

Report of: The Director of Children & Families

Report to: Leeds City Council Executive Board

Date: 17th March 2021

Subject: Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report (2019/20) Evaluating the Effectiveness of Safeguarding Arrangements in Leeds



Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input 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

1. Main issues

Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) Annual Report (2019/20) Evaluating the Effectiveness of Safeguarding Arrangements in Leeds identifies that:

- Leeds is a city that continues to demonstrate robust safeguarding arrangements which reflects its strong safeguarding partnerships and the commitment to protecting children from harm and promoting their welfare.
- The report identifies areas for continued improvement across the system, and these will inform the LSCP priorities and joint partnership working going forward.
- The LSCP has considered and consulted upon the development of a new Children and Young People's Partnership which addresses the agendas of both the LSCP and the Children and Families Trust Board (CFTB), with the implementation of the Children and Young People's Plan and the assurance of a robust safeguarding agenda at its heart.

2. Best Council Plan Implications (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- The LSCP contributes to the city's strategic planning and holds partners to account to be assured that the most vulnerable children of Leeds are safe from harm.

Children and Young People are a key priority for the city and the LSCP promotes and supports the Child Friendly City Initiative, the Children and Young Peoples Plan and the Best Council Plan with the ambition to ensure that the children and young people of Leeds have the best start in life, are safe, and feel safe.

- The LSCP Independent Chair and Board Managers have developed strong links with the strategic leads of the key partnerships within the city (Leeds Domestic Violence Partnership Board, Safer Leeds and Leeds Safeguarding Adults Board) to ensure a co-ordinated approach to safeguarding and to embed safeguarding as being part of everyone's business. Over the last year, this work has included:
 - Undertaking the Joint Strategic Review with Safer Leeds and Leeds Adult Safeguarding Board in relation to a young man who died at home in circumstances of extreme neglect.
 - The three safeguarding partnerships have also worked closely, as they do each year to promote Safeguarding Week promoting service relevant safeguarding messages across Leeds.
 - The three safeguarding partnerships developed a joint approach across Leeds to supporting adults and children at risk who have not been brought / taken to appointments to help encourage professional curiosity as to whether this suggests an underlying issue of concern.
- The development of a new Children and Young People's Partnership which addresses the agendas of both the LSCP and the CFTB, with the implementation of the Children and Young People's Plan and the assurance of a robust safeguarding agenda at its heart is currently under development.

3. Resource Implications

- LSCP 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. This budget funds the work of the LSCP and the Business Support Unit. Expenditure is monitored through regular reports to the LSCP Executive Board. The LSCP 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 as well as contributing to broader planning, commissioning and delivery.

Recommendations

The LCC Executive Board is asked to consider:

- The contents of the LSCP's Annual Report, including the identified areas of good practice and the areas for continued focus
- The safeguarding priorities for the city identified in the LSCP Annual Report

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report introduces the key learning from the LSCP Annual Report (2019/20) and highlights both the areas of strength and progress and clear areas for development across the safeguarding structures (report attached at appendix 1).

2. Background information

- 2.1 Following the changes in legislation to the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (WTSC) which removed the statutory requirement of local authorities to have a Local Safeguarding Children Board, the LSCP had been developing and implementing its new Multi-agency Safeguarding Arrangements under a new LSCP Executive and LSCP Independent Chair.
- 2.2 The LSCP annual report covers the year 2019/20, but also make comments on the period April to August 2020 in order to reflect on a full 12 months of the new Multi-agency Safeguarding Arrangements which came into place in September 2020. Furthermore, this report highlights some of the service responses and challenges to the national COVID pandemic.

3. Main issues

- 3.1.1 The report notes the continued effectiveness of the Safeguarding Partnership to support children, young people and families in Leeds. Central to this is a continued partnership focus on improving outcomes for children and young people through rebalancing the children's safeguarding system through intervening earlier and more effectively in the life of a problem (the Leeds Early Help approach).
- 3.1.2 The Safeguarding Partnership continues to be ambitious and sets high expectations of its partners. This has been met with good support and contribution from agencies across Leeds and a key willingness to build on the new partnership model that brings together the agendas of the CFTB and the LSCP.
- 3.1.3 External inspection findings (OfSTED, CQC etc.) and judgements provide further independent assurance of the progress being made by the children's partnership to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.
- 3.1.4 Strong leadership has improved the safeguarding culture and practice within Leeds. A restorative approach to working with families is contributing to the reduction of children requiring statutory intervention.
- 3.1.5 Leeds has developed a robust response to the exploitation of children and young people by developing safeguarding structures to both the early response to children at risk of exploitation and those who are experiencing exploitation.
- 3.1.6 Whilst the overall picture in relation to safeguarding remains strong the LSCP ensures that it seeks assurance and responds to any issues that emerge during the year either locally or nationally ensuring that there is no complacency across the safeguarding system in Leeds.
- 3.1.7 The key areas of focus for the LSCP during 2021/22 are:
 - The need to explore further how adult services across Leeds respond to those parents who may be struggling to care for their children due to their own emotional or mental health, drugs / alcohol misuse or domestic violence.
 - The link between school exclusion, reduced timetables and alternative educational settings and an increased risk of exploitation is an area for further exploration.
 - The LSCP will seek assurance that those schools not contributing to clusters are providing good quality early help support to children and families who need it.

- Further assurance will be sought that children and young people who have experienced child sexual exploitation and abuse have access to appropriate therapeutic services, not just at the time of the abuse but also if they require it later in their life.
- It is welcome that housing have reviewed and commissioned a young person's accommodation and support provision. Further assurance will be required to ensure that this provision continues to meet the needs of young people in Leeds especially for young women, LGBTQ and those experiencing additional vulnerabilities such as sexual or criminal exploitation.
- The LSCP has identified the need to seek further assurance that families who experience domestic violence and abuse who do not require social care intervention are supported through the early help approach and the work manages and reduces risk.
- Nationally, there is growing concern that young people entering adulthood experience a 'cliff edge' in terms of support. We know harm and its significant effects do not stop at 18 and consequently there is a need to ensure ongoing provision of support, either because harm continues into adulthood or because they need help to recover from the impact of harm suffered. We have recommended a joint task and finish group of safeguarding partners with a clear remit and timescale, to develop local arrangements and implement recommendations. The aim is to ensure stronger transition arrangements in the older age group (17-18) who continue to remain at risk of exploitation or abuse as they transition into adulthood.
- As a city there needs to be a continued focus of promoting safe sleeping messages, promoting breast feeding, reducing the number of parents that smoke and use alcohol and drugs to reduce the risk of sudden and unexpected deaths of babies. For older children, road traffic collisions remain the highest cause of preventable deaths. There needs to be continued approach to target interventions about road safety towards all children but especially more vulnerable groups of young people who may be at greater risk.

4. Corporate considerations

Whilst the LSCP is a stand-alone Partnership 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 that make up the LSCP. Active interest and support from Childrens Leadership Team and Corporate Leaders in the work of the LSCP has made a significant contribution to the safety and welfare of children.
- 4.1.2 Young people and families are also consulted through quality assurance work and the Student LSCP provides a young person's perspective on the safeguarding system.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

4.2.1 The LSCP has made significant progress in 2019/20 to engage with a range of communities in the City, and with a range of local third sector and voluntary organisations in partnership with Young Lives Leeds. 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. This also includes building on our relationships with faith communities to ensure they are part of the safeguarding conversation. 2020 has been a year of strengthening partnerships between the LSCP, the Adult Safeguarding Board and Safer Leeds Executive through joint working and identifying shared priorities and maximising joint opportunities to ensure the safeguarding of children and families.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

4.3.1 Leeds LSCP 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 LSCP 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, are safe, and feel safe in their communities.

4.4 Climate Emergency

4.4.1 The Leeds approach to safeguarding ensures that wherever safe and appropriate, children are cared for by their own family and community network. This is achieved by providing help and support to families as early as possible and locally through cluster arrangements.

4.4.2 A localised approach reduces impact on the environment by reducing the need to travel larger distances across the city compared to when services were more centralised. This local approach combined with our commitment to effective early help has also helped reduce the need for children to become looked after. In turn this has reduced the number of placements made outside of Leeds by almost half since 2012. This reduction means significantly reduced impact on the environment through reduced social work visits, independent review meetings and arrangements for family time for looked after children's relatives.

4.5 Resources, procurement and value for money

4.5.1 LSCP annual budgets, which come from a range of partner agencies including Health, Police and the Local Authority, reflect the partnerships shared multi-agency responsibilities and agreed priorities to protect children. Expenditure is monitored through regular reports to the LSCP Executive Board. The LSCP 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.

4.5.2 In addition all partners significantly contribute in-kind to the safeguarding agenda both within their agencies and in a multi-agency approach to supporting the work of the LSCP.

4.6 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

4.6.1 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 and Families consider any implications for the work of Leeds City Council.

4.7 Risk management

4.7.1 The LSCP had a statutory responsibility under Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 to hold partners to account to ensure all children at risk of, or experiencing harm are appropriately protected. 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.

5. Conclusions

5.1 This report presents an independent summary of the work of Leeds Safeguarding Partnership in 2019/20. It also sets out its key priorities and challenges for the Council and partners 2020/21. This independence has been informed by the appointment of the Independent Chair whose role also provides you with additional assurance.

6. Recommendations

6.1 The LCC Executive Board is asked to consider and endorse:

- The contents of the LSCP's Annual Report, including the identified areas of good practice and the areas for continued focus
- The safeguarding priorities for the city identified in the LSCP Annual Report

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.