**Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB)**

**Terms of Reference**

**In this document, a child is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. ‘Children’ therefore means ‘children and young people throughout’. (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018: p6)**

# Purpose:

The purpose of the SSCB is to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Staffordshire.

The SSCB is the key mechanism for agreeing how the relevant organisations will co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and for ensuring the effectiveness of what they do.

# Key Principles

* Effective Partnership Working – we are committed to effective collaborative partnership working which will deliver the best possible protection of children and young people in the area
* Focus on the family – our work will support families to enable their children to flourish and learn in preparation for a long, productive happy life
* Committed to Early Help - we recognise that those with economic, health and other disadvantages will need additional support to achieve the same outcomes as their peers. The recognition and consideration of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) will inform the decision making process enabling the right services to be facilitated to the right children at the right time.
* Promotion of a learning culture – we will operate as a learning system; open and ambitious to improve

**Scope and Remit**

The scope of the SSCB is based upon 3 broad areas of activity. We will:

* Be proactive to target groups of children and young people who may be vulnerable or in need and facilitate prevention / intervention at the earliest opportunity.
* Lead in robust activities which aim to prevent maltreatment, or impairment of health or development, and to ensure that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with safe and effective care
* Be reactive in work to protect children who are suffering and/or at risk of suffering abuse

**Aims**

The SSCB will focus on children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm and on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of these children. In doing so, the safeguarding partners will promote activities that protect children and young people from actual significant harm and the continuing risk of harm that minimise the impact of harm and promote factors that enhance protection.

They will work to raise awareness within the wider community, considering differing backgrounds and needs, and among statutory, voluntary and independent agencies, about how everybody can contribute to the wider safeguarding agenda.

The safeguarding partners will authorise the policy process, strategy and guidance required to support the priorities and effective safeguarding. It will scrutinise, challenge and maintain an overview of the effectiveness of children’s safeguarding in Staffordshire. This will be undertaken through quality assurance activity, learning and development programmes and commissioning and overseeing Rapid Reviews / Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews as required.

The safeguarding partners will be responsible for setting the strategic direction of travel and will task the Staffordshire Scrutiny and Assurance group to co-ordinate the activity to deliver on the arrangements and identified priorities. This will include scrutiny of the arrangements within the MASH to enable greater oversight and assurance of the strategic and operational responsibilities.

The safeguarding partners of the SSCB are responsible for the progress of the business priorities through the business plan and the production of a yearly report.

# Overall Objectives:

To improve the outcomes for children, young people and their families the safeguarding partners will:

* Listen to the voice of the child and their family and utilise these voices in order to shape service provision and bring about effective change to frontline practice.

* Encourage and support the development of effective working relationships between different services and professional groups, parents, carers and young people based on trust and mutual understanding.
* Monitor the effectiveness of Early Help work and evaluate how this prevention / intervention is helping to bring about positive outcomes through a robust performance framework
* Evaluate how well local services work together to safeguard children, ensuring that any actions arising from inspections of safeguarding services are effectively implemented and that their impact is evaluated and evidenced.
* Improve the quality of frontline practice through the facilitation of high-quality multi-agency training and development. Furthermore, that this training informs better practice and improves outcomes for children and young people
* Ensure that there is a level of agreement and understanding across agencies about operational definitions and thresholds for intervention
* Improve local ways of working in light of knowledge gained through national and local experience and research, and to make sure that any lessons learnt or shared, are understood and acted upon
* Raise awareness within the wider community of the need to safeguard children and promote their welfare, and to explain how the wider community can contribute to these objectives

# SSCB Meetings

The safeguarding partners will meet monthly.

Each meeting will be chaired by the Independent Chair and Scrutineer, and in their absence the chairing will be rotated between the safeguarding partners.

The agenda and papers for each meeting will be distributed seven days in advance of the meeting. All core members will ensure that they are fully prepared for each meeting, complete action/s as designated, and submit any written reports for meetings to the Board Manager when requested.

Each key partner agency will have an agreed nominated deputy. Any nominated deputies will be similarly prepared and have full delegated authority.

All members will be asked to make any declarations of interest at the beginning of each meeting.

The notes and actions arising will be distributed following each Board meeting.

Formal links are established with other key strategic partnerships

The SSCB will develop, implement, and evaluate a yearly report which will incorporate the annual work programmes.

**Membership of the SSCB**

Strong leadership is critical for the safeguarding arrangements to be effective in bringing together the various organisations and agencies and Working Together states clearly who the lead representatives for safeguarding partners are:

* local authority chief executive,
* the accountable officer of a Integrated Care Board (ICB), and
* a chief officer of police

Where this responsibility is delegated, Working Together states ‘it is important therefore that the lead representative from each of the three safeguarding partners plays an active role.

Should the lead representatives delegate their functions they remain

accountable for any actions or decisions taken on behalf of their

agency. If delegated, it is the responsibility of the lead representative to

identify and nominate a senior officer in their agency to have responsibility

and authority for ensuring full participation with these arrangements. In Staffordshire the delegated responsibility sits with:

* The Assistant Chief Constable of Staffordshire Police
* the Chief Nursing and Therapies Officer of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board and
* the Director for Children’s Services for Staffordshire County Council

The representatives, or those they delegate authority to, should be able to:

* Speak with authority for the safeguarding partner they represent. o
* Take decisions on behalf of their organisation or agency and commit them on policy, resourcing and practice matters.
* Hold their own organisation or agency to account on how effectively they participate and implement the local arrangements.

The leadership role of the safeguarding partner is, therefore, based firmly on the notions of authority to act and the accountability for action taken. Its purpose is to remove the blockages, bureaucracy and organisational self-interest that bar the route to the effective and efficient delivery and practice of multi-agency services to protect and safeguard children. The safeguarding partner holds to account both the agency they represent and the collective partnership for their performance in protecting and safeguarding children[[1]](#footnote-1).

In line with this requirement in Working Together and to promote leadership at a local level, the partnership arrangements will include the Lead Member for Staffordshire Children’s Services (Non-voting) and the independent chair and scrutineer.

Invitations will be extended to partners to present reports and other guests and when required to present information which is relevant to the Business Plan and priorities and in keeping with children safe in Staffordshire.

# Funding of the SSCB

The SSCB will be funded by contributions from the Local Authority, Staffordshire Police and the ICB. A memorandum of understanding sets out the agreed arrangements for contributions and budget spend.

# Accountability and Reporting

In order to bring transparency for children, families and all practitioners about the activity undertaken, the safeguarding partners will publish a report at least once in every 12-month period. The report will set out what we have done as a result of the new arrangements, including child safeguarding practice reviews and how effective these arrangements have been.

**Sub-groups**

The SSCB will be supported to deliver its core objectives by a number of key groups. Regular reporting from these groups will be take place with the safeguarding partners to provide assurance against their statutory responsibilities, and to evidence an effective system in terms of their priority areas; and to escalate matters requiring intervention or the support of the SSCB. In addition to those formal arenas established to support the Board, there may be, from time to time, a requirement to establish a working group to lead a specific piece of work and in such cases the accountability arrangements for these groups will be detailed upon establishment.

**Dispute Resolution**

Safeguarding partners and relevant agencies must act in accordance with the arrangements for their area and will be expected to work together to resolve any disputes locally. Where progress is insufficient, the SSCBs agreed Escalation policy must be followed and may also include a formal notice which will be served on the organisation setting out required changes, time scales and consequences of non- compliance

Public bodies that fail to comply with their obligations under law are held to account through a variety of regulatory and inspection activity.

In extremes, any non-compliance will be referred to the Secretary of State.

**Frequency of Meetings and Quoracy:**

The meeting is only quorate if there is representation from the three key partner agencies.

If the nominated delegated representative is unable to attend the meeting, then it is acceptable for a nominated deputy to attend.

If quoracy is not met the meeting will still go ahead and the actions and decisions from the meeting will be ratified by the SSCB.

Attendance will be monitored by the Board Manager, with any concerns raised directly with the Independent Chair and Scrutineer who will approach the safeguarding partner to assist with resolving the matter.

Review Date: June 2024

1. [Wood Review of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987928/Wood_Review_of_multi-agency_safeguarding_arrangements_2021.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)