.

## 4. Overall Assessment - Good

- 4.1 The Reports are written in an accessible style, contain a lot of good evidence of practical arrangements, innovation, learning and independent scrutiny. Their focus on how the Partners adapted to and delivered services during Covid provide strong evidence of a Partnership thinking on its feet and delivering for vulnerable children and families.

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<sup>1</sup> 16G (2) Children Act 2004

<sup>2</sup> 16G (7) Children Act 2004

<sup>3</sup> Department for Education 2018 Working Together chapter 3 para 41-46

<sup>4</sup> One of nine independent government sponsored research centres which seeks to improve practice in nine policy areas through research, evidence and the adoption of tactics that work.

<sup>5</sup> [https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Analysis\\_of\\_Safeguarding\\_Partners\\_yearly\\_reports\\_2019-20\\_Overview\\_report\\_May2021.pdf](https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Analysis_of_Safeguarding_Partners_yearly_reports_2019-20_Overview_report_May2021.pdf) ( page 9)

<sup>6</sup> **Working Together 18** is statutory guidance for multi-agency working which the Partners are required to comply with

- 4.2 Although written in a clear and comprehensive style the Reports are quite lengthy and technical. That could be a challenge for those who are not familiar with the type of material published in the report. The readership and impact of Reports could be enhanced with a more widely available short summary version.
- 4.3 Annual reports are required to be widely available and the Arrangements should say where they can be found <sup>7</sup>. The Calderdale Arrangements currently only state that the Reports is available through the CSCP website. The Partners might want to consider how they can increase the accessibility of their Reports.

*5. The Reports provide reassurance that the arrangements are effective- Good*

- 5.1 There is very good evidence in the Reports that the Partners' arrangements have been effective across a range of safeguarding, early years and child protection activity. The work that is described in relation to the response to Covid shows a coherent partnership, identifying priorities and taking action.
- 5.2 The Reports are particularly strong in their description of early years and early intervention work and in the practical steps and toolkits that are available to the children's work force in dealing with complex and difficult issues.
- 5.3 The Reports are also open about areas where further work needs to be done to improve practice. "Knowing yourself" is an important first step to progression and the Reports provide evidence that the Partners know where they need to focus to continue to improve.

*6. Describes the impact of the arrangements on families and children - Good*

- 6.1 The Reports provide good evidence that the Arrangements achieve for families and children. The adoption of the ICON programme<sup>8</sup> following a Partner review of non-accidental injuries to infants, the enhanced work with schools to understand and reduce school exclusions and the intervention work (already described) during the pandemic demonstrate sensitivity to family need. There is clear evidence of the Partners working together on these issues.

*7. Describes the way independent scrutiny is delivered - Additional Evidence Required*

- 7.1 How independent scrutiny is to be undertaken is required to be described in the Arrangements<sup>9</sup>. Changes to those arrangements should be reported in the annual report<sup>10</sup>. The arrangements for independent scrutiny in Calderdale changed in September 2020, with the retirement of the individual who had been the independent scrutineer.
- 7.2 The change to the Arrangements is recorded in the Reports, however the Arrangements themselves have not been updated. That is an accounting issue which is easily rectified.

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<sup>7</sup> WT Ch 3 para 43

<sup>8</sup> This is an NHS programme target at reducing the stress experienced by parents with infant children who cry a lot or find it difficult to feed

<sup>9</sup> 16G (3) Children Act 2004

<sup>10</sup> WT 18 Ch 3 para 46

- 7.3 The Calderdale Independent Scrutiny (IS) and Assurance Framework updated November 21 (and therefore after the period covered by these Reports) describes Calderdale's approach to IS quite well, but in these Reports, it is a lot less clear.
- 7.4 The Reports contain a lot of references independent scrutiny and there is no doubt that much open and transparent review and reflection take place. However, what would be useful is a clear statement about what the Partners view as Independent Scrutiny, why it is important and how it is to be achieved and acted on. Currently the Reports do not full describe in clear terms how independent scrutiny is delivered or how it is effective.
- 7.5 The University of Bedford Six Steps Model is usefully cited in the introductory section to independent scrutiny but is not effectively developed as the report progresses.
- 7.6 Openness to scrutiny on behalf of the Partners is apparent in the Reports. It needs to be described better.

8. *Provides Evidence of Individual, Group and Organisational Learning, including responding to SCRs, LSCPRs and Local Reviews - Good*

- 8.1 The Reports contain a lot of good evidence about how the Partners encourage learning, follow up on review findings and promote development.
- 8.2 The report on the Partners' SCR challenge events and the high -level commitment to that learning shown by three senior practitioners demonstrate a partnership determined to improvement. The joint organisation of multi-agency training across Children's and Adults Services brings a wider family dimension to the Partners' work that demonstrates whole system thinking in action.
- 8.3 The high take up of training licences among schools, health, local authority, and voluntary agencies is recorded. The take up by the Police is not recorded. The Reports describe learning and development as a high priority and the low take up by the police might usefully be explored and reported on in due course.

9. *Provides Evidence that the arrangements are Jointly Owned and Contributed to by:*

- *The strategic partners - Good*
- *Other relevant agencies - Additional Evidence Required*
- *Schools and Colleges - Good*
- *Children and families - Additional Evidence Required*
- 9.1 The opening to the Reports provides excellent evidence of the joint ownership of the three strategic partners, with each making a statement about their contribution to the Arrangements. There is plenty of other evidence of joint working and joint ownership. There is a clear message is that the Arrangements and these Reports are jointly owned and sponsored by the three Safeguarding Partners
- 9.2 The funding of partner arrangements is left to each partnership to determine. The Arrangements do not describe how funding is arranged, beyond the fact that it is equitable and proportionate. These are adjectives open to interpretation and it would be good to see a public statement of how public funds are being deployed.

- 9.3 The other relevant agencies<sup>11</sup>, apart from being described in appendix 2 do not feature heavily in these Reports. It might be expected to see them described as taking a lead in certain appropriate situations. These reports could usefully describe more fully the role and contribution of the Relevant agencies to the work of the Partnership.
- 9.4 The involvement of the education sector is well described in the Reports. Their joint work with the partners during Covid and their engagement with youth advisors, the police and the youth offending team are evidenced. The widespread engagement in the section 11 audit process demonstrates that the Partners are able to be confident in the safeguarding skills of this significant section of the children's workforce.
- 9.5 Some authorities have included schools and colleges in their executive group, to help with strategy setting and oversight. The Calderdale arrangements suggest that executive input from education is to be achieved through one of the subgroups being chaired by education.
- 9.6 Some partnerships include school representatives as part of their executive group. Given that the Calderdale arrangements include voluntary sector representatives this could serve as a model for including schools as well.
- 9.7 Hearing the child's voice is well evidenced in the report through the work of the young advisors. There is good evidence of the Partners assessing how their work impacts Children and Families. However, there is less evidence that families contribute to the development of the Arrangements. This is not a simple matter. The existence among the relevant agencies of organisations with a family focus shows that there is some involvement of families in helping set objectives, but more information could be provided.

10. *Describes arrangements for multi – agency:*

- *Quality Assurance - Good*
  - *Safeguarding Training - Good*
  - *Information Sharing - Good*
- 10.1 The quality of multi-agency engagement in the Arrangements is well evidenced. There is strong narrative around the Partners quality assurance (QA) procedures, which provide reassurance that professional practice is scrutinised, and reported on.
- 10.2 The Reports are open about areas of development that have been identified through the QA process. This has a direct link with the Safeguarding Training, which is designed to support and reinforce to audit findings, taken up by large numbers of the children's work force. The follow up to ensure that learning has been embedded is, although resource intensive, a strong message about the importance of seeking continuous performance improvement.
- 10.3 There is good evidence that the Partners are confident in how to apply the "public task" requirement for information sharing and that this has a good impact on the quality of multi-agency decision making.

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<sup>11</sup> Relevant agencies are those organisations locally . whose services and staff have an impact on the lives of children. They are identified by the Partners and are required to cooperate with the Partners in promoting Children's welfare and keeping them safe.

11. *Final Observations*

- 11.1 The Education Position statement provides good evidence of how the education sector engages with the Partners. In next year's annual report, it could be condensed and included in the main body of the report rather than being released as a separate document.
- 11.2 The requirement for the Child Death Overview Panel to publish an annual report<sup>12</sup> would seem to make the inclusion of the CDOP section in these Reports unnecessary.
- 11.3 The published multi agency arrangements document needs to be updated. It gives the impression of having been finished two years ago, whereas the Arrangements continuously change.

12. *Conclusion*

- 12.1 The Reports provide a good degree of reassurance that the multi-agency arrangements are making a difference to children and families. They provide evidence of a strong partnership, which is adaptable and focused on performance improvement.
- 12.2 These Reports meet their statutory requirements, they demonstrate how the Partners have chosen to prioritise their work and they show the Partners keen to embed learning from reviews, audits and stakeholder feedback.

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&  
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November 2021

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<sup>12</sup> Accessed at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/859302/child-death-review-statutory-and-operational-guidance-england.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/859302/child-death-review-statutory-and-operational-guidance-england.pdf) ( para 5.2)