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| **TITLE:** | **BRIEFING:** [**WOOD REPORT – SECTOR EXPERT REVIEW OF NEW MASAs**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987928/Wood_Review_of_multi-agency_safeguarding_arrangements_2021.pdf) |
| **DATE:** | 24th June 2021 |

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**A summary of** [**report**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987928/Wood_Review_of_multi-agency_safeguarding_arrangements_2021.pdf) **by Sir Alan Wood CBE, which looks at how local areas have set up their multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.** Report looks at models of good practice and makes recommendations for central government and individual agencies.

# How multi-agency safeguarding oversight has changed

Summary of report (extracted from [Executive Summary](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987928/Wood_Review_of_multi-agency_safeguarding_arrangements_2021.pdf))

* Report focuses on the key factors that underpin the successful implementation of the new multi-agency arrangements to safeguard children. These factors determine whether or not the arrangements will take us forward onto new ground in the way we plan, deliver, and assess the quality of provision and practice of our key staff.
* Although we are just 17 months beyond the implementation date of the new arrangements there are grounds for optimism and belief that change is happening, improvement in practice is beginning to embed, and is impacting on outcomes for children.
* The many examples illustrate the way in which safeguarding partners have grasped the opportunities provided in the legislation to introduce new, and adapt existing, arrangements to safeguard children. While we have some way to go to fully embed the reforms, progress this far is encouraging.
* Additional support, advice and guidance is needed to encourage and motivate safeguarding partners to maximise the potential within the statutory powers they now have to provide new ways of improving the quality of services to, and outcomes for, children.
* Resources for protecting children are under much stress. The recruitment and retention of safeguarding professionals remains a challenge across the three statutory agencies.
* The pandemic has meant that resources to fund activity have been stretched even further and partnerships in many areas report the challenges they face to ensure safeguarding children is prioritised as finances are limited.
* The work of the [ADCS on safeguarding pressures](https://adcs.org.uk/safeguarding/article/safeguarding-pressures-phase-7) emphasises the need for funding to be at a level which allows Ministers and local leaders to be confident that the cost of the work of protecting children is itself protected and improved. The report estimates a current shortfall in children’s social care budgets of ***£824 million***.
* A central factor underpinning better, and more effective local multi-agency working is the role played by central government departments. While support to local areas has been forthcoming and thoughtful, it can and must do more to ensure the next phase of implementing the reforms quickens the pace and widens the depth and breadth of improvement and change at local level.
* Whitehall departments need to demonstrate more effectively a culture of joined up working to support local implementation of the new arrangements to support their full potential to further improve the safeguarding of children.
* In particular there needs to be a specific and sharp step up in the support and encouragement provided by central government to embed a consistent and deep understanding of the role of the three statutory safeguarding partners.
* While report acknowledges some very impressive evidence of the effectiveness of this triumvirate, there are too many examples of not too much change from the LSCB arrangements - “old wine in new bottles” is the term he uses to describe this. The whole purpose and ethos of the new arrangements will stand or fall on the effective implementation of this new model of local decision making and accountability.
* Ministers and senior officials in central government departments must send clear and focused messages to the statutory partners in a way that demonstrates that central government itself has a joined-up culture in supporting the reforms. That is not the case now, consequently a message on the importance of this role is not being embedded sufficiently at local level.
* The proposed reorganisation of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) into Integrated Care Services will be a major change and a test of cross- Whitehall planning to the way health services are arranged. It will impact directly on the new multi-agency arrangements.
* This will be a test for joined up Whitehall multi-agency planning to ensure those designing the change implement the government’s ambition for the new arrangements especially the role and seniority of the statutory safeguarding partner from health.
* A key issue in this review has been the importance of accountability and judgement of the quality of service being provided by local agencies. There are some creative models of scrutiny and independent assurance being implemented locally. There is also a clear need for greater assurance, partnerships believe they are doing the best they can but would be keen to see a national perspective on their work.
* There is a palpable need for national inspectorates and regulators to develop a model that can provide an analysis on how things are impacting on children and what characterises best practice.
* There is no plan currently for a joint approach to provide such a picture. This is a serious gap. The report suggests a framework for bringing together the quality work of national regulators and local leadership in a model that can provide for Ministers and the public a clear statement of assurance about how children are being protected and safeguarded.
* Wood hopes that before we enter into 2022 the national inspectorates would have undertaken a range of activity - whether through the Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI) or other mechanism, that allows them to offer Ministers and the public an early judgement on the impact on outcomes for children of the decisions taken by statutory safeguarding partners.
* Implementation of the reforms has seen the development of a wide range of new approaches to engaging relevant agencies and other partners in safeguarding children. Some have said a focus on three safeguarding partners has created a sense of other agencies being ‘removed from the table’ of decision making.
* There was sufficient evidence of how safeguarding partners have ensured full engagement of relevant agencies in their arrangements in a way that ensures their opinions on all strategic issues can be raised to lead to the view that this is possible in all areas.
* A specific issue has been raised about the engagement of schools and other educational partners. Some partnerships are saying schools do not get involved others saying schools are ‘kept out’.
* This report demonstrates there is clear evidence and example of how successful engagement has been possible in most areas. However, more can and should be done to ensure head teachers and designated leads in schools can work more effectively with the local arrangements and where possible feed in a consensual view from the broad range of schools in any area. The point on consistency across England was described by the representative of the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT).
* One area of education that needs urgent attention is children who are in an unregistered school setting or receiving home education - there is some anecdotal evidence of an increase in the latter during the pandemic before the closure of schools. DfE needs to ensure its guidance to local authorities and safeguarding partners is up to date and contains additional guidance of managing children in these settings.
* Safeguarding partners have introduced a wide range of new measures to ensure independent scrutiny and challenge of the new arrangements.

***This includes:***

* We need to draw together a secure evidence base for the impact of independent challenge and scrutiny on the outcomes for children.
* One area where there is a deficit is the independent scrutiny of the impact on practice of the collective decisions and actions of the three formal safeguarding partners (the Chief Executive of a local authority, Chief Constable and Chief Operating Officer of the CCG). This is an area that attention needs to be turned to and is something in the first instance that the national inspectorates should form a judgement on.

# Recommendations

**Wood’s recommendations included:**

# Recommendation for Local Safeguarding Partnerships

**Full list of recommendations can be found at** [***appendix 1***](#_Appendix_1)

**Link to full report:**

[**Wood Report - Sector expert review of new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987928/Wood_Review_of_multi-agency_safeguarding_arrangements_2021.pdf)

# Appendix 1

RECOMMENDATIONS (in full) – *Links*

1. [Central Government](#_Toc75440130)
2. [Advice and guidance](#_Toc75440131)
3. [Funding](#_Toc75440132)
4. [Children missing education](#_Toc75440133)
5. [City and metro mayors and PCCs](#_Toc75440134)
6. [Evaluation and dissemination of emerging practice](#_Toc75440135)
7. [The Joint Inspectorates (JI) Ofsted, HMIP, HMICFRS and CQC](#_Toc75440136)
8. [Local safeguarding partnerships](#_Toc75440137)
9. [The Office for the Children’s Commissioner](#_Toc75440138)
10. [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (CSPRP)](#_Toc75440139)
11. [NHS England (NHSE)](#_Toc75440140)

**In order to have any impact on the effectiveness of the implementation of the reforms, these recommendations should be considered and, where possible, acted on within the next 12 months.**

## Central Government

Current cross-government reform implementation governance must be strengthened. The membership, role and functions of the internal governance board (SCRIB) should be reviewed to ensure it has a senior representation with a direct line of report to the relevant permanent secretaries and includes full representation from the MHCLG. A set of objectives for the national facilitators’ should emphasise their team role and all advice and guidance provided for local safeguarding partnerships should be cross government.

As a matter of priority, a formal list of local statutory partners should be set up, and then maintained by the three facilitators, to be used as a key interface for intelligence and data sharing as well as a conduit for advice and guidance between government departments and local statutory safeguarding partners.

## Advice and guidance

Government should arrange for new and additional guidance - to be provided through the most convenient route - for safeguarding partners. The advice should focus on the “strong leadership role” of the safeguarding partner expanding on the outline in Working Together 2018. It should cover:

* accountability and authority when the role has been delegated;
* the role to be played by the safeguarding partners in situations where each has delegated their role;
* escalation of issues and disputes resolution;
* ensuring an agreed data and information protocol is agreed by the safeguarding partners;
* a formal yearly statement of assurance in the yearly report; and
* how the work of the safeguarding partners is subject to independent scrutiny and /or challenge.

The [*Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children services and the Lead Member for Children Services (April 2013)*](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/271429/directors_of_child_services_-_stat_guidance.pdf) should be reconsidered in light of the role of the safeguarding partner and new statutory multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding children.

Government should ensure guidance is provided on the importance of considering the impact of change on multi-agency safeguarding arrangements to those in central government departments planning or publicising geographical and organisational changes to the boundaries of police, CCG and local government

areas. This should focus on ensuring that the status and role of the statutory safeguarding partner is protected in the new plans.

Consideration should be given to the commissioning of a national development framework for statutory safeguarding partners.

All central government communication about multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements should be joint departmental advice and shared with each of the safeguarding partners for an area.

## Funding

The section on multi-agency funding for safeguarding partnerships in Working Together should be revised to more clearly identify the functions that funding should cover in a partnership and to clarify the process areas where policing and health boundaries cover several multi - agency safeguarding arrangements.

Advice should be given to CCGs, Police Commissioners and local government to ensure that they fund cross area multi-agency arrangements by allocating an appropriate sum for each area within a partnership. Consideration should be given to how the principal that the three safeguarding partners have the responsibility for agreeing the funding for their area is maintained in constabulary areas that cover more than one multi-agency safeguarding partnership.

## Children missing education

Government should ensure additional guidance and advice is provided for statutory partners-including updating guidance for children missing education - and consider if further powers for safeguarding partners are needed to ensure they can take steps to ensure children in a non-registered school fall in scope to the safeguarding arrangements.

## City and metro mayors and PCCs

Consideration should be given to the role played in multi-agency safeguarding by elected Mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners. The regional scope of their brief should be reviewed to consider how they can best support the arrangements across their area.

## Evaluation and dissemination of emerging practice

Government should invest in a suitable platform for the dissemination of good practice in delivering multi-agency safeguarding for children including a specific study on the impact of multi-agency safeguarding partnerships to identify any specific and added value contribution they are making to outcomes for children.

The SCRIB and national facilitators should work with others including the Association of Safeguarding Partners to produce a best practice guide on the role of independent challenge and scrutiny, giving specific attention to:

how scrutineers should assess the effectiveness of the strong leadership by the safeguarding partners, and the involvement of children and young people in the scrutiny process.

Government should work with the National Child Safeguarding Review Panel and the WWCSC. to provide a formal brief for the analysis of yearly reports.

## The Joint Inspectorates (JI) Ofsted, HMIP, HMICFRS and CQC

The JI should consider whether the JTAI model, or an alternative process, can be utilised to assess and form a judgement on the impact of decision making and planning by the statutory safeguarding partners on the quality of safeguarding practice and outcomes for children and young people.

The JI should consider the role independent scrutiny plays in the multi-agency arrangements and identify whether or not it has an impact on the quality of safeguarding practice and the outcomes for children.

## Local safeguarding partnerships

Local safeguarding partners should satisfy themselves that the level of support, analysis and intelligence they require to conduct their business effectively and efficiently is provided. The role of business manager should be reviewed to consider whether it is meeting the needs of the safeguarding partners to carry out their strong leadership role in line with guidance in Working Together.

## The Office for the Children’s Commissioner

The OCC should consider undertaking a project to identify the impact on outcomes for children of engaging children and young people in the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

## The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (CSPRP)

The CSPRP should consider how it can most effectively disseminate the variety and range of models of local child safeguarding practice review and to share issues of national learning from local reviews.

## NHS England (NHSE)

NHS England should ensure that the planning framework for the replacement of CCGs by Integrated Care Systems includes clear and explicit advice about the appointment to the lead representative role as the statutory safeguarding partner is consistent with existing legislation and guidance.

NHS England and the SCRIB should consider if and when an assessment of the new Child Death Review (CDR) arrangements might take place and advise the multi-agency sector accordingly.