

Health and Wellbeing Board

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Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report

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Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Health and Wellbeing Board 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 achievements in 2012/13 and priorities and challenges for 2014.

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. Ongoing financial challenges facing Public Sector organisations have impacted on the operating environment for both Durham County Council and its partner agencies.

5. 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.
6. Statutory Partner Agencies (which includes 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. The Annual Report which is attached at Appendix 2 sets out the achievements and progress made during 2012/13 and identifies the challenges facing the Board in 2014/15. The report includes information on a range of issues including;
 - The provision of a wide range of evidence to demonstrate the extent to which the functions of the LSCB are being actively discharged
 - An outline of how the Board intends to focus more on the provision of Early Help
 - Work to ensure policies and procedures to keep children safe and safe recruitment are up to date
 - An assessment of interagency training
 - Information on what has been done to ensure that lessons have been learnt from Serious Case Reviews and lessons learnt about the prevention of future child deaths as identified by the Child Death Overview Panel
 - How the Board scrutinizes arrangements to safeguard children in the secure estates and other settings
 - Summarises arrangements for safeguarding privately fostered children

Local background and context

10. The report is drawn from a wide range of sources from across the Health and Wellbeing Board and reflects the County's on-going 'improvement journey' following the Ofsted Inspection in 2011 that rated services as 'outstanding'. Embedding and sustaining best practice at the front line 24/7 and 365 days each year, across the agencies, presents considerable on-going challenge and commitment, particularly, in the current financial and organisational context. This requires a high degree of multi-agency collaboration at every level.
11. 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 council's Children's Services and the planned changes to the Probation Service.
12. 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?
13. There has been more than a 10% reduction in the year of re-referrals to children's services and 13% reduction in children subject to Child Protection Plans following introduction of the One Point service, clearer guidance and training for staff about thresholds and risk factors and an increased focus on 'early help'.
14. During 2012/13 the numbers of children subject to a child protection plan fluctuated over the period reaching a high of 465 in September 2012 and stabilizing to the financial year end to 401, its lowest level since 2009.
15. The majority of children now stay on a Child Protection Plan for less than six months, with most of these staying on for three months. No children have been on a plan for two years or more, following concerted efforts to review plans earlier. The percentage of first reviews carried out on time was very good at 98%.
16. During the year 2012/13, as in previous years, the majority of children who became subject to a child protection plan were aged under four and unborn – making up 52% of all plans, 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.

17. Domestic abuse is the main parental risk factor for the need for a child protection conference (58.7%) followed by alcohol misuse (32.9%) parental mental health (30.7%) and substance misuse (21.9%). 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.
18. As in other local authority areas, in Durham neglect remains the main category of abuse identified as affecting children (64%, compared to 20% for physical abuse and 6% for sexual abuse) and therefore has been a priority for the LSCB in previous years. A well-established training programme is in place and policies and procedures and practice guidance is available to practitioners to help them undertake good risk assessments and develop packages of support for children and families.
19. The numbers of children looked after has been reducing over recent years and continues on a downward trajectory. Agencies are aware that by understanding the reasons children become looked after enables them to target better their early help and family support services.

Involving Young People

20. The LSCB has continued to actively to seek the views of children and young people on wider safeguarding issues. During 2012/13 the LSCB worked collaboratively with 'Investing in Children' to set up a Young People's Reference Group for the LSCB. The views of young people have been taken into account in the LSCB work plan. For example this includes continuing specialist training for practitioners in respect of parental mental ill health and child sexual exploitation.

Monitoring Agency Performance

21. A comprehensive review of performance, quality assurance and audit findings is summarised in the annual report (see Section 5) and outlines the breadth and depth of work being undertaken to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children and young people in County Durham.
22. 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 has been made in Durham to establish local processes for this vulnerable group of children ahead of recent national guidance.
23. The engagement of GPs in child protection conferences has improved significantly and in some localities practitioners were able to achieve very good levels of attendance.

24. Multi-agency 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 and a review of single agency practice audits has also been completed to ensure the Board is informed of the learning from these and issues requiring further attention.

Multi-Agency Training

25. 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.
26. Addressing Child Sexual Exploitation has been a high priority for the Board as has learning lessons from serious case reviews. A series of multi-agency events have been held across the county with over 1,000 staff trained on these issues.

LSCB Priorities 2014/15

27. 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 2014/05 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.

Issues and challenges for the Local Safeguarding Children Board 2014/15

28. Over the next year and beyond the LSCB and partners providing safeguarding services face a number of challenges including:
- Ensuring services are provided where they are most needed in the context of continued reductions in the council's budget, financial constraints on other key partners. For the Board this could also have implication in terms of levels of financial contributions from partners.
 - Implementing the Single Assessment Framework, Single Front Door and the new Threshold Document.
 - The new Ofsted Inspection Framework for safeguarding children, those looked after and care leavers.
 - Inspection/review of LSCBs – ensuring the LSCB is ready for inspection and can provide good evidence of effective multi-agency arrangements and evidence of impact on improving safeguarding outcomes for children and young people in Durham.
 - Responding to and assessing the challenges to safeguarding arrangements posed by the reform of the Probation Service.
 - Funding of sexual violence and advocacy (ISVA) /Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) worker to provide support around sexual health and in particular work with young people at risk of sexual exploitation.
 - Providing 'early help' early enough - LSCB and partners being able to evidence the difference for children, particular those who are most vulnerable in making sure they receive the help they need before things escalate into child protection.
 - Agencies finding ways of resourcing the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme.
 - The LSCB having a greater focus on looked after children in its performance monitoring activity to evidence how well they are safeguarded.

Recommendations

29. It is recommended that the Health and Wellbeing Board:
- 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.

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Background papers: LSCB Annual Report 2011/12, 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.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