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## Independent Scrutiny Function 2025 to 2028



Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership

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## Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership



## **1. Introduction**

Independent scrutiny plays a vital role in ensuring that multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are effective, transparent, and accountable. As outlined in *Working Together to Safeguard Children*<sup>1</sup>, the purpose of independent scrutiny is to provide objective assurance and constructive challenge to the work of safeguarding partners, The Local Authority, Integrated Care Board and the Police.

This function is not about inspection or performance management, but rather about supporting continuous improvement through an un-bias evaluation of how well agencies are working together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It helps ensure that safeguarding arrangements are not only compliant with statutory requirements but are also positively impacting on the lives of children and families.

Independent scrutiny must be impartial, evidence-informed, and focused on outcomes. It should be embedded within local safeguarding arrangements and clearly defined in terms of scope, methodology, and reporting. Importantly, it should also reflect the voices of children, families, and practitioners, ensuring that lived experience informs strategic decision-making.

## **2. Purpose and Principles**

- To provide independent scrutiny of the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Gloucestershire.
- To ensure scrutiny is objective, evidence based, developmental, and child focused.
- To promote transparency, learning, and accountability across all safeguarding activities.
- To embed scrutiny within a broader system of assurance, rather than treating it as a standalone function.
- To be delivered by a suitably qualified and experienced professional, commissioned, but not employed, by the safeguarding partners.
- It must be impartial and separate from operational delivery. To ensure this the Partnership Chair (Chair of the Executive) and Independent Scrutineer should be separate roles to avoid conflicts of interest.

## **3. Key Functions of Independent Scrutiny**

- Provide safeguarding partners and relevant agencies with independent, rigorous, and effective support and challenge at both a strategic and operational level.
- Provide assurance to the whole system in judging the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements through a range of scrutiny methods.
- Ensure that statutory duties are being fulfilled, quality assurance mechanisms are in place, and that local child safeguarding practice reviews and national reviews are analysed, with key learning areas identified and effectively implemented across the safeguarding system.
- Ensure that the voice of children and families is considered as part of scrutiny and that this is at the heart of arrangements through direct feedback, informing policy and practice.
- Be regarded as a ‘critical friend’ and provide opportunities for two-way discussion and reflection between frontline practitioners and leaders. This will encourage and enable strong, clear, strategic leadership.

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<sup>1</sup> [Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance](#)

- Provide independent advice when there are disagreements between agencies and safeguarding partners and ensure escalation procedures are followed appropriately.
- Evaluate and contribute to multi-agency safeguarding published arrangements and the annual report, alongside feeding into the wider accountability systems such as inspections.

#### **4. Scrutiny Methods**

4.1 Acting as a Critical Friend offering strategic evaluation of the safeguarding partnership, including:

- The effectiveness of published arrangements and the extent to which statutory duties are met.
- The quality of leadership, governance, and decision-making processes.

4.2 Review of information from multiple sources, including:

- Multi-agency forums and sub-group activity.
- Outcomes from rapid reviews, safeguarding practice reviews, and thematic case audits.
- Relevant single and multi-agency inspections.

4.3 Audit activities:

- Leading the annual Section 11 (Children's Act) audit.
- Assessing the annual audit reports for Keeping Children Safe in Education<sup>2</sup> and Early Years Foundation Stage<sup>3</sup>.
- Conducting and leading multi-agency audits and reflective learning practices, as required.

4.4 Quality Assurance Planning:

- Collaborating with the GSCP Business Unit to define and plan the quality assessment process.
- Assessing the effectiveness of partnership data collection and its use within reporting processes.

4.5 Annual Report Review:

- Reviewing and contributing to the GSCP Annual Report as required.

4.6 Engagement:

- Seeking the views of children and families.
- Seeking the views of professionals across the partnership.

4.7 National Best Practice:

- Maintaining an understanding of national best practice and its application to independent scrutiny within Gloucestershire.

#### **5. Reporting**

- As a non-Executive member to provide quarterly written briefings to the Safeguarding Executive and attendance at quarterly meetings.
- Production of reports relating to specific projects or tasks undertaken by the scrutineer.

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<sup>2</sup> [Keeping children safe in education 2025](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Early years foundation stage - GOV.UK](#)

## **6. Review and Evolution**

- To support the GSCP Business Unit in reviewing the scrutiny framework as directed by the GSCP Executive.
- To incorporate feedback from safeguarding partners, children, and families into the framework.
- To remain responsive to local priorities, statutory guidance, and national best practice.

## **7. Contract Specifics and Value**

- The independent scrutineer will be commissioned on a consultancy basis and will not be employed by the partnership or any of its member agencies.
- The initial contract term is three years, with the option to extend up to five years.
- A maximum of 30 days will be commissioned annually, at a professional fee of £650 per day, up to a total of £19,500 per year.
- The provider is expected to attend the GSCP offices in Gloucester as required, with a minimum of one day per month on-site.
- Travel costs are the responsibility of the provider; additional travel and other expenses will not be reimbursed.
- The provider will be accountable to representatives of the statutory Designated Safeguarding Leads.

## **8. Qualifications and Experience:**

The following qualifications and experience are required of the person(s) providing independent scrutiny:

- Proven expertise in safeguarding within Children's Services, Health, Education, Policing or appropriate relevant agency experience.
- Experience in strategic oversight and leadership, with the ability to hold senior leaders to account.
- Strong analytical, communication, and interpersonal skills.
- The ability to engage effectively with children, families, and multi-agency professionals.
- A working knowledge of Working Together to Safeguard Children and relevant national frameworks such as Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- Experience of working within or alongside local safeguarding partnerships.
- Not be an elected member or hold an equivalent position with any of the partners.
- Due consideration due to real, or perceived, conflicts of interest with regards to the post-holder must be undertaken by the partnership.