

Solihull Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) Assurance Statement, April 23-March 24



Background:

The LSPs have joint and equal responsibility for multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in Solihull. They are required to show strong leadership in overseeing the arrangements to help and protect children. The three statutory Lead Safeguarding Partners are the Chief Constable - West Midlands Police (WMP), Chief Executive – NHS Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the Chief Executive - Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC).

Safeguarding partners have three functions, these are detailed in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'. The functions are to:

- Speak with authority on behalf of their agency,
- Commit their agency to the agreed actions of the SSCP, and
- Hold their agency to account for the effective delivery of the arrangements.

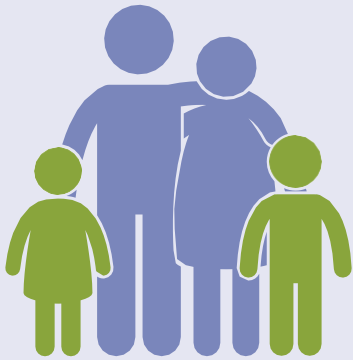
LSPs can delegate the three functions to the Delegated Safeguarding Partners - Chief Superintendent (WMP), Deputy CE (ICB) and Director of Children's Services (SMBC).

Although the functions can be delegated, ultimate responsibility for them remains with the LSPs.

The LSP Annual Assurance Statement describes the accountability and governance model including an assessment of the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for children in Solihull.



Our Multi-Agency Principles:



- We have joint and equal responsibility for multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in Solihull.
- We are committed to providing the best outcomes for our children, young people and families.
- We keep the voice of the child at the centre of what we do.
- We have clear governance, accountability and escalation arrangements.
- We have a focus on finding solutions and unblocking any barriers.
- We will call on other agencies for support, where needed.
- We act as a team, as opposed to a voice for our single agencies.

Through the agreed Scheme of Delegation, LSPs hold the DSPs to account for:

- Providing evidence about the quality/performance of multi-agency practice.
- Delivering the SSCP improvement plan, JTAI and National Panel recommendations.
- Updating on the progress of meeting the SSCP priorities.
- Identifying and anticipating new challenges to the work of multi-agency teams.
- Directing the SSCP support team, minimising bureaucracy ensuring task-oriented activity.
- Providing analyses of trends in practice from intelligent interpretation of data.
- Reporting on the engagement of children schools, and other relevant partners.
- Responding to messages from learning reviews.
- Reporting on the performance of the support team and use of allocated budgets.
- Advising on any issues the DSP cannot agree on.

Headings taken from the delegated responsibilities of the DSPs in the Scheme of Delegation:

1. Provide evidence about the quality/performance of multi-agency practice.

Full multi-agency audit programme is in place, with the subsequent learning shared across the partnership workforce. Response to Independent Scrutiny exercises has been swift.

Via the Audit Subgroup, the DSPs have overseen a multi-agency audit timetable that has identified key areas of concern for review. Topics in 2023/24 have included neglect, voice of the child, supervision and exploitation. The learning from audits is routinely shared at the Assurance and Review Group (ARG), the Executive and reflected in the Partnership Dashboard. Single page learning briefs are completed for each audit and shared with the workforce. These can be viewed on the SSCP website: [Learning from Multi-Agency Audits - Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership \(safeguardingsolihull.org.uk\)](https://safeguardingsolihull.org.uk). The Audit Group keeps a running log of actions from audits, which is scrutinised at each meeting to ensure timely completion.

Information from audits and data is scrutinised by the ARG and reported to the Executive at each meeting. Minutes of the Executive will provide evidence of challenge and support provided by the DSPs.

The DSPs have supported the scrutiny exercises undertaken by the Independent Scrutineer and have overseen a swift response to recommendations. A formal response to each has been received by the Executive and the LSPs and to promote transparency, the DSPs have agreed for these 2-page response briefs to be added to the SSCP website.

2. Deliver the SSCP improvement plan, JTAI and National Panel recommendations.

The SSCP Integrated Partnership Business Plan will be over 90% complete at the end of the reporting year. JTAI and National Panel recommendations are also completed.

The SSCP Integrated Partnership Business Plan (IPBP) has been scrutinised at each Executive meeting, with DSP members taking lead responsibility for specific workstreams. This has provided additional support and challenge when required for the operational leads, with all workstreams making significant progress. This has been particularly effective in relation to the improvements in the Neglect priority area and workstream. The IPBP has been presented to the LSPs regularly to provide updates on progress and the version from July 2023 is currently available on the website: [SSCP Integrated Partnership Business Plan](https://safeguardingsolihull.org.uk). The final version for 2023/24 will be uploaded at the end of March with over 90% of the actions due to be completed.

The Independent Scrutineer carried out an assurance exercise to ensure the recommendations of the JTAI have been implemented, which was presented to DSPs and LSPs. The National Panel recommendations have also been implemented and the updated action plan shared with the Leader of the Council in December 2023.

3. Update on the progress of meeting the SSCP priorities.

The SSCP Integrated Partnership Business Plan reflects the progress against the SSCP priorities. Progress has been reported via a highlight report to both the Executive and LSPs.

The SSCP priorities are included as part of the Integrated Partnership Business Plan. The priorities for 2023/24 have been neglect, early help and responding to findings of external inspections and peer reviews.

- Neglect: there has been considerable progress to revise and focus the delivery plan for this area of work, which has in turn supported the development of a 'Continuum of Tools' for neglect and a suite of documentation to support the identification and response to neglect. These are all available on the SSCP website: [Neglect - Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership \(safeguardingsolihull.org.uk\)](https://safeguardingsolihull.org.uk). The understanding of neglect data will be a focus for 2024/25, using the DfE Grant Funding to establish a place based multi-agency dataset.
- Early Help: the DSPs have supported and provided direction for the development of the Early Help Strategy via a task and finish group, the subsequent launch event and a suite of support tools. All can be accessed via the SSCP website: [Early Help - Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership \(safeguardingsolihull.org.uk\)](https://safeguardingsolihull.org.uk).
- Responding to findings of external inspections and peer reviews: The IPBP was written to include specific recommendations from inspections and peer reviews to ensure these were scrutinised and completed. The link to the IPBP is above, but in addition the SSCP Yearly Report for 2022/23 contains information on the completion of recommendations from the National Panel Report: [SSCP Yearly Report 2022/2023](#)

4. Identify and anticipate new challenges to the work of multi-agency teams.

Case reviews, audit and data have identified new challenges, with DSPs supporting discussions to identify mitigating actions.

Undertaking Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Rapid Reviews is a key element of identifying new challenges. In particular this year, this has identified areas such as the embedding of Trauma Informed Practice and understanding medical neglect; actions are in progress to take recommendations forward. Additionally, a recent review of data, alongside intelligence gained from training courses, reflects a low referral rate for cases of sexual abuse. A discussion will take place at ARG to establish recommendations, and the next SSCP Multi-Agency Training Module on Sexual Abuse has been heavily promoted.

Both the ARG and Executive have a standing item to consider the results of regulatory reviews on agencies, and the subsequent impact on our workforce and the partnership as a whole. There is a culture of mutual challenge and assurance, to enable honest conversations and support of improvement planning.

5. Direct the SSCP support team, minimising bureaucracy ensuring task-oriented activity.

The restructured SSCP Support Hub is providing valuable advice and information to the DSPs to support their statutory responsibilities and minimise bureaucracy.

As DSPs, we have provided direct support for the new SSCP Business Manager, and in turn the newly formed SSCP Support Hub. This has enabled the rationalisation of the meeting schedule to reduce duplication, delegation of activity oversight to SSCP Subgroups, and the creation of clear reporting routes and streamlined documentation.

The SSCP Support Hub now contains skill specific posts (a Training Officer, a Project Officer and most recently a Data Analyst, as well as two Co-ordinators working alongside the Business Manager) to support the range of tasks required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the partnership. Specific task-orientated activity includes:

- The SSCP Training Officer compiles and runs a comprehensive offer which is free to all staff across the partnership and is well attended. Nearly 600 staff attended the range of modules available in Q1-3, with Q4 data not yet included, which is already higher than previous years.

- The SSCP Project Officer, among other tasks, runs the multi-agency audit programme, produces all the associated learning briefs, supports the regional Child protection Procedures and writes and disseminates the SSCP newsletter. The newsletters can be found here: [Newsletters - Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership \(safeguardingsolihull.org.uk\)](https://safeguardingsolihull.org.uk).
- The Data Analyst has been working with colleagues across the partnership to ensure that data for the SSCP dataset is received and then analysed.

6. Provide analyses of trends in practice from intelligent interpretation of data.

Data and audit activity provides intelligence for constructive discussions with highlight analysis and trend information is now reported in the SSCP Partnership Dashboard.

A comprehensive SSCP dataset is now in place and provides a wide view of safeguarding indicators. It is collated quarterly and analysed/discussed at the subsequent ARG meeting, with improvements continuing to be made. In addition, data is discussed at the MASH Steering Group and Neglect Steering Group. Examples of data discussions include:

- Following discussion at ARG it was determined that the 'multiple categories of abuse' category for child protection planning was inconsistently deployed by practitioners during reporting and masking the key abuse category. It has since been deleted.
- The ARG, directed in part by the DSPs, have taken a focused approach at meetings to understand the data and receive assurance on specific topic areas. So far this has included CAMHS (via SOLAR) and School Exclusions/Suspensions (via the Education Inclusion Service), with both topic areas agenda'd for further discussion as actions are completed and refreshed data is obtained.
- The high number of 'No Further Action' (NFA) referrals logged in MASH was extremely misleading, and as such the categories have been updated. These referrals are now more accurately being logged as 'Advice and Information'.
- A spike in 'Unknown' referrals in October and November 2023 was addressed through training and was resolved.
- A multi-agency audit of domestic abuse, followed by a specific MASH audit into domestic abuse referrals both highlighted that the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA) forms were not being submitted appropriately, as agreed, with Police referrals. This was corrected and a subsequent dip sample audit has evidenced the improved outcome.

Highlight analysis and trend information is now reported in the SSCP Partnership Dashboard, which has been refined over the last 9 months to provide LSPs and other Strategic Leaders with high level assurance from the partnership.

7. Report on the engagement of children, schools, and other relevant partners.

The positive engagement of schools and other relevant partners continues to embed. The engagement of children and young people is a focus for the 2024/25 year.

Over the past year the Education and Early Years Group has become one of the core SSCP subgroups. Through the support of the Chair and the SSCP Business Manager, there is now a clear route to directly engage and hear from Headteachers and DSLs. The Headteacher representatives on the Executive have been supported to be engaged members of the group and provide helpful and necessary feedback from the education sector.

There is additional work to be done to better include the voice of children and young people, and the voluntary and community sector, in the work of the SSCP. This element had always been planned for Year 2 of the Integrated Partnership Business Plan and will be a focus for 2024/25.

The SSCP Support Hub maintain attendance information for all the subgroups. This will be reported in detail at the ARG meeting in March, but the individual Subgroup Chairs have actively monitored attendance during the year and reported back positively. For ARG specifically, multi-agency representation has remained over 90% for the year and from November 2023 moved to be face-to-face to encourage better engagement and discussion. Likewise, attendance at the Executive meeting is similarly high, with all attendees contributing to the challenge and discussion.

8. Respond to messages from learning reviews.

The sharing of learning from reviews and audits consistently takes place, primarily through the improved communications routes developed in this reporting year. Recommendations are actively monitored through to completion.

Learning from reviews and audits are routinely shared across the partnership via briefing notes and as part of the quarterly Safeguarding Practice Forum. For example, the CSPR which was published in 2023 was a key feature of a virtual learning session in May 2023 which was attended by 140 colleagues and has been viewed 90 times since ([Link to YouTube of May 2023 Learning Event](#)). The related learning regarding raising awareness of the risks of alcohol and drug use by parents focused on a learning briefing and sharing learning materials from the Birmingham 'Who's in Charge?' campaign. This was included in the two SSCP newsletters before Christmas and data tells us that the first newsletter was opened 1401 times (accounting for multiple opens and where it was forwarded to others) with the specific section and link to the Who's in Charge materials clicked 103 times. The second newsletter was opened 1006 times, with 44 clicks to the Who's in Charge materials.

As DSPs, we have also taken careful consideration with regards to ensuring a jointly considered response when an incident is identified that may meet the criteria for a notification to be made of a serious child safeguarding incident. A recent example is the case in December 2023, where we decided to carry out the rapid review process first, to enable colleagues to bring together the relevant information, and take a more informed view on whether a notification was appropriate. The rapid review meeting was constructive and challenging, but also identified significant learning and a range of associated actions. A notification was subsequently made, and the resulting view of the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel was that *'Following careful consideration of the information provided we agreed with your decision not to initiate a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review. We thought this was a good and clear rapid review that identified key events and areas of learning'*.

For all Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Rapid Reviews undertaken, the SSCP CSPR Panel monitor the associated action plan to ensure that recommendations are completed.

9. Report on the performance of the support team and use of allocated budgets.

Budget reports have been received from the SSCP Business Manager, where appropriate allocation of resource has been discussed and agreed at Executive level. The SSCP Support Hub is performing well.

We have received budget reports from the Business Manager and ensured additional scrutiny via the SMBC Finance Team. This has allowed us to establish the Support Hub staffing structure within agreed budgets and financial constraints.

The SSCP Support Hub has worked effectively over the year, enabling the new subgroup governance structure to embed. New staff members are valued, working well with DSPs and

other colleagues to positively impact on the confidence of the SSCP across the partnership.

The SSCP Business Manager has become a member of the joint DSP/LSP meeting, with responsibility to report on the partnership improvement plan, and is a regular contributor to the Children's Improvement Plan meeting and Strategic Quartet. This reflects the confidence the DSPs have in the Business Manager and Support Hub.

10. Advise on any issues the DSP cannot agree on.

Headline: The DSPs have maintained an effective and constructive relationship as a group, and in their ability to raise issues with the LSPs when appropriate.

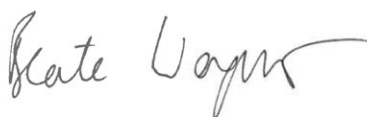
We have met regularly as a group, and despite personnel changes for two of the partners, have continued to work as a unit to progress SSCP Executive discussions and report back to the LSPs. There was a point during the year when we didn't have consistent partnership input, but this was raised in an open and transparent way and has now been resolved.

There have been a couple of occasions when the escalation of issues was required. For example, the 'one leader' role within the MASH needed a few discussions with LSPs to finally agree on a position that satisfied the concerns of all three partners. Additionally, there was concern about the health input into the MASH and the risks highlighted with the proposal to change the operating model to rely on one health provider. Discussions took place in an open and transparent way and the resulting offer has been found to be working effectively, with supportive leadership in place who have engaged fully with MASH and SSCP arrangements.

A significant contributing factor to the positive relationships between DSPs and the culture shared with the rest of the Executive has been the commitment to hold Executive meetings, and subsequent DSP meetings, face-to-face in council offices at Chelmsley Wood, at the heart of one of our areas of highest need.

Assurance Statement:

As the Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) for the Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership, our opinion is that for the year ended 31st March 2024, we have **fully** complied with the Scheme of Delegation set by the Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) and have delivered improvements in our safeguarding arrangements for children in Solihull.



Beate Wagner

Director of Children's
Services

Solihull Metropolitan
Borough Council



Richard Harris

Solihull Chief
Superintendent

West Midlands Police



Lisa Stalley-Green

Deputy Chief Executive
and Chief Nursing Officer

NHS Birmingham and
Solihull Integrated Care
Board

For the year ended 31st March 2024, the Chief Executive of the Council, the Chief Executive of the Integrated Care Board and the Assistant Chief Constable of West Midlands Police have met with the Delegated Safeguarding Partners to receive/approve the items set out below. Any matters that required the attention of the Chief Constable were escalated by the Assistant Chief Constable.

- The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) in Solihull publication including proposals for a parent/ young person friendly version.
- Progress updates against the SSCP Action Plan.
- Progress updates against the SSCP Dashboard.
- Progress updates against the recommendations from the Solihull JTAI.
- Resources and leadership of the MASH.
- Proposals for spending Section 31 Grant Funding received for Strengthening Multi-Agency Leadership.
- Corporate Parenting Commitments.
- Updates on the 'Engage' status for West Midlands Police.
- Recommendations from the Independent Scrutineer.
- Updates from the SSCP Business Manager.
- Results from Ofsted Monitoring Visits.
- Matters for escalation to Political/ Board Leaders.
- Communication of key issues and learning to staff and stakeholders.

We have reviewed the Assurance Statement prepared by the DSPs and we are satisfied that the DSPs have fulfilled the requirements of the Scheme of Delegation.



Paul Johnson

Chief Executive


Solihull Metropolitan
Borough Council



Craig Guildford

Chief Constable

West Midlands Police



David Melbourne

Chief Executive

NHS Birmingham and
Solihull Integrated Care
Board