

Report of Mark Peel, Independent Chair, Leeds Safeguarding Children Board

Report to Leeds City Council Executive Board

Date: 16th November 2016.

Subject: LSCB Annual Report (2015/16) Evaluating the Effectiveness of Safeguarding Arrangements in Leeds



Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:		
Appendix number:		

Summary of main issues

The LSCB Annual Report (2015/16) Evaluating the Effectiveness of Safeguarding Arrangements in Leeds identifies that:

- Good progress continues to be made to ‘rebalance the safeguarding system’ to ensure that children and young people receive ‘the right service at the right time’ and that the need for statutory intervention is reduced safely and appropriately.
- External inspection findings and judgements provide independent assurance of the progress being made by the children’s partnership to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.
- The Board continues to be ambitious and sets high expectations of its partners. This has been met with good support and contribution.
- The LSCB is progressing its plans and addressing its priorities and can evidence the contribution it is making to improving practice, multi-agency working and outcomes for children and young people.

- The importance of ensuring continued investment into the Early Help strategy for Leeds.

Recommendations

The LCC Executive Board is asked to consider

- The contents of the LSCB's Annual Report,
- Request that the Director of Children's Services consider any implications for the work of Leeds City Council.

1 Purpose of this report

1.1 This report introduces the key issues from the LSCB Annual Report (2015/16).

2 Background information

2.1 Leeds 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 the City.

2.2 Its statutory objectives are to:

- Co-ordinate local work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- To ensure the effectiveness of that work.

2.3 Working Together (2015) requires each Local Safeguarding Children Board to produce and publish an Annual Report evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area. The report is submitted to the Chief Executive and Leader of the Local Authority, reflecting that overall accountability for the safety and welfare of children and young people must be led by them. It is also sent to the local Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Well Being Board. There is also a local agreement to submit it to Leeds City Council Scrutiny Board for Children and Families and to the governance bodies of all partner organisations to support their governance of safeguarding practice in Leeds.

2.4 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 states that the LSCB Annual Report 'should provide a rigorous and transparent assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services. It should identify areas of weakness, the causes of those weaknesses and the action being taken to address them as well as other proposals for action'. The Report should:

- Recognise achievements and progress made as well as identifying challenges.
- Demonstrate the extent to which the functions of the LSCB are being effectively discharged.
- Include an account of progress made in implementing actions from Serious Case Reviews.
- Provide robust challenge to the work of the Children and Families Trust Board (CFTB).

2.5 The LSCB Annual Report is the result of an Annual Review process which ran from April to July, culminating in an Annual Review meeting on 21.07.16. It includes information from partners and LSCB sub groups. The report was signed off by the LSCB on 22.09.16.

2.6 The LSCB Annual report contains detail about work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Leeds. It contains key issues, messages and challenges developed in order to ensure that these are accessible to the professional

partnership and the wider community. This summarises the progress made by Leeds LSCB in 2015/16 through and with its partners and analyses the effectiveness of:

- Safeguarding arrangements in the city.
- The LSCB itself in supporting and coordinating safeguarding arrangements and in monitoring and challenging those who provide them.

3 Main issues

3.1 The Report notes the continued effectiveness of the Partnership to support children and young people and families in Leeds. The OfSTED inspection in 2015 confirmed the significant improvement journey Leeds has taken since 2011 based on an ambitious but sustainable strategic plan underpinned by political and professional support and co-operation. Central to this is a partnership agreement that the children's safeguarding system needs to be 'rebalanced' in order to improve outcomes for children and young people by intervening earlier and more effectively in the life of a problem.

This involves:

- An early help approach to providing 'the right service at the right time'.
- A restorative approach to working with children, young people and their families.
- A commitment to a culture of continuous learning and improvement.
- A reduction in the need for statutory intervention.
- The development of innovative safeguarding process and practice funded through the Innovations Fund.
- A multi-agency commitment to shared principles, behaviours and ways of working.

3.2 The review of the Children & Young People's plan 2011-15 identified a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people, and the framework of obsessions, outcomes and priorities has been retained for the 2015-18 Plan

3.3 There is evidence that good progress continues to be made to rebalance the safeguarding system:

- There has been good use of Early Help services with dedicated staff working within clusters.
- Weekly review meetings consider decision making at the Front Door ensuring a consistent approach and response to contacts.
- The establishment and growth of Family Group Conferences.

3.4 Overall the need for statutory intervention is reducing:

- Gradually falling numbers of children and young people who need to be Looked After.

- The number of children and young people subject to child protection plans continues to fall, with Leeds becoming in line with national comparators.

3.5 Despite the continuing reduction in the number of children and young people requiring statutory intervention, more work is being undertaken to assess and respond where there are concerns about a child. With the implementation of the 'Conversations' model of assessments rather than the rigid predetermined 'thresholds', practitioners are empowered to discuss safeguarding concerns based on risks and needs and in turn consider the most appropriate package of support for a child or family.

- More referrals are being accepted by Children's Social Work Service.
- More child abuse investigations are being carried out.
- More Initial Child Protection Conferences are being held.
- A focus on quality of services rather than just the timeliness of processes.

3.6 A particular focus in 2015/16 has been to better understand and improve the partnership response to child sexual exploitation and related vulnerabilities. Trafficking, Female Genital Mutilation, children who go missing and children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviour all form part of the wider work of the LSCB Risk and Vulnerabilities Sub Group.

3.7 The LSCB has considered the following factors in assuring itself that practice and multi-agency working is appropriate and safe:

- Findings from external inspections (OfSTED, CQC, HMIP, HMIC).
- Partner compliance with statutory duties under Section 11 of the Children Act to ensure arrangements are in place to effectively safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.
- Monitoring Safeguarding Performance data and trends.
- Quality Assurance Processes.
- Findings from multi-agency audits.

All the data we have indicates good attention is paid to managing risk appropriately and safely within the frameworks in place.

3.8 The Board monitors progress against its own objectives, self-challenges and responsibilities through a variety methods e.g.:

- The Business Plan which indicates that 89% of tasks were completed or proceeding on time
- The Performance Management System, which indicates improving partner compliance with safeguarding requirements, and assurance that the quality of multi-agency interventions with children and young people is steadily improving

- The review of work to address self-challenges, which indicates that progress had been made on all of the 9 challenges set for 2014/15

3.9 The evidence included in this Annual Report is that the LSCB continues to make good progress in implementing its plans and responding to emerging issues. Regular evaluation of progress routinely identifies areas for improvement and where more needs to be done.

3.10 The LSCB Learning and Improvement Framework (LIF) brings together a structure of continuous learning which improves practitioner responses to children and young people at risk. This is undertaken through:

- Findings and lessons from the broad range of work undertaken by the LSCB and partners are effectively disseminated across the partnership using a range of methods such as
- Training and development programmes of work for staff across Leeds
- Learning from LLR's SCR's, audit activity shared across the partnership.
- Bulletins and website-this is tracked intelligently with statistics on whether bulletins are opened and read, hits on the LSCB website including which pages are accessed the most.

- Monitoring actions that are being undertaken to improve services such as:

- Section 11, 175/157
- External Inspections
- The monitoring of action plans
- The impact on practice, multi-agency working and outcomes for children and young people.

3.11 Multi-agency policies and procedures continue to be developed and implemented to support practice and multi-agency working. This significantly helps to consolidate and improve the functioning of the children's safeguarding system in order to better support vulnerable children and young people.

3.12 The Board continues to take a leadership role in instigating partners to engage with the way in which professionals work together and with children, young people and their families in order to improve outcomes through earlier and more effective intervention.

3.13 The Report sets out a series of challenges for 2016/17 (for the consideration of the Children & Families Trust Board, Leeds Safeguarding Adults Board, Safer Leeds Executive and Health and Wellbeing Board). These include:

1. Bringing the Safeguarding Boards together, and securing a new (post Wood Review) Partnership.
2. Monitoring of, and appropriately responding to, the impact of continued austerity on safeguarding, looking especially at impact on:

- Provision operated/funded by LCC
 - The range of universal services offered to children and families including Health Visiting
 - Youth Justice post Taylor report
 - Third sector opportunities and pressures
 - The safeguarding 'estate' for Leeds. Perhaps looking at issues around recruitment and retention
3. Monitoring of, and appropriately responding to, concerns regarding the transition and support of Adolescents, focussing specifically on:
- Those on plans aged 13+ years
 - Those in and leaving care
 - Educational outcomes for specific groups
4. Monitoring of, and appropriately responding to the emotional and mental health of children and young people, looking especially at:
- Making Leeds the first child friendly Custody City
 - Data around levels of anxiety, especially amongst girls and young women
 - Formal mental health interventions with children and young people
5. Monitoring of, and appropriately responding to the wide range of vulnerabilities that Adolescents are exposed to as highlighted within the Leeds CSE Strategy.

Implicit in all of the above are the values and ethics of the Leeds approach, such as 'listening to the voice of the child', child centred and restorative approaches.

4 Corporate Considerations

Whilst the LSCB is a stand-alone Board which sits outside the direct corporate structure or governance of the system, much of what it does impacts directly on the corporate responsibilities and accountabilities of Leeds City Council

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 This is a report produced through a process of engagement and consultation with partners on the LSCB. Active interest and support from CLT and Corporate Leaders in the work of the LSCB has made a significant contribution to the work of the LSCB.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 The LSCB has made significant strides in 2015/16 to engage with a range of communities in the City, including the faith communities, and with a range of local third sector organisations. There is much still to do to engage more extensively to

support the development of safe cohesive communities that promote the welfare of their children, and protect them from harm. 2016 has been a year of strengthening partnerships between the LSCB and Safer Leeds through joint working.

4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan

4.3.1 Leeds LSCB contributes to the cities strategic planning and holding partners to account to ensure that the most vulnerable children of Leeds are safe from harm. Children and Young People are a key priority for the city and the LSCB promotes and supports the Child Friendly City Initiative, the Children and Young Peoples Plan and the Best Council Plan so that the children and young people of Leeds have the best start in life and are safe, and feel safe.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 LSCB Annual budgets, which come from a range of partner agencies such as Health, Police and the Local Authority, reflect the Board's Independent statutory multi-agency responsibilities and agreed priorities. Expenditure is monitored through regular reports to the Board. The LSCB is not an operational body or one which delivers services to children, young people and their families. Its role is co-ordinating and ensuring the effectiveness of what its member organisations do and contributing to broader planning, commissioning and delivery.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 The Executive Board is not being asked to make any decision arising out of the contents of this report. The Board may request that the Director of Children's Services consider any implications for the work of Leeds City Council.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 The LSCB has a statutory responsibility under Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 to hold partners to account to ensure all children at risk of, or experiencing harm are appropriately supported. This responsibility is in line with LCC Corporate Risk Management Framework for safeguarding children and young people and ensures LCC is challenged and supported in ensuring that the relevant safeguarding governance, quality of front line practice, training, clarity of staff roles and responsibilities and the voice of the child is of the highest standard.

The LSCB also has its own Risk Register which is monitored through the LSCB Executive.

5 Conclusions

5.1 This report presents a summary of the work of Leeds Safeguarding Board in 2015/16. It sets out the progress made and the challenges for the Council and partners to the Board in 2016/17.

6 Recommendations

6.1 The LCC Executive Board is asked to consider

- The contents of the LSCB's Annual Report,

- Request that the Director of Children’s Services consider any implications for the work of Leeds City Council.

7 **Background documents**¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council’s website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.