

Questions from members of the public – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, 26 November 2024

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mrs Jennie Hewitt Herefordshire	Can the committee explain how the appointment of the Director of Childrens Services to Chair of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Partnership does not pose a conflict of interest risking that the voices of the most vulnerable children in our care are not heard by an independent body who can hold Herefordshire Council to account?	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
<p>Response:</p> <p>Working Together 2023 identifies the lead safeguarding partners (LSPs) as the Chief Constable of West Mercia Police, Chief Executive of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Partnership and the Chief Executive of Herefordshire Council. It also requires the LSPs to identify the designated safeguarding partners (DSPs) at a local level, in Herefordshire’s case the Director of Children’s Services (DCS), Chief Nurse - Integrated Care Board (ICB) and local policing commander for Herefordshire.</p> <p>The LSPs also appoint one of the DSPs to be the Chair of the local partnership, in this case they have identified the Director of Children’s Services. Working Together 2023 identifies that these three partners have ‘joint and equal’ responsibility. It also requires the local partnership to identify its arrangements for independent scrutiny, in Herefordshire Mr Kevin Crompton has been appointed as the Independent Scrutineer, amongst his roles are to judge the effectiveness of the local safeguarding partnership and to report accordingly to both LSPs and DSPs and within the annual report. The DSPs have specifically asked the Independent Scrutineer to engage with families, children, young people and carers and other stakeholders to capture and report on their experience of partnership working.</p> <p>The Safeguarding Children’s Partnership has also identified how it will secure the voice of children and families. All meetings are attended by the full partnership and the Independent Scrutineer is also in attendance. The partners provide support and challenge to each other as the lead partner agencies in the work carried out, and report into the lead safeguarding partners. Therefore, there is no conflict of interest as all partners are interested in hearing the voice of the child.</p> <p>In addition to the above, since her arrival the DCS has laid out clearly her expectations and strengthened arrangements locally for hearing the experience of children and families as part of the revised improvement plan.</p> <p>Working Together 2023 also identifies that the DSP chairing role will be rotated between the three safeguarding partners.</p>			

The senior leaders across the system in Herefordshire will often be collectively present in a range of meetings. By way of ensuring equity of work a parallel example to the DCS chairing the Children's Safeguarding Partnership is the local police commander chairs the Community Safety Partnership in Herefordshire.