

KSCMP Scrutiny and Assurance Framework December 2024

Section 1: Introduction

The arrangements in Kent for complying with our multi-agency obligations to safeguard children, as required by Working Together 2023¹, are laid out in the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-agency Partnership (KSCMP) arrangements. This framework should be read in conjunction with that document.

The KSCMP aims to create an environment that allows for the robust scrutiny and constructive evidence-based challenge of safeguarding activity. These arrangements embody a partnership approach to learning and improvement across the multi-agency children's safeguarding system and provide opportunities to proactively identify good practice as well as gaps and areas for improvement. This approach aims to enhance the existing processes of professional and organisational scrutiny and challenge within partner agencies and to assure Safeguarding Partners that their responsibilities are being delivered across the geographical area that they are responsible for. Alongside this, we aim to maximise the Partnership's drive and commitment to delivering continuous improvement leading to better outcomes and experiences for our children, young people and families.

To support the delivery of the Partnership's vision we have developed an approach made up of two essential components. The first focuses on scrutiny taking place through the work of the Partnership sub-groups and the Business Team. The second, through the commission of an Independent Scrutineer, is to provide an objective overview of the effectiveness of our arrangements to safeguard children.

¹ [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023: A guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children](#)

Section 2: Approach to scrutiny & assurance

Guiding principles

Our Scrutiny and Assurance Framework is based on eight key principles that guide our approach to understanding how well our safeguarding system is delivering for the children of Kent. These principles are:

Clarity: about what we want to achieve in terms of our local safeguarding children multi-agency arrangements.

Balance: between the frontline, the organisational and the system oversight, using early warning indicators and dashboards to help us to identify and track system performance and focus on new safeguarding issues or risks.

Responsiveness: listening to the voices and experiences of children, their families, and the views of relevant professionals to shape services and drive practice improvement.

Questioning: using a variety of tools and systems to produce detailed analytical reports about the performance of the safeguarding system.

Rigorous: employing robust ongoing and independent scrutiny to evaluate how the system is performing. This is to provide high levels of assurance of the effectiveness of our multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements.

Collaborative: fostering a common understanding by using language which makes for the effective sharing of accurate and timely information and supports frontline staff, agencies and organisations and the Safeguarding Partners.

Developmental: a commitment to learn from good and poor practice at both the strategic and operational level, to drive continuous improvement.

Owned: by the Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) and KSCMP Executive working with the Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group.

Our approach to scrutiny and assurance

Safeguarding children produces a variety of data and information from a range of agencies and services that is often unwieldy and complex to interpret. Effective and focused analysis of the knowledge that is held within this data is key to understanding how well we are delivering safeguarding across our geographical area and focusing our joint efforts to improve outcomes for children.

To achieve this, we are taking an approach to assurance that concentrates on establishing an objective overview of how well the whole safeguarding system operates in order to prioritise activity and identify gaps, weaknesses and strengths against known risks. This approach, embedded in a culture of mutual respect, will

allow partners to hold each other to account on the evidence available and support the ongoing development of a culture of constructive challenge and improvement.

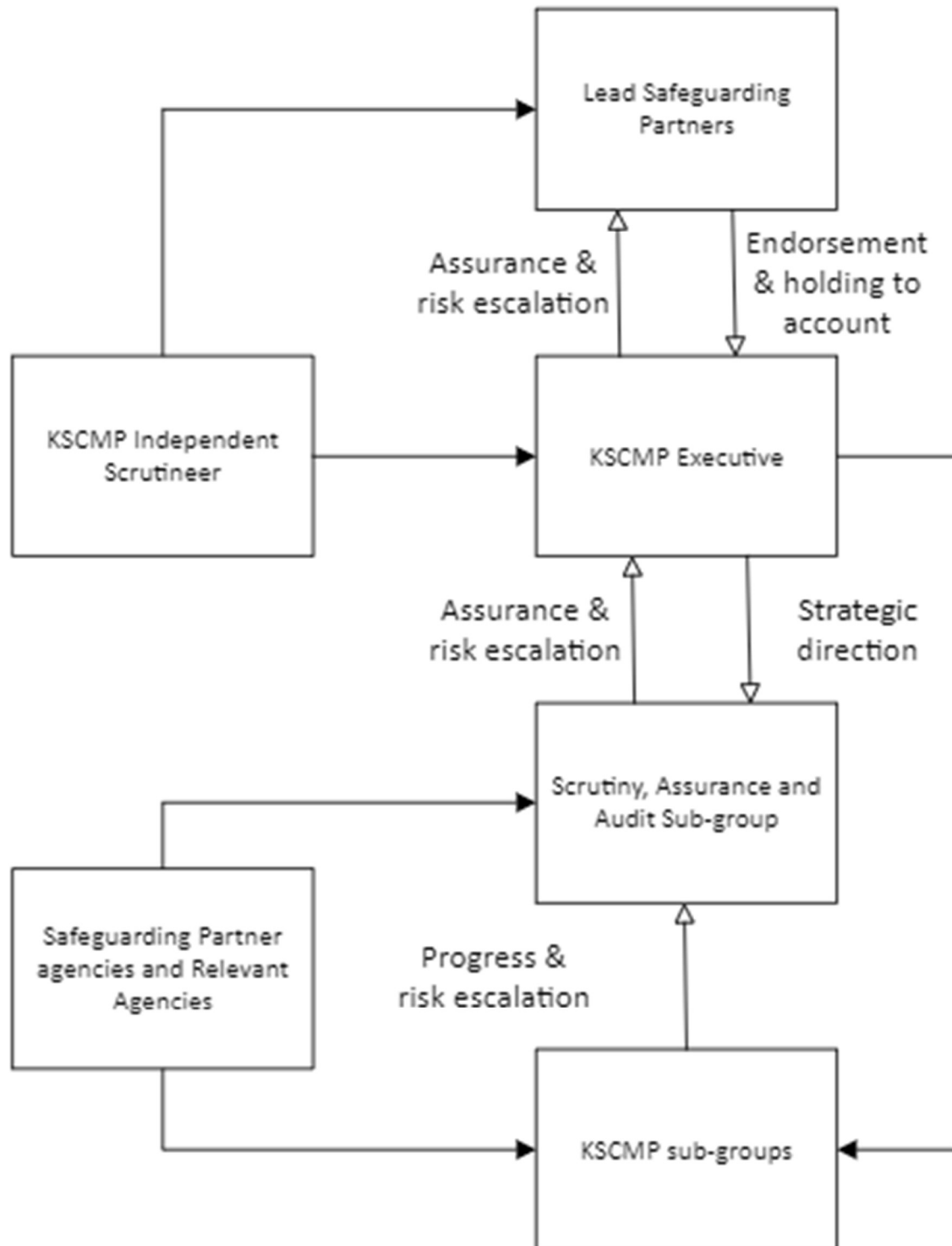
By adopting the “Three Lines of Defence²” methodology used in a range of national and local assurance models, our tiered approach focuses on developing assurance across our multi-agency safeguarding Partnership that supports the management of risk and provides an understanding of:

- the operational delivery of safeguarding activity,
- the overall effectiveness of the whole system in protecting and meeting the needs of vulnerable children, and
- the efficacy of the safeguarding system in meeting regulatory or statutory standards and requirements.

This approach aims to provide a depth of understanding across the safeguarding system.

² Assurance Frameworks HM Treasury

Overview of scrutiny and assurance



Scrutiny and assurance tools		Where reported
Tier One - Operational	Single agency data	Partnership Data Dashboard
	Single agency audits	Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group
	Single agency serious safeguarding incident reviews	Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group
Tier Two – Strategic	Partnership Data Dashboard	Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group, KSCMP Executive & Lead Safeguarding Partners
	National and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews	KSCMP Executive Partnership Chair LSP report
	Partnership Strategic Plan	Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group & KSCMP Executive
	Section 11 Audit	Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group, KSCMP Executive & Lead Safeguarding Partners
	Multi-agency audits	Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group
	Partnership Risk Register	KSCMP Executive & Lead Safeguarding Partners
	KSCMP Annual Report	KSCMP Executive Board & Lead Safeguarding Partners
Tier Three – Independent & oversight	Independent Scrutiny	KSCMP Executive & Lead Safeguarding Partners
	Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Report (yearly)	KSCMP Executive
	Single agency inspections	Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group & KSCMP Executive
	Joint Targeted Area Inspections	KSCMP Executive Board & Lead Safeguarding Partners
	Peer review	Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group & KSCMP Executive

Section 3: Roles and responsibilities

Our KSCMP arrangements have been designed to provide a high level of scrutiny and to support the development of assurance to the Safeguarding Partners of the system-wide delivery of their duties.

Each of the KSCMP sub-groups have a role to play in contributing to the development of assurance. The role of each group in the context of the Scrutiny and Assurance Framework is as follows:

Lead Safeguarding Partners: holds the Executive to account, seeks assurance of system effectiveness and signs-off key Partnership documents and decisions.

KSCMP Executive: sets the strategy and priorities, accounts for effectiveness, provides strategic leadership to the Partnership and makes key decisions.

Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group: leads on the system of scrutiny, based on detailed analysis. Drives improvement across the whole system and uses assurance tools to identify early warning of risk and any deficits in performance.

KSCMP sub-groups: engage partners, provide assurance on specific issues, and contribute towards Partnership priorities and goals.

Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group

The Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group will review the assurance products developed across the Partnership and advise the KSCMP Executive of the key issues that arise from their analysis. This will include highlighting any early warning of emergent risks and issues, latent or reoccurring concerns, as well as identifying strengths, gaps and areas for improvement. Assurance reporting will take place on a regular and thematic basis, subject to established priorities, and reports to the KSCMP Executive will include key information and recommendations for action. The primary responsibility of the Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group will always be to alert the Executive of declining or weak performance at the earliest juncture.

KSCMP sub-groups

The exact nature of the activities of each group is defined within the Terms of Reference for each group. Each group will have a specific focus and provide information, intelligence and feedback to the KSCMP Executive on the following:

- efficacy of frontline practice,
- lived experience of children and families,
- timely sharing of information and intelligence derived from the discharge of agency responsibility,
- contextual understanding of agency operational delivery,
- exploration of interconnectivity between agencies, and

- contributions and progress made towards the Partnership priorities and Strategic Plan.

Sub-group feedback will be provided by:

- Chair updates to the Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group,
- Reports within the yearly Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Report,
- Updates within the quarterly Executive Circular, and
- Updates against the KSCMP Strategic Plan.

KSCMP Business Team

In line with the 'Three Lines of Defence' model, the Partnership Business Team will be responsible for collating relevant data and assurance tools to support scrutiny. This is, however, dependent on Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Agencies fulfilling their responsibilities to share relevant data and information with the Business Team in a timely manner. Analysis of this information and other available data will inform the development of reports and recommendations for consideration by the KSCMP Executive.

The work of the sub-groups will also be supported by the KSCMP Business Team, including via analytical quality assurance, practice improvement, and learning and development.

Independent Scrutiny

The commissioned independent scrutiny³ will draw largely on the resources of the Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group in developing an appraisal of the Partnership arrangements. The role of the Independent Scrutineer is critical to providing third tier assurance and in assessing the overall effectiveness of the KSCMP arrangements, including arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding incidents. The appointed Independent Scrutineer will carry out this work with reference to the approach outlined in this document.

³ As described in the KSCMP Arrangements

Section 4: Scrutiny & assurance indicators

Main KSCMP objectives	Scrutiny tier	Key Indicators	
Children are protected	Independent and oversight	Extent to which recommendations from Independent Scrutiny have been acted upon.	Extent to which funding contributions by the Safeguarding Partners are equitable and adequate.
Children are prevented from the risk of harm		Extent to which the system of scrutiny and assurance has the right impact.	Extent to which single agency inspection outcomes are shared and considered.
Children are supported to recover from harmful situations	Strategic	Extent to which key priorities for the next 2/3 years have been developed to drive Partnership activity.	Extent to which a Strategic Plan has been developed and progressed.
Services improve through learning		Extent to which the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of change takes place.	Extent to which learning from local and national Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews is used to improve multi-agency practice.
Services improve through learning		Extent to which the Partnership identifies and responds to emerging risks and issues.	Extent to which the Section 11 and multi-agency audits help lead to change and improvement.
Services improve through learning	Operational	Extent to which a Partnership Data Dashboard has been developed based on sharing of single agency data.	Extent to which operational and strategic staff are provided with the right level of training and support.
		Extent to which the voice of children and families shape service development and practice improvement.	