

Report of Jane Held, Independent Chair Leeds Safeguarding Children Board
Report to Children and Families Scrutiny Board
Date: 25 July 2013
Subject: Draft LSCB Annual Report on the Effectiveness of Safeguarding Arrangements for Children and Young people in Leeds (July 2013)

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

Summary of main issues

1. This cover report introduces the attached draft LSCB Annual Report prior to its consideration by the LSCB on 19 July 2013. The final version will be presented to the Council's Chief Executive, the Leader of the Council, the Police & Crime Commissioner and the Health and wellbeing Board. It will be published on the LSCB website at the end of August.
2. The draft LSCB Annual Report includes a summary of progress made to ensure that the safeguarding needs are met of children and young people who are privately fostered in Leeds.

Recommendations

The Scrutiny Board is asked to:

1. Receive and comment on the content of the draft LSCB Annual Report.
2. Note the challenges for 2013/14, including those accepted by the Children's Trust Board.

3. Consider the progress being made to safeguard children and young people who are privately fostered.

Purpose of this report

To update Children and Families Scrutiny Board on the progress being made by and through the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board to improve safeguarding children practice in Leeds.

Background information

It is a statutory requirement under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 for the LSCB to publish an annual report evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements for children and young people (C&YP) in the local area.

The LSCB Annual *Performance* Report, including challenges for 2013/14, was received and accepted by the Children's Trust Board (CTB) on 27.06.13. The Annual Report will be presented to the CTB on 05.09.13.

The CTB must take account of the report in preparing and refreshing the Children & Young people's Plan.

Main issues

Effectiveness of the LSCB:

The report indicates that the LSCB has made good progress in addressing the challenges it set for itself in 2012/13.

The over-arching challenge it is setting itself for 2013/14 is to 'step up a gear'; to build on progress made in 2012/13 in order to more fully understand the effectiveness of the safeguarding system in Leeds and better lead the partnership in developing services and multi-agency working in order to improve outcomes for C&YP.

Private Fostering

The Scrutiny Inquiry Report on Private Fostering published on 17.01.13. recommended '*that the LSCB advises the Scrutiny Board in July 2013 of the progress made by Children's Services against the updated action plan*'.

The LSCB, at its meeting on 28 June 2013 received the Annual Private Fostering Report from Children's Services. A summary of its contents is included in the LSCB Annual Report at (8.2.5).

The Private Fostering Report identifies that progress is being made in:

- Raising professional awareness about the need to identify and respond to private fostering arrangements
- Updating the Communications Strategy

- Establishing a private fostering service to support the work of social workers, undertake assessments and provide training / advice across the partnership.

An audit of case files was undertaken in January 2013 indicating that although progress had been made in ensuring that statutory visits were undertaken, improvements were still required in the timely completion of assessments and undertaking police checks.

A further audit will take place in November 2013. This will provide a more comprehensive picture of the impact that current developments are having on responding to children and young people who are privately fostered.

Performance against challenges to CTB for 2012/13:

The overarching challenge to the CTB remained to 'rebalance the safeguarding system' to reduce the need for statutory intervention to safeguard C&YP.

Evidence of progress made in the year is provided by:

- The gradual reduction in the number of children and young people who need to be looked after
- The establishment of a CSWS Duty and Advice Team and revised arrangements for responding to contacts and referrals from partner agencies
- The continued investment in Early Help Services.

Summary of the Effectiveness of Safeguarding arrangements:

Ensuring that risk is being managed appropriately and safely is a crucial factor at all times; but particularly so during a period of 'whole system re-orientation' as is currently the circumstances in Leeds. It is important that the LSCB is able to be satisfied that risk is being managed safely and appropriately in individual cases.

The evidence that will be considered by the LSCB on 19.07.13 includes:

- The reduction in the number of looked after children and young people is gradual and is being actively managed. The reduction is due to a combination of fewer receptions into care (with alternative, more appropriate, options being rigorously explored) and improved permanency planning.
- Although the number and make-up of the cohort of children and young people who are subject to child protection plans requires further investigation and improvements are required in the effectiveness of plans, it is notable that the LSCB audit confirmed the Ofsted findings of 2011 that children and young people are not being left in unsafe situations.
- Concerns remain about the high rate of re-referral to Children's Social Work Services with the implication that some children and young people may not be receiving a timely and effective response. Nevertheless, the introduction of the new Duty and Advice

Team has impacted positively on these figures and the trend is expected to continue in 2013/14 as the new arrangements bed in.

- Considerable audit and review activity is being undertaken to better understand the working of the safeguarding system as a whole and the performance of its component parts.

Challenges for 2013/14:

The LSCB, in response to changes in guidance (Working Together 2013), will need to evidence it has increased the rigour of its challenge to partners and more explicitly driven (and understood) improvements in outcomes for C&YP.

At the same time it needs to seek to work more collaboratively with the Safeguarding Adult Board and the Community Safety Partnership to identify things we can do better together and support each other with.

Challenges accepted by the CTB for 2012/13 include the following:

- To continue to progress the 'rebalancing' of the safeguarding system in Leeds in order to promote a more preventative approach (C&YP receiving 'the right service at the right time') and reduce the need for statutory intervention. Key components of this approach are:

To reduce the number of C&YP who need to be 'looked after.'

To support more effective multi-agency engagement in the oversight and implementation of child protection plans.

To develop and extend the comprehensive, multi-agency, Early Help offer, supported and facilitated by a common approach to assessment.

- To ensure that during this period of transition within the system, risk is managed appropriately and safely in individual cases.
- To ensure that the rebalancing of the system is supported by the development of a partnership approach to shared professional values, attitudes and behaviours and common principles of supervision.
- To continue to promote a restorative approach to working with C&YP and their families that will more consistently result in 'the voice of the child' being included in all interventions and which promotes the principles established by the CTB:

The default behaviour of Children's Trust and Local Government partners in all their dealings with local citizens/partners/organisations should be a restorative one - high support with high challenge.

Children's Trust and Local Government partners should ensure that families, whose children might otherwise be removed from their homes, are supported to meet and develop a safe alternative plan before such action is taken.

For all other families where a plan or decision needs to be made to help safeguard and promote the welfare of a child or children the family should be supported to help decide what needs to happen. Children's Trust and Local Government partners must create the conditions where families can be helped to help themselves - this would represent a fundamental renegotiation of the relationship between Local Government and local citizens - from doing things to and for families to doing things with them.

Children's Trust and Local government partners must see all local schools as community assets and have a clear role in holding those institutions - no matter what the governance arrangements - to account for the contribution they make to the well-being of the local population.

- To work with partners who commission services for C&YP to:

Build into their commissioning processes a requirement of compliance with s(11) of the Children Act 2004 / s(175) Education Act 2002

Establish a common performance management framework which is compatible with the LSCB framework.

- To review access and availability of services for families who have suffered a child / young person bereavement.
- In the light of work being undertaken by the LSCB, LSAB & SL, to review the provision of services to address situations where C&YP are living in the context of compromised parenting (domestic violence, parental substance mis-use, parental mental ill health).
- As a better understanding of the scale of CSE is established, to review the provision of services to (i) reduce the number of Young People at risk / suffering from sexual exploitation and (ii) respond to young people who have become victims.
- To develop and co-ordinate improved services for vulnerable 16 – 21 year olds.

Corporate Considerations

Consultation and Engagement

Active interest from CLT and Corporate Leaders in the work of the LSCB has made a significant contribution to the improvement journey. There is a shared expectation within the Council that a Child Friendly City also has to be a Safe City. This enables the LSCB to take some assurance about the direction of travel.

Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

The work of the Board contributes to improved community cohesion. Over the next year part of the public engagement work the Board plans will be to use the new LSCB website to increase community engagement with the work of the Board.

Council Policies and City Priorities

The work of the LSCB is central to the Council's priorities and policies for children and young people.

Resources and Value for Money

A Funding and Value for Money Review identified the need to maintain the current level of Base Budget expenditure for the LSCB and requested partners to increase their contributions to ensure 'in year' financial viability and maintain an appropriate level of strategic reserve. A revised funding formula was agreed amongst existing contributing partners to ensure that the agreed expenditure for the Base Budget of £521,000 was fully funded for 2013/14 and that a small commissioning budget would be available to be used to address emerging themes and challenges.

Out-turn figures at the end of March 2013 indicated that an in year shortfall in funding of £21,000 was mitigated by an underspend of £32,000. This enabled a strategic reserve of £50,000 to be carried forward into 2013/14 and a commissioning budget to be established of £35,000.

Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

No specific implications

Risk Management

The Board is currently completing its Annual Review focusing on how well we work together to improve outcomes for vulnerable C&YP. The 'Effective Governance' scorecard in the Performance Management System indicates that progress continues to be made to tighten governance and system wide processes.

Conclusions

The draft Annual Report of the LSCB concludes that considerable progress is being made to make the necessary changes to improve multi-agency working, services and outcomes for children and young people. It identifies where more progress needs to be made and where we need to better understand problems and issues faced by children and young people in Leeds.

Challenges are set for the LSCB and the Children's Trust Board to address in 2013/14 which promote a direction of travel which encompasses an increasing focus on:

- The quality of services rather than on the timeliness of processes

- The LSCB operating more like an 'Improvement Board'

- The frontline and community engagement

- The voice of children and young people

- The use of research and evidence based practice.

Recommendations

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- 3) Consider the progress being made to safeguard children and young people who are privately fostered.

Background documents

Leeds Safeguarding Children Board draft Annual Report (2012/13)