

BARNSELY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP REPORT	
Meeting:	Barnsley Safeguarding Children Partnership
Date of meeting:	18 th November 2024
Subject/ Report Title:	S.11 Self-Assessment Audit 2024
Author:	Annette Carey Strategic Safeguarding Partnership Manager
Status of report:	Not confidential

1. Purpose of the Report
<p>Requirement: Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, sets out the provision for Local Children Safeguarding Partnerships to undertake a self-assessment audit for agencies and services to assure themselves and the Partnership that the standards to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people are met.</p> <p>The role of the BSCP is to support the section 11 duty, described in <i>chapter 4 of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023</i>, which sets out the specific statutory duties for a range of individual organisations and agencies working with children and families; to promote the welfare of children and ensure they are protected from harm.</p> <p>For the Partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The self-assessments and scrutiny tell us about the effectiveness of arrangements and joint working for safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children and young people in Barnsley <p>For Agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The s.11 self-assessment audit provides an opportunity to all key agencies that work with children and young people to give an account of how safeguarding is prioritised in their organisations Provides evidence that agencies work closely with Barnsley SCP and understand its roles and responsibilities Enables agencies to identify good practice and areas of development in their organisations Enable agencies to self-assess for evidence of learning and improvement Supports evidence gathering for external inspections and assurance <p>For Barnsley Safeguarding Children Partnership, the audit results will support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of how all agencies, professionals and others who are involved with children, young people and their families are accountable for singly and collectively safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children & young people in Barnsley The BSCP Annual Report which is a public statement of the effectiveness of joint working arrangements to protect children and young people in Barnsley <p>The development of Partnership priorities to provide leadership and support for learning and improvement and to share good practice.</p>
2. Proposals/ Recommendations/ Action required:
To note and accept the recommendations of the report.
3. Background:

This 2024 s11 organisational self-assessment takes place in an evolving landscape where digital networks and platforms provide great opportunities for communities to connect but can also present new risks; where the cost-of-living crisis means greater numbers of adults find themselves parenting in hardship, and there are continuing challenges to Public Services funding. Partners continue to operate with a drive for continuous improvement, to deliver better outcomes for children and their families and is evident in the service changes described in the self-assessment. Legislative changes have also brought fresh challenge and focus to services in safeguarding and children’s landscapes.

In line with *Working Together (2023) chap 4*, which identifies organisations and services that have a duty for s.11 reporting, the following agencies have taken part in the 2024 self-assessment audit:

- NHS ICB (Barnsley)
- BMBC Children’s Social Care
- BMBC Berneslai Homes
- BMBC 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service
- The Prison & Probation service
- South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue
- Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Southwest Yorkshire Partnership Foundation NHS Trust
- South Yorkshire Police
- BMBC Adult Social Care

4. Methodology:

The methodology was as follows:

1. Detailed guidance was provided to all participating agencies
2. Completion of the written s.11 self-assessment audit which addresses 9 policy standards, each standard has a compliance checklist and evidence requirements.
3. Agencies were asked to provide a RAG rating against each compliance requirement which determines their overall standing against each Policy Standard. The RAG rating is based on a **‘Met/ Partially Met/ Not Met** evidenced response. See appendix x
4. A multiagency Challenge Event was held in May 2024, for all agencies, organised around 3 questions from the self-assessment (appendix?). They were . . .
5. Each agency participated in individual scrutiny meetings with the Independent Scrutineer and Partnership Manager. Agendas discussed specific actions in their agency plan, standards that were rag-rated red or amber, over-optimistic answers, partnership priorities and 7 common questions.

Policy Standards self-assessment

Most agencies provided full answers and offered supporting evidence. Compliance was strong in infrastructure and reporting lines as all agencies have well-established safeguarding structures and reporting mechanisms. Clear commitment to bring effective changes to children’s lives, where they are at risk of harm and to partnership working was evident in responses. Areas for development that related to specific activities were: Private fostering, young people’s involvement or co-production in service development, child-friendly complaints process, promotion of first year of life programmes, ICON and Safe Sleep. There were a few instances where an agency assessed themselves as having fully met a standard

without evidence or suggested they did not have a duty. There were also some over-optimistic answers and underscoring. These were picked up in the challenge event and scrutiny meetings and are captured in individual action plans.

The results are at appendix 2.

Challenge Event

The event was organised around the following questions, sampled from the s.11 self-assessment. They were chosen as key enabling or evidence questions for agencies, in making a demonstrating impact in children's lives:

- **9.3: The organisation has a culture of professional curiosity, evidenced in training, supervision and practice.** Each agency to provide a case study ahead of the meeting, that shows how they've demonstrated a culture of professional curiosity
- **9.9: The views of the child and family are sought and recorded.** Each agency to speak to how they demonstrate they do so effectively and provide supporting material.
- **9.20: The organisation produces regular single agency audits that demonstrate that children and young people are safeguarded, and their welfare is promoted.** Each agency to provide a single agency audit on the subject, that has been completed in the past 12 months, ahead of the meeting.

All agencies participated in the event on 16th May 24. The headline results of the s.11 self-assessment were shared, to provide context to the challenge event discussions, covering strengths, areas for development and standards that had over-optimistic reporting.

The discussion brought out examples of good practice as well as the challenges and areas for development, identified by agencies. Specific recommendations were made for work related to Professional Curiosity, capture of children's experiences and audits. Agencies were asked to update their individual action plans with learning and shared good practice from the event.

A summary report of the Challenge event is at appendix 3.

5. Scrutiny:

The agenda for each scrutiny meeting with individual agencies was based on their s.11 action plans drawn up from their self-assessment findings. It explored the themes from the Challenge event in greater depth and in addition, asked 5 common questions:

- Agencies were invited to share an action or activity that has had a positive impact on children and young people in Barnsley
- Following the recent multiagency audit for the Quality of Referrals at the Integrated Front Door, how does your agency track the numbers of referrals/ contacts and the outcomes of those referrals/ requests for service?
- How does your agency assure itself that relevant thresholds have been applied?
- How can the Partnership help your agency?
- What are your agency's 3 priorities for safeguarding children in the next 6 months?

Independent Scrutineers' report

Being part of the section 11 process has provided me with the opportunity to further increase my understanding and knowledge of Barnsley agencies, their strengths and their areas for development. Section 11 not only provides assurance to the safeguarding partnership of the effectiveness of your arrangements but is an opportunity for organisations to review and reflect on their structures and processes. It provides an opportunity to set priorities for the

coming year. The findings from this audit need to be considered alongside the findings of the s.175 education audit to provide further evidence of the wider safeguarding arrangements in Barnsley. We must recognise however, the limitations of this process as some key organisations who play a central role in children's lives are not covered, for example the voluntary and sports sectors. Next steps should include how they can be supported to provide assurance to you of their arrangements.

Engagement and participation in the process was good. The majority of agencies provided their audits in a timely manner. Attendance and contribution to the challenge events was high. There was a keen sense of partners wanting to learn from one another and share good practice in the group challenge event, especially around the themes of the child's voice and single agency audits. In individual agency sessions most representatives were able to provide a good level of knowledge and understanding of their agency's structures and processes. They were transparent and honest in their discussions and welcomed the constructive challenge presented. Agencies need to consider the level of seniority in attendance as the representative needs both a thorough understanding of the wider organisation and the authority to make the required changes.

There is a strong level of compliance across the standards. The majority of organisations provided evidence of well-established safeguarding structures and processes in place, with workers understanding who they needed to go to in their organisation with any safeguarding issues. There is a clear commitment to working in partnership and an awareness of the changing landscape introduced through Working Together 23. Evidence was provided of progress against the actions identified in the previous audit, demonstrating a commitment to continual improvement.

The BSCP and individual agencies need to take forward the findings from this section 11 to ensure continual progress. Two areas that as scrutineer I will have particular regard to are the impact of the work that partners and the partnership do, demonstrating the difference that is being made and the ambition of Barnsley agencies to foster a strong culture where children are central to the work they do.

I look forward to seeing the progress made against the identified agency actions at the meetings in March 25 and will hold the BSCP to account for their areas for development to support to partners in light of the findings of this audit.

How can BSCP help agencies?

The main areas identified were raising concerns about children, sharing good practice, resources, information, advice and guidance. This would be largely addressed by the Partnership having its own independent website and will be part of our work plan. Some partnerships hold multiagency practice forums, which can be explored for future development. Some agencies said it would help their partnership working to join specific subgroups and task & finish groups. Other areas were where links between individual agencies would help, such as kinship care with mental health services, which have been taken forward.

Agencies priorities for the next 6 months?

Common themes reflected partnership activity in the s.11 standards around specific themes by individual agencies, which included: Exploring Early Help, the Think Family agenda, Professional Curiosity, roll out of Signs of Safety, developing Quality Assurance activity, training and use of GCP2, Fabricated Illness training, a joint children and adults social care approach to transitions, a more joined up approach to commissioning, planning and placements, tackling

	<p>perpetrators in domestic abuse whilst keeping children safe with non-offending parents, development of the pre-birth assessment pathway, improving the quality of referrals and specifically between the LRU and the IFD, co-location of Probation at the IFD, develop co-production with children and families, First Year of Life public awareness campaigns, developing work themes for Partnership priorities, such as childhood obesity in Neglect and review the effectiveness of the B.Safe team.</p>
6.	Findings:
	<p>Strengths</p> <p>The strengths identified below were demonstrated by most agencies taking part:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies understand the shifting environments in which they work and identify trends in areas of risk for children and young people. • Evidence in the 2024 s.11 audit demonstrates that in many instances, partner agencies have progressed areas of development they identified in the s.11 report 2022. • Themes that were discussed in scrutiny and that have been identified as priority areas of safeguarding, align with those that are already live issues in joint work and/or reflected in BSCP's annual report. • There is a good-to-high level of compliance demonstrated by agencies across the 9 Policy Standards. • All agencies have a senior management-led Infrastructure in place to support children's welfare and safeguarding. Staff and volunteers are clear about who the designated person is, in their organisation and when to contact them. • Agency safeguarding policies are up to date and regularly reviewed. Most are aware of and apply BSCP policies and procedures. • Safeguarding priorities are reflected in the agency's strategic/ business plan. Several agencies referenced improved outcomes for children that are matched to the agency's business plan and shape service development. • Training is well established in agencies. Safeguarding awareness is part of inductions. Most agencies operate a training matrix for specific roles. Training is reviewed and evaluated. The Partnership training offer is highly valued for its content, range and delivery. • Most agencies evidenced relevant staff are trained to recognise the signs of Child Exploitation and are linked into relevant contextual safeguarding forums for safeguarding and disruption activities. • Agencies evidenced that staff are aware of the Thresholds of Intervention, where to access them and how to seek advice if required. • The majority of agencies are engaged with the Signs of Safety rollout. • Most agencies have different methods of communication available to children to express their views. • All agencies evidenced a culture where safeguarding children and young people is a priority for them. The majority evidenced a drive for continuous improvement. • All agencies participate in rapid and local reviews. Agencies ensure that learning from reviews is embedded into practice and complete action plans.
7.	Areas for Development:
	<p>Each agency has an individual action plan, drawn from gaps they've identified in the self-assessment and from conversations in the challenge event and individual scrutiny meetings.</p>

An assurance meeting will be arranged, as an additional Operational & Business Group meeting in March 2025, where agencies will present progress of their plans.

Multiagency themes and areas for development:

- Most agencies reported that data, audit and performance is used to good effect to ensure their practice supports / effective safeguarding of children and young people.
Action: It would be good practice and strengthen multiagency quality assurance work for agencies to share relevant data and single agency audit results with BSCP every quarter.
- As there is high take up of Partnership training and some agencies also deliver in-house sessions, it would be useful to analyse the impact and practice changes, post-training, for outcomes for children and young people.
Action: PWD subgroup to lead, with a task & finish group, that considers how impact of training is measured by partners, through evaluation, supervision, and evidence of improved outcomes for children. It will also help the Partnership to evaluate the impact of individual courses.
- Results for the Graded Care Profile 2 tool demonstrate that a few agencies have yet to train relevant colleagues in its use. Others have completed training which has not yet translated into routine practice.
- **Action:** BSCP training to continue with its increased course offer for the year ahead. Agencies to dip sample their case work and referrals and report findings into O&BG Q1 2025.
- Only 50% of agencies reported that staff were aware of Private Fostering and how to refer.
Action: The BSCP business unit and the Private Fostering team to circulate resources and information to raise Partnership awareness. Promote awareness through newsletters and the website. Agencies to implement awareness and information-sharing through their internal pathways.
- In 2020, Barnsley had a higher percentage of babies under one year affected by SUDI and traumatic brain injury compared to statistical neighbours. It is a BSCP ambition to extend the delivery of advice and guidance for Safer Sleep and ICON, traditionally delivered by health practitioners, to all professionals supporting families, children and young people. Whilst the number of infant deaths has thankfully reduced, s.11 results suggest there remains scope for greater awareness and delivery by some partners.
Action: Health partners to reissue resources and links to Safer Sleep and ICON briefings. BSCP business unit to promote campaigns through newsletters, website and social media
- Future s.11 reporting. Many safeguarding children partnership use an online organisational self-assessment which reduces administrative time and has the advantage of giving flexibility to partner agencies.
Action: Discussion to take place, with costings, for consideration of a move to an online assessment in 2026.
- Future s.11 reporting. Some partnerships operate a sub/regional safeguarding operational self-assessment. Advocates point to the benefits which avoid duplicate reporting particularly for Health and Police partners

	<p>Action: The Executive Business Group to consider, with costings, if a South Yorkshire organisation self-assessment would be of value for the 2026 self-assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the value of a joint children and adults s.11 in future, to encourage assurance of a cradle to grave approach to safeguarding and seamless transitions. <p>Action: The Joint Safeguarding Executive group to assess if a joint approach would be of value in 2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of the Voluntary & Community sector in Partnership assurance. <p>Action: Discuss consideration of a sector-specific s.11 self-assurance piece, such as the NSPCC model, with the Start Well VCSE forum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scrutiny discussions reinforced the reasons for an independent website. <p>Action: BSCP to develop and resource an independent Partnership website in the coming year.</p>
8.	Next Steps:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies to progress and implement single agency action plans and present updates at an additional Operational & Business Group meeting in March 2025. • Agencies to share the findings report and their individual action plans with their safeguarding leaderships • Shared partnership actions to implemented in relevant subgroups and the Business Unit • The Business Unit to prepare a briefing with guidance and links for themes identified for sharing and development • The s.11 findings report to be presented to the BSCP business Executive Group in November and Partnership meeting in December
9.	Attachments:
	<p>Appendix 1: Organisational self-assessments results Appendix 2: Self-assessments summary Appendix 3: Challenge event summary</p>
10.	Contacts:
	<p>Annette Carey Strategic SCP Manager annettecarey@barnsley.gov.uk</p>