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| **KSCMP Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group Terms of Reference** |
| **December 2024** |

**KSCMP Scrutiny, Assurance and Audit Sub-group (SAAS)**

**Terms of Reference**

**1. Purpose and Objectives**

1.1 The arrangements in Kent for complying with our multi-agency obligations to safeguard children, as required by Working Together 2023, are laid out in the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-agency Partnership Arrangements. These Terms of Reference should be read in conjunction with that document and the KSCMP Scrutiny and Assurance Framework (SAF).

1.2 The primary purpose of the SAAS is to assure the Safeguarding Partners of the efficacy of the safeguarding children system in Kent and facilitate robust scrutiny and constructive challenge across the Partnership. It is also responsible for leading the Partnership response to multi-agency audits undertaken by KSCMP.

1.3 The objective of the SAAS is to ensure that the functions of the Partnership are effectively discharged by the Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Agencies as required by Working Together 2023.

1.4 SAAS will, through the activity of the Partnership sub-groups, single agency representatives and KSCMP Business Team:

1. assure:

* agencies are fulfilling their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
* the efficacy of the safeguarding system in protecting and promoting the welfare of children; and
* delivery of the KSCMP Strategic Plan and Priorities.

1. analyse and respond to:

* the activity of the whole safeguarding system:
* the findings of independent scrutiny which helps to determine the effectiveness of our arrangements, (including arrangements to identify and review local child safeguarding practice reviews);
* findings of multi-agency audits undertaken by the Partnership; and
* analysis of Partnership performance data.

1. identify early warnings of weak or declining performance, emerging risks or issues, latent or reoccurring concerns and areas for improvement. This will include escalating risks or issues to the KSCMP Executive where they cannot be resolved through the SAAS membership or require strategic leadership response.
2. Learn from good / best / outstanding practice.

1.5 Through the delivery of these objectives the SAAS will be able to establish an understanding of how well children’s safeguarding, as a whole system, is performing, identify early warning of risk and under performance and make recommendations accordingly.

**2. Leadership and Chairing**

2.1. The Chair of the SAAS will be the KCC Lead Member for Children’s Services (LMCS).

2.2 The deputy Chair will be the Director of KCC Integrated Children’s Services Countywide Services.

2.3 The responsibilities of the chair are as follows, to:

* Chair the regular meeting of the SAAS;
* Agree agendas and approve draft minutes;
* Report to the Partnership Executive Board at specific request;
* Liaise with the chairs of other groups within the Partnership to deliver specific activity, as required; and
* Liaise with the Independent Scrutineer and contribute to the annual scrutiny report.

**3. Working arrangements of the SAAS**

3. 1 The SAAS will meet quarterly. Should the need arise, the Chair of the Group can convene an extraordinary meeting, either face to face or virtually.

3.2 Minutes will be circulated no more than 10 working days after the meeting.

3.3 Agendas and papers will be circulated not less than 7 working days before the meeting.

3.4 The secretariat and administration for the SAAS will be provided by the KSCMP Business Team.

3.5 Meetings will only be quorate if there is representation (excluding the chair) from all three Safeguarding Partner agencies (Police, Health and Local Authority). Where this is not possible the planned meeting will be rearranged at the earliest possible opportunity.

3.6 Substitution for members of the group is only acceptable as an exception. In this exception the officer substituting must be able to contribute meaningfully to the meeting and commission work in their own agency accordingly. Where the substitute cannot provide this level of contribution, the meeting will not be quorate, and the process described in 3.5 above will apply.

3.7 Meetings will provide a regular and formal opportunity for the SAAS to develop assurance regarding the effective delivery of the requirements placed on the partnership and relevant agencies as laid out in the SAF. Activity will be outlined in an SAAS forward plan, and will focus on the scrutiny and analysis of performance across the safeguarding system and will include:

* reporting against the agreed KSCMP priorities and Strategic Plan;
* reviewing the KSCMP data dashboards to understand trends, statistically valid variations and analysis of the performance across the safeguarding system;
* pro-active timely reporting to the Safeguarding Partners, on the above, including recommendations for action;
* identification of Partnership strengths;
* a focus on performance relevant to the preparation for single and joint agency inspection, including pro-active benchmarking against Joint Targeted Area Inspection frameworks when published;
* utilisation of feedback from national and local inspection and review of Safeguarding Partner and Relevant Agencies;
* receiving and acting on updates on the lessons learned from local and national Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews;
* quality assurance of policies and procedures developed by the Policy & Procedures Group, including activity to measure efficacy and impact on practice;
* through existing fora, hearing the views of children and their families in regard of the support they receive and in respect of their “lived experience “of the safeguarding system and using this information to inform analysis of performance across the system; and
* support for the work of the Independent Scrutineer in appraising the safeguarding system and formulating the yearly KSCMP scrutiny report.

3.8 In support of the above, much of the Group’s work will take place between formal meetings. Working group meetings will be held in between full SCG meetings to undertake key activity.

**4. Membership - Roles and Responsibilities**

4.1 Membership will include, but not be limited to:

* a representative(s) from each of the Safeguarding Partner agencies and Relevant Agencies who can reflect the data collection and analysis processes within their agency and who holds the knowledge and authority to present and commission work accordingly;
* Chairs of the KSCMP sub-groups (or an agency representative who can provide an update on behalf of the Chair);
* members of the KSCMP Business Team as appropriate; and
* KSCMP independent Scrutineer.

4.2 Those providing business support from the Business Team will attend the meetings to take minutes and assist with broader administration.

4.3 Members of the SAAS will be expected to:

* share information regarding:
  + feedback on actions undertaken in response to KSCMP priorities or the Strategic Plan;
  + data collection and analysis processes within their agency;
  + the context and interpretation of the information shared;
  + the impact of known risks and emerging issues;
  + feedback from local or national agency inspection and anticipated initiatives or legislative change; and where applicable;
  + provide information from representative fora with regards to concerns or emerging themes or patterns;
* commission further internal agency activity to support the objectives of the group or commit their agency to taking part in further joint activity; and
* scrutinise the information presented at group meetings and foster common understanding by using language which makes sharing effective and provides respectful challenge.

**5. Relationship with other groups within KSCMP architecture**

5.1 The SAAS will report to the KSCMP Executive Board via an annual scrutiny report, as well as on an exceptions basis when required.

5.2 The SAAS will draw information from the other groups within the Partnership, analyse the information it receives and report to the Partnership Executive Board.

5.3 The SAAS, as required, may commission further work from another KSCMP group in order to understand an issue or to gather more information. Where this is the case, the decision to request additional work from another group will always be ratified by the KSCMP Executive Board.

5.4 The Chair of SAAS will attend the KSCMP Executive Board when required, to report progress towards agreed priorities and on key developments. This will be scheduled within the Executive Board agenda planning and that of the SAAS.

**6. Escalation Processes**

6.1 Should the minutes of an SAAS meeting record a dispute between members the process of escalation as described in Section 11 of the KSCMP Arrangements will be followed.

**7. Ratification, Review and Refresh**

7.1 These terms of reference will be agreed by the members of the Executive Board and reviewed annually or specifically in respect of any relevant legislative change that affects the operation of the KSCMP.