

Health and Wellbeing Board

11 March 2015



Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report

Report of Jane Geraghty, Independent Chair of Durham Local Safeguarding Children's Board

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 (attached at Appendix 2) 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 the achievements in 2013/14 and what the priorities and challenges were for 2014/5.

Background

2. Durham Local 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
4. 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.
5. 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.

6. The Safeguarding Framework which outlines the joint working arrangements between the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) with the Health and Wellbeing Board, Children and Families Partnership and the Safe Durham Partnership was ratified by the Health and Wellbeing Board at its meeting in November 2014.
7. 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.
8. The Board has no service delivery functions but is required to inform (through its co-ordination and effectiveness responsibilities) and challenge 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.
9. Working Together (2013) required each Local Safeguarding Children Board to produce and publish an Annual Report evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area. The report should have been 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 was also shared with LSCB partner agency senior management teams.
10. The report set out the achievements and progress made during 2013/14 and identified the challenges the Board faced in 2014/15 and beyond. The report summarised how effective the LSCB was in discharging its duties 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

11. The report was drawn from a wide range of sources from across the Children and Families Partnership and reflected 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, presented considerable ongoing challenge and commitment, particularly, in the current financial and organisational context. This required a high degree of multi-agency collaboration at every level.
12. The report recognised the significant service restructuring that was 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 included the introduction of Clinical Commissioning Groups, restructure of the council's Children's Services and the planned changes to the Probation service.
13. This year's report also built on learning from national research including Ofsted guidance on what makes an effective LSCB and the findings of the national review of annual reports 'Facets of an Effective LSCB' which was published by the National Independent Chairs of LSCBs in 2013. It was 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?
14. 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 babies, 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.
15. Domestic abuse continued as the main parental risk factor leading to the need for a child to become subject to a child protection plan, 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 continued to be provided for multi-agency practitioners and included awareness raising sessions as well as more in-depth specialist sessions presented by specialist workers which focuses on the impact of these risks on children's emotional health and development as well as their protection.

16. 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 where necessary. The LSCB will be putting a greater emphasis on tackling neglect in 2015/16. The existing 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 and taking decisions about how best to support families, or in the most serious cases taking the decision to use court processes to remove children from their parents/carers.
17. The numbers of children looked after continues to reduce and is 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

18. The LSCB has continued to actively 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 were taken into account in the LSCB work plan and priority setting for 2014/15. For example this included a continued focus on 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 so that the voice of children and young people continues to be reflected in the work of the board.

Monitoring Agency Performance

19. 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.
20. Particular efforts have been made to increase the number of children who go missing who have an interview within 72 hours of returning home. Good progress continues to be made in Durham to establish local processes for this vulnerable group of children, some of whom may be at risk of being sexually exploited, ahead of recent national guidance and concerns raised in other parts of the country.

21. Case audits have taken place in areas identified by the Board as requiring further examination. This included audits of children subject to more than one child protection plan, review of no further action decisions and audits of missing children return interviews.

Multi-Agency Training

22. Durham LSCB has a range of courses that offer practitioners from partner agencies more specialist training on issues such as domestic abuse, mental ill health and working with highly resistant families. 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" which meets the requirements of 'Working Together 2013' which identifies the need to have a well trained workforce with an appropriate knowledge and skills- base.
23. 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

24. 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, the Board 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 recognised 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 and better understand how to apply rules about confidentiality. In addition, a focus needed to be maintained to ensure lessons were being learnt and agreed procedures are being followed.
 - **Early Help** - the Board recognised 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

Recommendations

25. The Health and Wellbeing Board are recommended to:

- Note the content of the report to ensure it remains sighted on the LSCB's effectiveness and interfaces.
- Note the range of work that has taken place to safeguard children in county Durham, and the continued challenges, developments and achievements in this critical area of work.

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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 – during 2014 arrangements were put in place to successfully recruit two lay members to the Board. The position of Training coordinator was vacant for a short period but was also successfully recruited to in March 2014.

Risk – ongoing funding contributions are required from multi-agency partners to ensure safeguarding arrangements continue to be effective and that the work of the board is supported through the LSCB Business unit.

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 is published on the LSCB website at:

www.durham-lscb.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