



LSCB

ANNUAL REVIEW JULY 2008

1.0 OVERVIEW FROM INDEPENDENT CHAIR

This, the second annual review of Leeds Safeguarding Children Board, demonstrates the significant progress which has been made towards achieving the ambitious objectives which were outlined in the first year of the Board's three year Business Plan. Attendance of both statutory and non-statutory partners at Board and Sub Group meetings has continued to be excellent and it is this level of commitment alongside high quality business support which has made the progress possible.

This report details the range of important work which has been developed and progressed. This has included the development of an E safety strategy, establishing independent processes for Serious Case Reviews, a collaborative approach across West Yorkshire to reviewing childhood deaths which became a statutory requirement from 01.04.08 and improving recruitment and selection practices. In order to demonstrate its commitment to safer recruitment, the LSCB has decided that all members must have enhanced CRB checks and the constitution is being amended to reflect that.

A Joint Area Review (JAR) took place during 2007 and as part of that process the LSCB Manager, Sub Group Chairs and myself were interviewed by inspectors who concluded that good progress had been made in developing the LSCB which they described as being well managed. They also indicated that the comprehensive Business Plan set out an appropriate plan of work. Positive comments included the LSCB being proactive in reviewing and updating inter agency policies and procedures, good arrangements for information sharing between agencies, the good quality and coverage of safeguarding training with action plans from Serious Case Reviews being incorporated effectively into that and the analysis of its impact on practice.

Despite the progress which has been made, the overall judgment for safeguarding was adequate which needs to be improved upon to ensure that children and young people in Leeds receive services which are assessed as good. The Business Plan is being updated to reflect the findings of the JAR, the Government's Staying Safe Action Plan (aimed at improving children's safety) and the Third Joint Chief Inspectors' Review on Arrangements to Safeguard Children (launched on 8 July 2008) to which the LSCB contributed via a Chairs' Survey and interview. Areas to be addressed include improved arrangements for safeguarding those who are at risk of sexual exploitation, in danger of forced marriages and those missing from home and education.

As well as the Board being responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of services in Leeds, for which it is refining its performance management framework, it is important that it is able to measure its own effectiveness. During the coming year performance measures will be developed which will help us to assess how well we are doing and to what extent we are

impacting positively on the safeguarding agenda. That should be assisted by strengthening arrangements for service users to contribute their views.

Whilst there are many challenges ahead there is a good foundation on which to build and with the continued support of all those involved, directly or indirectly, in the Board's work I am confident that the progress will be maintained.

Judith Dodd
Independent Chair
14.07.08

2.0 REVIEW OF 2007/08 AND PLANNING FOR 2008/09

The Business Plan 2007/08 was structured specifically to focus on facilitating compliance with chapter 3 of Working Together 2006 which sets out the objectives and functions of Local Safeguarding Children Boards. It has been reviewed and updated on a quarterly basis by the Board, its Executive, Sub Groups and Area Safeguarding Children Groups.

Overall progress against the business plan has been good, with key systems and processes in place on or before the Working Together deadline on 1 April 2008 for transition from the arrangements of the previous ACPC. The Business Plan (see appendix 1) details progress made and areas requiring further attention. Consistent with Working Together 2006 guidance, the board has focussed initially on protective and preventative activities and responsibilities. Consideration will be given in 2008/09 to further engagement with wider safeguarding issues affecting children and young people in Leeds.

2.1 Co-ordination of activity to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

2.1.1 Policies and Procedures

2007/08 saw consolidation by the LSCB Policy and Procedure sub group of work undertaken to update interagency safeguarding procedures, available on the LSCB website from 3 July 2007. New model child protection procedures for Third Sector agencies have been developed and disseminated. An E safety task group has been established and has initiated the production of an E Safety strategy in line with BECTA guidance. A multi agency working party has undertaken work to agree consistent, common thresholds to underpin inter agency assessments of need, interventions and joint working. The resultant electronic document 'Levels of Need' is available on the Children Leeds website. The group will act as a reference point through 2008/09 for agreement between agencies about the delivery of services to meet identified levels of need.

The Policy and Procedure Sub Group has identified the following areas of work for 2008/09: considering the impact on procedures of the introduction of Contact Point; reviewing joint protocols between adult and children's services; and revising West Yorkshire Safeguarding Procedures with respect to the process for undertaking serious case reviews.

Leeds recognised the concerns that children and young people have about bullying a number of years ago and has developed an anti bullying strategy incorporating wide publicity and a training programme. Using the 'Tell Us' survey the LSCB Performance Management sub group will review the effectiveness of the strategy in the Autumn 2008.

2.1.2 Protection of Children and Young People

The Board has promoted the development of services to protect children and young people who are suffering, or at risk of suffering significant harm. A notable initiative has been the audit undertaken by the National Children's Bureau, reviewing the effectiveness of collaborative work between adult and children's services to children and young people living in the context of parental substance misuse and / or mental health problems. Work will continue in 2008/09 to develop joint working protocols and to consider the needs of such children and young people who are living in acute stress and are at risk of becoming 'looked after' by the local authority.

The LSCB has promoted a focus on the child in the revision of the Leeds Domestic Violence Strategy. Discussions are taking place between West Yorkshire Police and Children and Young People's Social Care regarding the monitoring of domestic violence incidents with a view to assessing the risk to children and young people of repeat notifications.

2.1.3 Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups

The Board has sought to highlight the needs of groups of children and young people who are potentially more vulnerable than the general population. Collaboration on a West Yorkshire basis has produced an inter agency protocol for responding to children and young people who are missing from home. A LSCB task group has been established to consider how agencies in Leeds can best meet the needs of this group and will be making recommendations to the Board in 2008/09 based on the Young Runaways Action Plan (DCSF 2008).

The safeguarding needs of children and young people who are disabled continue to be addressed in the LSCB training programme and a section on intimate care has been included in interagency procedures. The Performance Management Sub Group will review the effectiveness of protective services for this vulnerable group in 2008/09.

The LSCB is aware that the size of the looked after population in Leeds is higher than comparators and is keen to monitor the implementation of plans to gradually reduce the number over the coming years. Issues of threshold application, the effectiveness of preventive services and the quality of care provided to looked after children and young people will be key factors in this.

Children and young people who are unaccompanied asylum seekers represent a particularly vulnerable group. Children and Young People's Social Care has established a dedicated Independent Reviewing Officer post to ensure compliance with reviewing regulations relating to children who are 'looked after.' The Performance Management Sub Group will monitor outcomes for this group in 2008/09.

2.1.4 Training

The Learning and Development sub group, supported by the training and development officer has maintained and enhanced an LSCB interagency safeguarding training programme which is well attended and continues to receive positive evaluations from participants. Follow on workshops from the city wide neglect conference were held in the autumn of 2007, allowing participants to explore issues in greater detail. The Joint Area Review in 2007 identified 'the quality of, and access to, safeguarding training' as a significant strength.

Priorities for training identified for 2008/09 include: report writing for serious case reviews; the implications of the establishment of the Independent Safeguarding Authority; the introduction of new Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health guidance on the physical signs of sexual abuse; and collaborative working between adult and children's services.

2.1.5 Recruitment

Revised recruitment and selection procedures were included in the up date of interagency safeguarding procedures which have been available on the LSCB website since July 2007. In order to support their implementation a training programme run by accredited National College for School Leadership trainers was rolled out in the autumn of 2007 and regular events have been included in the LSCB training programme for 2008/09. Compliance of partner agencies with the new procedures is being monitored through an audit of responsibilities set out under s(11) of the Children Act 2004.

2.1.6 Allegations Concerning Staff

Although data about allegations against people who work with children and young people has been maintained in Leeds for a number of years, 2007/08 was the first year for which figures were required to be submitted to the DCSF. The new requirements for data collection do not allow for ready comparison with previous years but the number of allegations (80) indicates little change. The largest number of referrals were from Children & Young People's Social Care, Education and the Secure Estate. This is consistent with previous years and with the experience that allegations are more likely to be made against workers in sole charge of young people over longer periods of time. Although comparative national data has yet to be published, information shared within the region suggests that Leeds has a comparatively high number of allegations reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer, which is likely to be indicative of well embedded policies and procedures.

Allegations of physical abuse comprised 67% of the total and 90% of the allegations within the Secure Estate were linked to incidents of authorised physical intervention or restraint. Allegations of emotional abuse were exclusively against staff who were, in effect, exercising parental roles (e.g. foster carers, residential workers) and it is encouraging that these are being referred as potential child protection issues and thus subject to external scrutiny.

It has proved difficult to differentiate between 'unfounded,' 'unsubstantiated' and 'malicious' allegations. A substantial number of allegations (in excess of 50%) were unwitnessed, denied or impossible to prove or disprove, hence them being 'unsubstantiated.'

2.1.7 Children and Young People who are Privately Fostered

Since June 2007 considerable work has been undertaken to raise the private fostering profile with numerous briefings to a wide range of people and organisations. Publicity material, including posters and leaflets on private fostering for staff, private foster carers and parents has been produced and disseminated widely. Further work is needed to identify private fostering arrangements not listed and to record any information collected accurately on Children & Young people's Social Care's electronic recording system. A better analysis of data is required as is the need to improve monitoring of all work undertaken in respect of private fostering.

The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005 were used as a template for the development of a three year plan to ensure minimum requirements are achieved. New procedures have been written and implemented for conducting private fostering assessments, and arrangements have been made for reviewing and monitoring of the service.

Despite this above activity numbers of identified private fostering arrangements remain very low and it is difficult to know what the actual or potential figures might be. However, it is

hoped that continued local and national awareness raising will increase notification of private fostering arrangements in the future.

Information from other Local Authorities confirms that successful publicity is better by using a “drip, drip” approach as big campaigns have not resulted in wide scale identification of private fostering arrangements.

2.1.8 Interagency Child Protection Processes

The transition from ‘Child Protection Register’ to ‘a list of children subject to a child protection plan’ was accomplished in the autumn of 2007, alongside enhanced expectations about the multi agency sharing of information prior to child protection conferences. A review of the role of conference chairs resulted in a process being implemented whereby chairs, in exceptional circumstances, can overrule a conference decision if they feel that it is not consistent with the information shared. When a decision is overruled in these circumstances a multi agency review meeting is held within one month.

2.1.9 Planning and Commissioning of Services

The Board has engaged in the formalisation of governance arrangements within Children Leeds and has established links with bodies in the city who contribute to safeguarding activity. Inputs into the annual refreshing of the Children and Young People’s Plan have contributed to ensuring that ‘safeguarding’ remains a key component.

Work is ongoing to ensure that tendering and contracting processes for services commissioned by Leeds City Council include appropriate consideration of safeguarding issues.

2.1.10 Licensing Act 2003 & Gambling Act 2006

The LSCB support team receives all licence applications and has engaged with the Licensing Authorities where concerns have been raised in relation to children and young people. A more structured approach to reviewing and monitoring all applications is to be considered in 2008/09.

2.1.11 Raising Awareness of the Need to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children and Young People

The work of the Area Safeguarding Children Groups in the 5 wedges of the city has been crucial in raising awareness amongst practitioners and first line managers about an interagency approach to children and young people grounded in ‘safeguarding and promoting welfare.’ They facilitate interagency support groups which enable specific issues to be considered (e.g. learning the lessons from serious case reviews) and allow the networking to take place which is a necessary requirement for effective inter agency collaboration.

The Third Sector sub group (voluntary, community and faith organisations) acknowledges the particular challenges faced by small independent organisations in adopting and embedding a culture of safeguarding. Work is being undertaken on a communication strategy specifically for this sector and links have been made with Leeds VOICE. A series of workshops have been run for agencies to consider the implications of the ‘duty to safeguard’ as outlined in s(11) of the Children Act 2004 and support is being provided to agencies in the completion of the LSCB self audit tool. A city wide conference for Third Sector organisations is being planned for 2008/09.

Presentations about the role of the LSCB to groups of professionals in various agencies have been delivered by the LSCB manager and to multi agency audiences through the Open Forum events in 2007.

The development of a LSCB communication strategy to widen information available to all agencies and the public is viewed as a priority for 2008/09. Work is ongoing to update the LSCB website to support this initiative.

2.1.12 Responding to Unexpected Child Deaths

Leeds played a central role in the development of a West Yorkshire protocol for responding to unexpected child deaths, with the PCT establishing a 'rapid response' service that was operational on 1 April 2008. The operation of this service will be monitored through 2008/09.

Where the deaths of children have attracted media attention, close co-operation between agencies and communications officers has ensured that press statements are drafted and agreed in a timely manner.

2.2 Ensuring the Effectiveness of Work in Leeds to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children and Young People

2.2.1 Partner Agency Compliance with Statutory Safeguarding Requirements

The Performance Management sub group has developed a self evaluation audit tool to review compliance with the requirement of 'a duty to safeguard' (s11 Children Act 2004). A phased audit process has been initiated, commencing with agencies which are represented on the Board. An initial analysis of the returns from these key agencies involved in safeguarding children and young people has been presented to the Board, indicating a high overall level of compliance overall and identifying common areas for improvement, including: the availability of information for children and young people, safer recruitment practices, initiating Common Assessments, and establishing robust information systems. The audit tool requires agencies to outline improvement plans, progress against which will be audited in 2008/09.

The second phase of the audit has engaged with Third Sector agencies, supported through workshops run by the Third Sector sub group in conjunction with the Children and Young People's Forum. Initial findings will be available in the Autumn 2008, allowing the broadening of a multi agency overview and identifying the support needs of the Third Sector.

The performance management framework has been refined and will provide a structure to collate outputs and outcomes from partner agencies and facilitate an overview of the effectiveness of safeguarding activity in Leeds. The sub group has identified priorities for 2008/09 that includes: children and young people who are 'looked after;' thresholds for assessment and intervention; safeguarding children with disabilities; and children who are missing.

2.2.2 Serious Case Reviews

In the light of the revised West Yorkshire Inter Agency Safeguarding Procedures the Board has reviewed and developed processes to undertake serious case reviews, giving particular attention to the need for appropriate independence in the role of overview report author, the composition of standing and overview panels and decision making regarding the undertaking of a review. Increased involvement by Ofsted and Government Office in monitoring and evaluating Serious Case Reviews has prompted the Board to recognise that dedicated capacity to manage the process is required within the LSCB support team.

In 2007/08 the LSCB progressed one Serious Case Review and commissioned four others, one of which has been undertaken in collaboration with the MAPPA Strategic Board. Overview reports for two reviews were received by the LSCB in July 2008, with three cases still being progressed. Partner agencies continue to contribute to reviews undertaken by other Local Safeguarding Children Boards.

A biennial review of serious case reviews in Leeds (2005 – 07) was received by the Board, identifying areas for improvement that included: communication between agencies; responding to cases of neglect; supervision of staff; undertaking assessments; and the application of thresholds.

Action plans resulting from serious case reviews are monitored by the Performance Management sub group and lessons learned considered by all sub and area groups. Dissemination of messages from reviews occurs in city wide and area events for practitioners and first line managers. In the annual review process all sub and area groups identified learning the lessons from serious case reviews as being a priority for 2008/09.

2.2.3 Child Death Overview Panel

The Board took a lead role in the development of a West Yorkshire Protocol for the collection and analysis of information about all child deaths and developed processes and procedures that enabled a system to be operational on 1 April 2008. Panel meetings occur on a monthly basis and a first annual report providing analysis and identifying trends will be available to the Board in the Autumn of 2009.

2.3 Development of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board

2.3.1 Governance Arrangements within the Children's Trust Arrangements

The Board has engaged in events arranged by Children Leeds, inputting information about the purpose, role and independence of the LSCB. A review of the Board constitution, terms of reference etc for all constituent groups has been undertaken with revisions to be received in 2008/09.

The Independent Chair of the LSCB has regular meetings with the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member in order to ensure they are briefed appropriately about relevant safeguarding issues.

2.3.2 Links with Bodies in Leeds who Contribute to Safeguarding

Representation and involvement with the other bodies such as Safer Leeds, the Integrated Strategic Commissioning Board etc has been established. Further development of these links will occur in 2008/09 to ensure effective communication and influence.

2.3.3 Participation of Children, Young People, Parents and Carers

The East Area Safeguarding Children group in conjunction with a local children's centre is piloting the establishment of a parents / carers reference group and links are being made to established participation process for children and young people in Leeds such as the Youth Council. Developing an effective participation strategy is a key task for the Board in 2008/09.

2.3.4 Organisational Structure

A review of constituent components of the Board indicates that the current structure is fit for purpose. Capacity issues remain a challenge for members in all groups, but motivation and energy levels are high. There is a commitment from staff in all partner agencies to improve safeguarding outcomes for children and young people in Leeds.

2.3.5 Resourcing the Work of the Board and the LSCB Support Team (see appendix 2)

The Board reviewed resource requirements in autumn 2007, increasing the annual budget from £157,000 to £305, 000 for 2008/09 in order to ensure compliance with the requirements for LSCBs outlined in Working Together 2006. The uplift was largely borne by Children's Services and Health partner agencies . The budget will be reviewed in the Autumn 2008 in the light of the developing understanding of the role and cost of the Board's safeguarding activities. The annual financial statement for 2007/08 indicates a slight under spend of £8,000 over the year.

The increased demands in relation to undertaking serious case reviews has resulted in changes to planned recruitment to the development worker post. A decision to include management of serious case reviews in the job role has implications for the degree of support that can be offered to small Third Sector agencies.

In establishing itself, the LSCB support team has been hampered by delays in recruitment to development, administrative and training officer (maternity leave) posts. Agency workers are being used in 2008/09 to ensure key tasks are undertaken and developed whilst recruitment processes bear fruition.

2.3.6 LSCB Business Plan 2007 – 10 (see appendix 1)

The plan was established with a high level of input from LSCB members throughout its structure. It is reviewed on a quarterly basis by all constituent groups, allowing progress to be monitored and adjustments made in accordance with changing priorities.

Bryan Gocke, LSCB Manager
31 July 2008