

Independent Scrutineer (IS) 6 Month Report

April 2022

Executive Summary

This report covers the activity undertaken by the Independent Scrutineer for Barnsley during the first 6 months the role has existed. The period represents 18 days work. The purpose of the report is to provide an audit trail for the work undertaken by the IS in the period and to ensure the Partnership is sighted on the findings and observations.

It seems important to state at the outset that nothing that has been observed, reviewed or scrutinised to date has given rise to significant concern about the safeguarding practice for which the individual partner agencies are responsible. In addition, at all levels, partner agencies appear largely to work effectively together within a culture of mutual respect and support. Other reviews, reports and inspections undertaken in recent years have reached similar conclusions.

The comments, observations and recommendations in this report therefore should be viewed within the context of being about the 'Partnership' as a safeguarding system as distinct from the partner agencies. The focus is on the added value the BSCP should bring to the local safeguarding landscape so that:

- it acts as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others,
- implements local and national learning including from serious safeguarding incidents,
- facilitates and drives action beyond usual institutional and agency constraints and boundaries and
- ensures the effective protection of children is founded on practitioners developing lasting and trusting relationships with children and families.

(taken from Working Together 2018)

Recommendations

The report is broken down to broadly cover the areas that have been considered by the IS. Each section contains findings and observations resulting from the scrutiny activity and includes a number of recommendations/suggestions for improvement.

These are as follows:

MASH

- The feedback from referring agencies during s11 challenge about the need for better feedback about outcomes of referrals and the need for a review of the current referral form should be further explored and a response made to partner agencies.
- There were four areas of improvement to the Integrated Front Door (MASH) identified within the CSIP that were to be completed by the end of April 2022 the Executive should seek assurance from the MASH strategic group that these have been completed.
- There should be a senior education representative or enhanced education representation embedded within the MASH.

- The Executive, through the MASH Strategic Group should seek assurance that there is performance information and a dip sample/ audit programme, relating to the MASH that is used to enhance understanding and drive continuous improvement.

SCPR Sub Group

- The CSPP subgroup should reconsider the means by which recommendations from reviews are translated into actions that lead to change or improved practice and from which impact can be measured.

PAQA (proposed to become a 2nd Tier operational leadership group)

- There is a need to review the way that PAQA audit activity is currently undertaken and reported so it can extend its reach and the extent of assurance it can provide.
- A more relevant and meaningful multi-agency/partnership data set is required.
- Consideration should be given to move to a more South Yorkshire informed approach to data collection, sharing and analysis and the possibility of developing a central function to do this work on behalf of the four local authorities, the (local) ICS and South Yorkshire Police, should be explored.
- Consideration should be given to how feedback from children and families can be meaningfully collected and collated so it can be accessed when required to influence changes in practice, support evidence of impact and inform audit findings
- PAQA/Operational Leadership Group should contribute to the construction of the agenda for the Executive in order to ensure that decisions required by them to move issues forward are taken in a timely manner by the Executive and formally recorded.
- Given the enhanced role that PAQA will assume as the operational leadership arm of the Partnership, it is recommended that consideration be given to securing dedicated resource to ensure it functions effectively.

BSCP Executive and Independent Scrutiny

- In future the BSCP Executive should be more actively engaged in the ensuring that the practice reviews it commissions fulfil the requirements set out in WT 2018 particularly with regard to ensuring that recommendations from local and National Reviews are focussed on improving outcomes for children.
- The Executive should ensure that there is some formal record of issues raised by the Independent Scrutineer and the Partnership's response to any findings or recommendations made.
- The infrastructure in place to support the Partnership should be reviewed to ensure that it is sufficiently resourced, so it is able to carry out its statutory functions.
- If the IS role is to be undertaken as set out in the paper previously presented to the Executive, consideration should be given to increasing the number of days allowed to fulfil the requirements.
- The Executive should consider how formal IS feedback to them gets communicated to the Chief Officers who are the formal safeguarding partners

Conclusion

The report represented the first six months work of the BSCPs Independent Scrutineer. As set out in the summary there is no evidence that anything is broken in Barnsley in terms of the safeguarding work of partner agencies or indeed the Partnership itself. On the contrary there is evidence of considerable strengths and plenty of potential for future developments.

The BSCP took the decision that they wanted an Independent Scrutineer in order to secure a form of challenge that would support further improvement, and this is the basis of the recommendations and suggestions that have been made.

Jean Imray

Independent Scrutineer

April 2022

.