

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

Report to Leeds City Council Executive Board

Date: 18 November 2015.

Subject: LSCB Annual Report (2014/15) 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 (2014/15) 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.
- As in previous years more needs to be done to develop practice and multi-agency working in order to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.
- Partners are working to increase the ‘voice of the child’ in service design and planning and in working with children, young people and their families in the delivery of services.

- Momentum needs to be maintained in developing services to respond to children and young people who are experiencing / at risk of sexual exploitation.
- 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.
- Challenges are made for key strategic bodies in 2015/16 with an overarching challenge for the LSCB, Children and Families Trust Board, Leeds Safeguarding Adults Board, Safer Leeds Executive and Health and Wellbeing Board to work more collaboratively together in recognition of the changing nature of safeguarding issues and the need to respond effectively to these.

Recommendations

The LCC Executive Board is asked to consider and comment on:

- The evaluation of the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in Leeds
- The challenges identified for strategic bodies in 2015/16
- The implications for the work of Leeds City Council.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report introduces the key issues from the published LSCB Annual Report (2014/15).

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 The guidance states that the 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 product of an Annual Review process which ran from April to July, culminating in an Annual Review meeting on 16.07.15. It includes information from partners, sub groups and the Annual Performance Report (received by the LSCB on 25.06.15.). The report was signed off by the LSCB on 24. 09.15. and published on the LSCB website at the end of September.
- 2.6 The full report and appendices comprise a lengthy document containing considerable detail about work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Leeds. An Executive Summary containing key issues, messages and challenges has been 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 2014/15 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

2.7 The Executive Summary is attached to this report.

3 Main issues

3.1 The Report notes that the Partnership responded to previous Ofsted inspections of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements by embarking on an 'improvement journey' 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:

- A restorative approach to working with children, young people and their families
- A commitment to a culture of continuous improvement
- An early help approach to providing 'the right service at the right time'
- A reduction in the need for statutory intervention.

3.2 The findings in the Ofsted Inspection report of March 2015 highlighted that:

- Clear priorities for children's services are outlined in the Children and Young People's Plan and driven by an active Children's Trust
- Priorities are strategically aligned with the overall local authority plan, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the Safer Communities Strategy
- Cross-cutting priorities and the 'three obsessions' are facilitating a shared ambition for children across the city and providing a sharp focus for strategic and operational thinking

3.3 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

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

- There has been a significant rise in the use of Early Help services
- An increase in the number of Early Help Assessments
- The establishment and growth of Family Group Conferences

3.5 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 more in line with national comparators.
- However the number of children and young people becoming subject to a child protection plan has remained constant over 2013 – 15

3.6 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:

- 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

- 3.7 A particular focus in 2014/15 has been to better understand and improve the partnership response to child sexual exploitation. Reviews undertaken indicate that whilst good progress is being made, momentum needs to be maintained in 2015/16; there remains much more to do
- 3.8 The LSCB has considered the following factors in assuring itself that practice and multi-agency working is appropriate and safe:
- Findings from external inspections
 - Partner compliance with statutory duties to ensure arrangements are in place to effectively safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people:
 - Performance data and trends
 - Quality Assurance Processes
 - Findings from Audits.

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

- 3.9 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, the continued re-balancing of the children's safeguarding system 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 but 1 of the 24 set for 2014/15
 - The Annual Review process, which included Board members' assessments that overall 88% of tasks and responsibilities are being progressed.
- 3.10 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.
- 3.11 The Leeds Learning and Improvement Framework brings together:
- The safeguarding lessons learnt from the full range of the work of the LSCB and partners
 - The actions that are being taken to improve services
 - The impact on practice, multi-agency working and outcomes for children and young people
- 3.12 There is good evidence of significant impact on the development of policies and procedures which underpin practice and multi-agency working. Although these are technically 'outputs', they help to consolidate and improve the functioning of the children's safeguarding system in order to better support vulnerable children and young people.
- 3.13 The Board has undertaken a leadership role in prompting partners to engage in changes to 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. This is contributing to improving outcomes for children and young people evidenced in the

gradual reduction in the number of child deaths and the need for statutory intervention and the increase in Early Help services.

- 3.14 The Report sets out a series of challenges for 2015/16 (for the Children & Families Trust Board, Leeds Safeguarding Adults Board, Safer Leeds Executive and Health and Wellbeing Board). These include:
- An overarching challenge for all strategic boards to work more collaboratively together in recognition of the changing nature of safeguarding issues and the need to respond effectively to these.
 - Maintaining the progress being made to safely re-balance the safeguarding system through:
 - Maintaining an overview of the individual agency and shared allocation (and re-allocation as a result of collective changes to meet priorities differently) of resources across the partnership to support the further development of the Leeds Early Help Approach
 - Promoting the implementation of:
 - The 'Think Family Work Family' protocol (a continuing challenge from 2014/15)
 - The Family Group Conference system
 - Ensuring that workforce development across the partnership keeps pace with the scale of change to be implemented within the safeguarding system
 - Supporting Clusters in the development and delivery of Early Help Services.

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

One of the key corporate changes in 2013/14 was to reinstate a corporate safeguarding group, which takes responsibility for the strategic and operational co-ordination of safeguarding practice within the Council. This has made significant progress in 2014/15.

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 This is a report produced through a long process of engagement and consultation with partners to the Board.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 The LSCB has made significant strides in 2014/15 to engage with a range of communities in the City, including the faith communities in the city, 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.

4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 Children and Young People are a priority for the city.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 The council as well as partner organisations contribute to the Board's work. A value for money exercise in 2012/13 led to an administrative restructure in 2013/14. Annual budgets reflect the Board's statutory responsibilities and agreed priorities. Expenditure is monitored through quarterly reports to the Board.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 No direct legal implications

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 This report is part of the risk management infrastructure for Leeds City Council and will inform the safeguarding children risk on the corporate risk register.

5 Conclusions

5.1 This report presents an executive summary of the work of Leeds Safeguarding Board in 2014/15. It sets out the progress made and the challenges for the Council and partners to the Board in 2015/16.

6 Recommendations

6.1 The LCC Executive Board is asked to consider and comment on:

- The evaluation of the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in Leeds
- The challenges identified for strategic bodies in 2015/16
- The implications for the work of Leeds City Council.

7 Background documents¹

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.