

Multi-Agency Assurance

Hello, I'm Sophie Butt. I'm an area director in Hampshire Children's Services and I'm the chair of the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) Scrutiny Group. In this video, we're going to talk today about what multi-agency assurance is and how we undertake this in Hampshire.

For us, multi-agency assurance forms a key part of our scrutiny agenda and our scrutiny activity under the Scrutiny Group each year. We do this by undertaking multi-agency audits. We have a programme of audits that are agreed at the beginning of each year, aligned to themes arising from our strategic plan and our annual plan.

We also look at the outcomes and learning from audits that single agencies or individual agencies might undertake themselves as well, and we also look at undertaking dry run or practice run exercises of the multi-agency inspection frameworks, a JTAI or a Joint Targeted Area Inspection. One of the reasons that we do this is to help us to understand what our practice is like and how effective it is in that particular JTAI theme. We also do this to test ourselves across the partnership to make sure that we are as prepared as we could and should be for when we receive the full JTAI ourselves, and it provides assurance to us across the partnership.

This year we undertook the JTAI dry run on Early Help, which was one of the themes that was being inspected on nationally this year. When we did this ourselves, we identified a range of good practice across the whole partnership in terms of the offer and the work that's being undertaken with children and their families in the early help arena. That provided us with good assurances that our systems around referral and assessment of needs in this area are strong and effective. As always with any audit, we look to identify improvements or areas of development because as a partnership we're always wanting to strive to do better by highlighting our learning and effective practice to practitioners and further developing our multi-agency tools and resources that can be used to work with children and families in early help. Consequently, we're working together to develop an online Early-Help Toolkit which will be placed on the HSCP website at some point in the next financial year, as well as providing an enhanced training offer, particularly around young carers, disguised compliance and professional curiosity.

Other audits that we've undertaken this year include a multi-agency audit on valuable children with disrupted education. This audit looked at children who may have disrupted attendance at school or an education setting. We recognise that this may be for a variety of reasons and certainly that is the case nationally and it's the case in Hampshire as well. This subject area of safeguarding is an annual priority for us across the partnership, so it was right and timely that we undertook an audit on a sample of cases of children that have got disrupted education. We looked at each particular incidence and what we, across our partnership, are doing to work with that child and their family to help them overcome any challenges or barriers and think about how best to provide an education for that child.

What this, or what the audit, told us is that the schools that children are attending are ultimately a safe place. Children are happy to go there and the staff who are looking after them and providing them education know them well and are working proactively and tenaciously with their families, as are the multi-agency practitioners that also work and support these children and families, and that we work well together to try and understand needs and issues or barriers and have the confidence to escalate concerns as and when they arrive.

We're also working closely with our colleagues in the Education and Inclusion Branch of Children's Services to support the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) and Inclusion Group that has been set up to help us work, collectively and dynamically to improve our school attendance in Hampshire, and to think about how we can further reduce any barriers that children may experience when looking to attend school.

Another audit that's been undertaken in this audit cycle or this financial year is around intra-familial sexual abuse of children. These are children who have experienced sexual abuse from people within their family unit or their family home. This audit was undertaken just towards the end of the financial year so the report itself hasn't been approved yet by the HSCP Executive. It will be published early on in the next financial year so there'll be more practice points and effective learning points to follow. However, what I would like to do is to encourage you after you've finished watching this video and any others you might want to watch today to pop along to the HSCP Learning from Reviews Toolkit. In there, you'll find learning summaries from all of our multi-agency assurance and audit and learning activities as well. It will help give you a flavour for the work that's undertaken as part of the Scrutiny Group, but most importantly, the learning that's obtained for it and what it is that we've done to develop that learning to support practice going forward.

Thank you.