

Cabinet

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Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report

Report of Corporate Management Team

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Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with information in respect of the Annual Report of the County Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board which sets out the work of multi-agency partners to ensure effective arrangements are in place to safeguard and protect vulnerable children and young people from abuse and neglect. The report sets out achievement's in 2013/14 and priorities and challenges for 2014/15.

Background

2. Durham Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is a statutory body established under the Children Act 2004. It is independently chaired (as required by statute) and consists of senior representatives of all the principle stakeholders working together to safeguard children and young people in Durham.
3. Its statutory objectives are to:
 - Coordinate local work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
 - Ensure the effectiveness of its work

Safeguarding means to: undertake any activity which prevents a child's health, welfare or development being impaired, and includes activity to protect from abuse and other risks such as neglect.

4. The Board is independent of any of the partners, funded by them all and hosted and supported by Durham County Council. The LSCB Chair works closely with all LSCB partners and particularly with the Corporate Director of Children and Adult Services (under Section 18 of the Children Act 2004). The Director of Children's Services has the responsibility within the local authority for improving outcomes for children, local authority children's social care functions and local cooperation arrangements for children's services in Durham the Corporate Director of Children and Adults services fulfils this function.

5. Statutory Partner Agencies (which includes both all the health commissioning bodies and provider bodies, the police, probation and the council, are under a duty to co-operate with the Board and those accountabilities are defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 and the NHS Accountability Framework.
6. The Board has no service delivery functions but is required to inform (through its co-ordination and effectiveness responsibilities) the commissioning intentions of partner agencies, It is also required to monitor, quality assure and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the services commissioned and delivered in the local area.
7. Working Together (2013) requires each Local Safeguarding Children Board to produce and publish an Annual Report evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area. The report should be submitted to the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council, the local Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Durham LSCB report is also shared with LSCB partner agency senior management teams. The report is attached at Appendix A.
8. The report which is attached at Appendix 2 sets out the achievements and progress made during 2013/14 and identifies the challenges facing the Board in 2015/16. The report summarises how effective the LSCB is in discharging its which are to;
 - assess the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families, including early help;
 - assess whether LSCB partners are fulfilling their statutory obligations set out in chapter 2 of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013;
 - quality assure practice, including through joint audits of case files involving practitioners and identifying lessons to be learned; and
 - Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of training, including multi-agency training, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Local background and context

9. The report is drawn from a wide range of sources from across the Children and Families Partnership and reflects the County's ongoing 'improvement journey' following the Ofsted Inspection in early 2012 that rated services as 'outstanding'. Embedding and sustaining best practice at the frontline 24/7 and 365 days each year, across the agencies, presents considerable ongoing challenge and commitment, particularly, in the current financial and organisational context. This requires a high degree of multi-agency collaboration at every level.
10. The report recognises the significant service restructuring that has and is taking place within different agencies. All partners are aware of the need to promote more effective ways of using finite resources to work with

children, young people and their families. Particular changes include the introduction of Clinical Commissioning Groups, restructure of the councils Children's Services and the planned changes to the Probation service

11. This year's report also builds on learning from national research including guidance on what makes a 'powerful' annual report and the 'Facets of an Effective LSCB.' (See Section 7 of the report). It is intended to address three fundamental questions:
 - What did we do?
 - How well did we do it?
 - What difference did we make to improve outcomes for children, young people and families?
12. During the year 2013/14, as in previous years, the majority of children who became subject to a child protection plan were aged under four and unborn, reflecting the national picture, the vulnerability of very young children and the need for early intervention services in the community to be targeted at this age group.
13. Domestic abuse continues as the main parental risk factor for the need for a child protection conference, followed by Alcohol misuse, parental mental health and substance misuse. In 2011/12 domestic abuse was identified as a priority for the LSCB and is now embedded into the Board's day to day activities. Specialist training continues to be provided for multi-agency practitioners and includes awareness raising sessions as well as more in-depth specialist sessions presented by specialist workers.
14. As in other local authority areas, in Durham neglect remains the main category of abuse identified as affecting around 60% of children and therefore has been a priority for the LSCB in previous years. A well-established training programme is in place and policies. Procedures and practice guidance is available to practitioners to help them undertake good risk assessments and develop packages of support for children and families. A greater emphasis will be put on tackling neglect in 2015/16. The one day neglect course will also be increased to a two day more in-depth course which focusses on the long term impact of neglect on children's health and development and is designed to better equip practitioners with identifying risks earlier.
15. The numbers of children looked after continues to reduce is on a downward trajectory. Agencies are aware that that by understanding the reasons children become looked after enables them to target better their early help and family support services.

Involving Young People

16. The LSCB has continued to actively to seek the views of children and young people on wider safeguarding issues. During 2012/13 the LSCB previously worked collaboratively with 'Investing in Children' to set up a

Young People's Reference Group for the LSCB. The views of young people s were taken into account in the LSCB work plan and priorities setting for 2014/15. For example this included continuing specialist training for practitioners in respect of parental mental ill health and child sexual exploitation. The Board has committed to meeting more regularly with the reference group in 2015/16.

Monitoring Agency Performance

17. A comprehensive review of performance, quality assurance and audit findings is summarised in the annual report and outlines the breadth and depth of work being undertaken to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children and young people in County Durham.
18. Particular efforts have been made to increase the number of children who go missing and who have an interview within 72 hours of returning home. Good progress continues to be made Durham to establish local processes for this vulnerable group of children ahead of recent national guidance
19. Case audits have taken place in areas identified by the Board as requiring further examination. This has included audits of children subject to more than one child protection plan, review of No further action decisions and audits missing children return interviews.

Multi-Agency Training

20. Durham LSCB has a range of courses that offer practitioners from partner agencies more specialist knowledge on issues such as domestic abuse, mental ill health and working with highly resistant families and other topics. The LSCB's training strategy ensures that LSCB courses reflect national and local guidance around the importance of early help, the need for adult and children staff to collaborate and coordinate their actions and to "think family". 'Working Together 2013' identifies the need to have a well trained workforce with an appropriate knowledge base.
21. Addressing Child Sexual Exploitation continues as a high priority for the board as has learning lessons from serious case reviews. A series of multi-agency events were held across the county with over 1,000 staff trained on these issues.

LSCB Priorities 2014/15

22. The LSCB has in place a well-established number of standing sub-groups which have clear terms of reference for taking forward the priorities of the Board. The Board meets every two months and each sub-group provides regular progress reports to the Board. The LSCB continues to work on a range of issues as part of its ongoing work but has agreed to focus additional work in 2014/15 on the following priorities;

- **Information sharing** - as this remained a critical issue from Serious Case Reviews both national and local. It is recognized that agencies cannot be complacent and that further work was required to ensure that practitioners across all agencies are aware of their responsibilities to share information where appropriate. In addition a focus needed to be maintained to ensure lessons were being learnt and agreed procedures are being followed.
- **Early Help** - the Board recognized early help as the key priority area for making significant impact on outcomes for children. Working Together identifies this as an area where LSCBs need to bring more challenge to partners to demonstrate that families are receiving help at an earlier stage before matters escalate

Peer Review and Improvement Planning

23. In October 2004 the LSCB commissioned the Local government Association (LGA) to undertake a Peer Review of the LSCB to support the Board in making continuous improvement based on its self-assessment in early 2014. The review was undertaken using the newly devised methodology for reviewing LSCBs. Durham was part of a national pilot to test out how the diagnostic tool worked.

24. The review was conducted over three days and the main findings were:

Strengths

- The LSCB partnership was self-aware and there was a willingness to move forward. It was evident that the appointment of a new Chair was an opportunity to review the Board and was welcomed by all.
- There has been a prompt response to some high priority areas that require rapid action e.g. Child Sexual Exploitation which partners have valued.
- Some innovative work was found and was supported by the LSCB including:
 - 'Never do Nothing' run by CAVOS which promotes safeguarding standards in the voluntary and community sector and
 - work with 'Investing in Children' resulting in the formation of a Children and Young People's Reference Group

Areas for further development:

- More work should be done to review the board priorities so that these are fully owned across the Board and to achieve partners' full engagement.
- The profile and influence of the LSCB should be developed so that it is seen as less Local Authority-led and more of a partnership.
- An Annual Report covering achievements from 2014 – 15 should be completed.

- LSCB policies and procedures and the business plan should be updated on the website.
- A review of the LSCB subgroups and chairing arrangements should be completed.
- Engagement between schools and the Board should be improved.

25. Following the Peer Review an action plan has been developed. Under the newly appointed independent Chair, actions have been taken so that to date, almost all the above areas for development have been addressed. Specific work is ongoing to raise the profile of the board through a number of activities and in different forums. The LSCB has conducted a number of development sessions for partner agencies which has led to the strengthening of the membership and governance arrangements. A revised set of priorities, new work streams and subgroups have been agreed to take forward the ambitious work plan.

Recommendations

26. It is recommended that Cabinet exercises its role in scrutinising safeguarding practice in Durham through receiving this report and thereby contributing to the governance of safeguarding.
27. It is recommended that Cabinet note the range of work that is taking place to safeguard children in county Durham, and the continued challenges, developments and achievements in this critical area of work.
28. Cabinet to note the positive outcome of the Peer review and the work undertaken to make the improvements required.

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Background papers: LSCB Annual Report 2013/14, Working Together 2013

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – Continued pressures on the public sector and all partners who support the Board financially may have an impact on the level of funding to the Safeguarding Children Board to enable it to continue the level of work it has achieved to date

Staffing – Arrangements are in place to recruit two lay members to the Board. The position of Training coordinator is vacant, interviews are planned to recruit to this

Risk – ongoing funding contributions are required from multi-agency partners to ensure safeguarding arrangements continue to be effective

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – Children's safeguarding is intrinsically linked and is covered in the LSCB Governance and Memorandum of Understanding

Accommodation – No pertinent issues

Crime and Disorder - none

Human Rights - None

Consultation – the report is available for all partner agencies and members of the public and will be published on the LSCB website
www.durham-lscb.gov.org.uk

Procurement - no pertinent issues

Disability Issues – The needs of disabled children are reflected in all aspects of safeguarding and the work of the Board including policies and procedures

Legal Implications – The LSCB is a key statutory mechanism for agreeing how relevant organisations in County Durham will cooperate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the area. This is set out in Section 13 of the Children Act 2004 and Regulation 5 of the Local Safeguarding Children Board Regulations 2006