



Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership

Independent Scrutiny Strategy

Across Derby and Derbyshire, the safeguarding partners are Derby City Council, Derbyshire County Council, Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board and Derbyshire Constabulary. The four statutory safeguarding partners have to ensure that there are arrangements for effective independent scrutiny in place for our local area; our approach will need to reflect and comply with national guidance and frameworks.

Having reviewed relevant guidance, our independent scrutiny function will need to form part of our working arrangements and will need to achieve the following:

- Provide statutory safeguarding partners and relevant agencies with independent, rigorous, and effective support and challenge at both a strategic and operational level that considers scrutiny of practice and services provided by all agencies.
- Provide assurance to the whole system in judging the effectiveness of the multiagency safeguarding arrangements through a range of scrutiny methods such as external review by an expert in a particular field; assurance interviews, focus groups, learning events, questionnaires, surveys and case studies; multi-agency scrutiny panels and peer review panels; practice observation and appreciative inquiry. The prioritisation and direction of areas for scrutiny will be provided through the statutory safeguarding partners, through a programme of audit and assurance signed off at the Executive Board.
- 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. This scrutiny will sit alongside and does not replace any activity carried out through inspection by regulatory bodies.
- 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, and recommendations to inform 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 consistent with the requirements of [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#), alongside feeding into the wider accountability systems such as inspections.

Principles of independent scrutiny in Derby and Derbyshire

Independent scrutiny helps drive continuous improvement and provide assurance that arrangements are working effectively for children, families, and practitioners. It also considers learning from local child safeguarding practice reviews, national reviews and thematic reports.

Scrutiny is evidence-based, and feedback will be considered and acted upon by safeguarding partners.

Scrutiny will consider the impact that the Lead Safeguarding Partners and Delegated Safeguarding Partners 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), inspections of Health Providers carried out by CQC as well as Joint Targeted Area Inspections, National Child Protection Inspections and the DDSCP annual reporting.

The statutory safeguarding partners will agree on how best to implement a robust system of independent scrutiny so that the system in place leads to objective and rigorous analysis of our local arrangements consistent with the requirements set out in national guidance.

Statutory partners and relevant agencies will review progress against agreed priorities and identify areas for scrutiny, with a focus on achieving improved outcomes for children. Scrutiny is based on sharing and analysis of local and national data, intelligence, and information. This includes our multi-agency performance framework, 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.

For Derby & Derbyshire, Independent scrutiny can be delivered through a range of methods and structures as illustrated above. However, DDSCP have set out recommendations for a two-phase approach as set out below to allow time to develop our arrangements consistently and coherently:

Independent Scrutiny 2024 - 2025

During 2024 the DDSCP reviewed and implemented updated multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in line with national guidance published in 2023.

To help us transition to a new model from April 2025, the recommendation is that interim scrutiny arrangements during 2024 until March 2025 will include an independent scrutineer commissioned to:

- Evaluate and contribute to multi-agency safeguarding published arrangements and the annual report, alongside feeding into the wider accountability systems such as inspections as required.
- Be regarded as a 'critical friend' and provide opportunities for two-way discussion and reflection between frontline practitioners and leaders.
- 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. They will achieve this through reviewing evidence provided in reports and attending the Executive Board and Chief Officer Group.
- Provide statutory safeguarding partners and relevant agencies with independent, rigorous, and effective support and challenge at both a strategic and operational level. They will be able to provide advice on the commissioning of scrutiny activity in consultation with safeguarding partners.

If supported, a rapid role outline will be developed with a recommendation to the partnership on the best way to secure this function.

Independent Scrutiny 2025 – 2026

During the interim phase above, The DDSCP will review its model of independent scrutiny to include in more detail how it will:

- Set out areas of DDSCP activity that will be subject of independent scrutiny, including where appropriate the use of subject area experts. The Chief Officer Group, Executive Board and Quality Assurance subgroup all have a role in coordinating the areas for scrutiny and include steps taken to obtain scrutiny of activity to address the DDSCP three priority areas (Domestic Abuse, Online Harms and Neglect)
- Set out the role of an individual scrutineer to achieve scrutiny of arrangements on an ongoing basis at key DDSCP decision making / strategic forums (such as Chief Officer Group / Executive Board)
- Set out arrangements for embedding scrutiny within the structure of the work of subgroups or set apart from it.
- Set out arrangements for scrutiny work to be undertaken through interviews, focus groups, data analysis, observations, and peer review.
- Take account of the voice and experience of children and their families so that they are appropriately represented and heard in the work of the partnership.
- Set out how different methods that are planned for scrutiny activity will be reported upon.

Review the progress to implement independent scrutiny against the Checklist for Independent Scrutiny (2022)

In preparation for delivering a new model of scrutiny for 25/26, a recommendation report will be presented to the COG during the final quarter of 24/25 to ensure we are ready to implement any such approved model.