

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Report of the Safeguarding Working Groups

17 March 2009

Resources

Cllr Hyde (Chair)

Cllr Driver

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19 March 2009

Preventative Duty

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Background

In January 2009, the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) received a report on safeguarding in Leeds. This coincided with the publication of the latest Annual Performance Assessment (APA) for children's services in Leeds, which assessed safeguarding as 'adequate'.

Members were also informed that the Leader of Council had asked, through the Chair, that the Scrutiny Board undertake an inquiry into the safeguarding arrangements for children in Leeds.

The Board agreed to establish two working groups to focus on two key areas of safeguarding:

Resources – to consider the adequacy of current children's social work resources to meet core child protection responsibilities

Preventative Duty – to consider the universal safeguarding duty and preventative work, particularly at a wedge level.

This report presents the outcomes of the first meetings of the working groups.

Working Group Meetings

The following areas of proposed further work emerged from the discussion at the working group meetings:

Joint working

Consider the national perspective:

- Lord Laming's report – The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report (12 March 2009)
- The Secretary of State's initial response to Lord Laming's report (12 March 2009)

Resources

Consider the various stages of the journey that a child experiences from initial referral through to a potential child protection plan. Receive information about the various assessments and decision making processes, and the key staff involved.

Detailed information on resources including:

- the current position with regard to social work staff involved in front-line child protection work: eg numbers of social workers, caseload, vacancy rates, sickness rates, recruitment and retention programmes, training and development, supervision, experience levels, turnover.
- the numbers of children at risk: eg the numbers of referrals, numbers of initial and core assessments, performance against target times for assessments, number of children with a child protection plan
- budget provision for this area of work
- the involvement of key partners, eg Police and health partners in relation to resources for front-line child protection work

Consider the LGA report – Respect and protect: respect, recruitment and retention in children’s social work

Consider the findings of the audit of child protection plans for 0-4 year olds in Leeds, and the Leeds self-evaluation of issues arising from the ‘baby P’ case, and relevant action plans from the service transformation programme

Consider information about the handling of serious case reviews in Leeds, including Ofsted assessment of the reviews, and the implementation of findings from reviews

Visit a duty team

Meet with care management team staff and a core group for child protection plans

Preventative Duty

Focus on progress towards becoming a Common Assessment Framework (CAF)-led city

Receive evidence about the pilot implementation of the CAF and Budget Holding Lead Professional programme

Consider evidence on the take-up and outcomes of CAFs across the city to date, including number of CAFs undertaken, number of staff trained to undertake CAFs, spread of lead CAF professionals, examples of good practice and potential barriers to take-up

Receive evidence on the role of the voluntary, community and faith sector in contributing to the CAF programme

Meet with local Safeguarding Children Board Chairs

Conclusion

Therefore the working groups recommend that the Scrutiny Board commission further meetings of the working groups to look in more detail at the issues set out above

The working groups would report back on their findings to the full Scrutiny Board.