

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

WEDNESDAY, 8TH MARCH, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors J Bowden, E Bromley,
Amanda Carter, J Heselwood, Z Hussain,
J Lennox, L Martin, K Renshaw,
R. Stephenson and J Tudor

CO-OPTED MEMBER (VOTING)

Mr E A Britten - Church Representative (Catholic)

Mr A Graham – Church Representative (Church of England)

Ms J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)

Mr N Tones – School Staff Representative

Mrs K Blacker

60 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

61 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There was no exempt information.

62 Late Items

The Chair highlighted that a request had been made by Councillor Stephenson for a late item of business to be added to the agenda for today's meeting.

RESOLVED: To note that the request for an additional late item of business to be added to the agenda had been declined by the Chair.

63 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

64 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

The Board received the following apologies and notification of substitutes.

Councillor Bithell (Cllr J Lennox attending as substitute)

Councillor Ragan (Cllr Tudor attending as a substitute)

Councillor Richards (Cllr Amanda Carter attending as substitute)

Councillor Senior
Councillor Howley
Councillor Forsaith
Helen Bellamy- Co-opted School Staff Representative

65 Minutes - 25 January 2023

The Board noted that the minutes had incorrectly referenced Kate Blacker as a parent governor co-opted member, which had been her previous role, and therefore needed to be amended.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the amendment outlined above, the minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2023 be agreed as an accurate record.

Matters arising

Minute No. 57 - Initial Budget Proposals for 2023/24

The Chair confirmed that the Board's deliberations on the relevant budget savings proposals did inform a composite report from Scrutiny which was acknowledged by the Executive Board during its meeting held on 8th February 2023 and also formed part of the agenda papers for consideration at Full Council on 22nd February 2023.

66 Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership - Update

The Board received the report from the Head of Democratic Services which presented updates on recent Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) activity.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Julie Longworth, Director of Children and Families
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer for Social Work
- Farrah Khan, Chief Officer Family Help
- Jasvinder Sanghera CBE, Independent Chair of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Chief Superintendent Steve Dodds, West Yorkshire Police District Commander for Leeds
- Karen Shinn, Business Manager of Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Phil Coneron, Manager of Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Rebecca Roberts, Section Head of Social Care Legal and legal adviser to the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership

The Chair explained that the meeting was being dedicated to the important issue of safeguarding children and follows the work that was undertaken by the Scrutiny Board last year. It was noted that the LSCP Executive had provided three separate update reports as follows:

- Appendix 1 – Report of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive on the LSCP Notifications Process
- Appendix 2 – Report of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive on Cross Cutting Themes from Review Processes
- Appendix 3 – LSCP Annual Report Overview

The Chair highlighted that the date of the LSCP report at Appendix 1 had been entered incorrectly and should read 8th March 2023.

It was agreed that the Board would consider each of the reports in turn.

LSCP Notification Process

The Independent Chair of the LSCP introduced the update report set out in Appendix 1 and highlighted the following key points:

- The Board was reminded of the background context that led the LSCP Executive to undertake a review of its notification process and decision making in relation to Serious Child Safeguarding Incidents (SCSI).
- It was acknowledged that the current legal framework places a duty on the Local Authority to consider and decide whether a case meets the criteria for notification to the National Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, even if there are differences of opinion amongst partners. However, it was highlighted that the review of the notification process has now led to an enhanced process of open, honest and robust discussions amongst all partners, along with appropriate challenge, and resulted in a more equitable approach to decision-making.
- In addition to the area of decision-making, it was noted that the review had identified further areas of learning and enhancements, particularly around enhancing the dissemination of learning and monitoring the implementation and monitoring from all local learning. Linked to this, it was highlighted that a work plan is being developed and will be implemented and monitored through the Leeds Children and Young People Partnership.
- Reference was also made to the anticipated update of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 Guidance and the benefits of sharing the journey undertaken in Leeds to help inform future national guidance around SCIS and associated review processes.

The following areas were also discussed during the Board's consideration of this report:

- Issues surrounding different agencies risk assessment processes, particularly in relation to the assessment and management of Registered Sex Offenders, and the work of the LSCP to improve greater

awareness and understanding amongst practitioners, as well as ensuring that systems are kept up to date.

- The importance of staff feeling confident to escalate concerns and the work being undertaken across the Partnership to understand and address barriers to implementing the LSCP multi-agency Concerns Resolution Process, which supports the escalation and resolution of concerns.
- The purpose of the Rapid Review process in relation to serious child safeguarding cases and the improvements made to simplify the process to support any partner agency wishing to refer a potential SCSI to the LSCP Review Advisory Group (RAG).
- The role and involvement of the National Safeguarding Practice Review Panel in relation to Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR).
- The work being undertaken by the LSCP, in collaboration with Safer Stronger Communities and the Leeds Safeguarding Adults Board, to develop consistent city-wide resources to improve greater understanding around disguised compliance and the application of professional curiosity.
- The importance of capturing the voice and lived experience of the child in all cases.
- The role of the courts and opportunities to share learning, with the acknowledgement that the national Care Review also included a recommendation to improve the quality and consistency of local and judicial decision making through improving the quality and transparency of data and facilitating learning at a local level.
- The position of the LSCP Executive in terms of feeding into the forthcoming review of the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 guidance.

Cross Cutting Themes from Review Processes

The Business Manager of the LSCP introduced the update report set out in Appendix 2 and highlighted the following key points:

- The LSCP undertakes learning from a broad range of reviews in order to learn from those cases to help make improvements to the systems that protect children and to prevent other children from being harmed.
- The LSCP starts from a strength-based approach as it recognises that learning is obtained by considering what worked well and associated good practice, as well as areas for improvement.
- Good practice and learning is disseminated through the LSCP Business Unit to the partnership in a variety of ways, including learning briefs, refresher training sessions, presentations to the Leeds Children and Young People Partnership and practitioner presentations.
- There is a recognised need for greater assurance with regards to the dissemination of learning by and within partner agencies and evidencing how learning is being implemented and improving outcomes for children and young people.
- Going forward, the monitoring and evidencing of learning will be a focus for the LSCP Business Unit and the RAG.

The following areas were also discussed during the Board's consideration of this report:

- The definition and use of Section 7 reports in accordance with the Children Act 1989 and the recent changes made by Children and Families to ensure there is additional oversight of Section 7 reports by a service delivery manager.
- Workforce development measures around disguised compliance and professional curiosity, including a regional Masterclass series, collaborative working with local universities and utilising existing supervision frameworks.
- The use of language and ensuring that practitioners have a clear understanding of what key definitions mean in practice.
- Embedding learning through practice standards and constant reinforcement.
- The importance of accurate and timely risk assessments, particularly in complex cases, and ensuring that workforce development measures are reinforcing the need to keep systems up to date.

Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report

The Manager of the LSCP introduced the update report set out in Appendix 3 and highlighted the following key points:

- The independent role of the LSCP Business Unit in terms of supporting the partnership and providing quality assurance and advice.
- The purpose of the Annual Report in terms of providing an objective analysis of the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in the city and reflecting on the LSCP priorities and activity over an 18 month period.
- That data is showing the timeliness of statutory safeguarding functions to be good, with the two external reviews from Ofsted also endorsing outstanding practice and leadership.
- That poverty remains a key area that can impact on outcomes of children and families.
- That the LSCP supports and will continue to monitor the review of the city's Early Help system.
- That the LSCP supports the city's focus on children experiencing adverse childhood experiences through the development of its Trauma Informed Strategy and the drive to make Leeds a Trauma Informed City.
- That the LSCP will be preparing for any changes arising from the review of the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 guidance as well as considering the recommendations from the national Care Review.

The following areas were also discussed during the Board's consideration of this report:

- Tackling the challenge of poverty through the Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds, with an acknowledgement that a more detailed report on this Strategy is expected to be considered at the Scrutiny Board's next formal meeting.
- The content and ownership of the forthcoming LSCP Annual Report, including confirmation that the report will be reflecting on the LSCP's review of the notifications process.

- The use of the LSCP website to help signpost parents to relevant information, advice and support.
- Information sharing with schools and the positive work being undertaken through Pol-Ed, which is a West Yorkshire Police education programme, written by teachers for teachers in schools across West Yorkshire.

Having considered the LSCP update reports, the Chair sought views on appropriate next steps by the Scrutiny Board and following a further discussion with Members, the majority view of the Board was to receive a further update report from the LSCP Executive in September/October 2023 covering the following elements:

- The findings from the LSCP Executive's twelve-month review of its revised notification processes, which will be undertaken in July 2023.
- Progress on the work being undertaken around practitioner escalation and resolution of concerns.
- Capturing the voice of the child and evidencing how the learning stemming from reviews is being disseminated and is improving outcomes for children and young people.
- Addressing the use of language and jargon and understanding the use of definitions used in the sector.
- The work being undertaken to ensure the use of accurate and timely risk assessments and improving awareness and understanding amongst practitioners around differing risk assessment processes.
- The Leeds input into the review of the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 guidance, with an update on progress dependent upon the timing of the national review process.
- Clarification of the levels of oversight, including democratic oversight, that surrounds those Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews that are notified to the National Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.

During the discussion with Board Members on appropriate next steps, Councillor Stephenson put forward a particular suggestion that the Scrutiny Board recommends that where a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) is notified to the National Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, the published findings of that CSPR is considered by the Council's Executive Board for consideration.

Following a vote requested by two Members, the Board decided (by a majority vote) not to support the suggested additional recommendation.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the content of the LSCP update reports, including the comments made by Members, be noted.
- (b) That the LSCP Executive provides a further update report to the Scrutiny Board in September/October 2023 covering the agreed elements set out above.

(Under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 16.5 Councillor Stephenson and Councillor Amanda Carter required it be recorded that they voted in

support of the suggested additional recommendation that where a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) is notified to the National Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, the published findings of that CSPR is considered by the Council's Executive Board for consideration)

67 Work Schedule

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented the Board's latest work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser made specific reference to the proposal that the Board defers receiving an update report on the Youth Justice Plan and the Future In Mind Strategy until the new municipal year, with the specific reasons set out in paragraph 6 of the report.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the work schedule, as presented, be agreed
- b. That update reports on the Youth Justice Plan and the Future in Mind Strategy be deferred to the new municipal year.

68 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED:

Wednesday, 29th March 2023 at 10.00 am (pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.45 am).