

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD (LSCB) 2012-2013

Relevant Board Member(s)	Councillor David Simmonds
Organisation	Local Safeguarding Children Board
Report author	Lynda Crellin, Independent Chairman - Local Safeguarding Children Board
Papers with report	Appendix 1 – Annual Report of the Local Safeguarding Children Board 2012-2013

1. HEADLINE INFORMATION

Summary	The Local Safeguarding Children Board is required to produce an annual report that comments on the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard children. Working Together to Safeguard Children (revised March 2013) requires that this report is submitted to the Leader of the Council, the local Police and Crime Commissioner, and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board. Ofsted inspection standards assess the LSCB on whether the local governance arrangements enable statutory partners to assess whether they are fulfilling their responsibilities to help, protect and care for children, and also whether this assessment leads to clear improvement priorities.
Contribution to plans and strategies	None.
Financial Cost	None.
Relevant Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Children, Young People and Learning
Ward(s) affected	N/A

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:

1. receive and note this report, the actions identified in the report that are being taken by the LSCB and its constituent agencies to improve the safeguarding of Hillingdon's children and young people, and the concerns raised about the risks to future safeguarding; and
2. ensure that the Health and Wellbeing Strategy gives a high priority to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of children and young people, and

that particular attention is given to improving support for children who experience neglect and emotional harm.

3. consider the development of a protocol between the LSCB and the Health and Wellbeing Board that clarifies how the two Boards will work together and inform each other's strategic priorities.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Safeguarding children and young people and promoting their welfare is the responsibility of everyone in Hillingdon. Failure to ensure this, puts at risk the lives of the children themselves and their future as citizens. The financial and emotional cost of this failure is well documented in the numbers of those who are not in work, who are guilty of criminal and anti social activity, and who have difficulties in parenting their own children.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications from this report, although it does highlight the potential risks to safeguarding of reduced resources.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None directly from this report.

BACKGROUND

1. The LSCB is a statutory multi agency body, established with the overall aim of monitoring, overseeing, supporting and challenging the work of all agencies with regard to their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children. It stands independently of other local bodies and its members are senior decision makers from all local agencies who work with children. LSCBs are required to produce an annual report which comments on the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard children (The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009). This is the fifth annual report under the new requirements. Working Together to Safeguard Children was updated in spring 2013, and requires that the annual report be 'submitted to the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board'. The annual report was presented to the Council's Cabinet in December 2013, and the Safer Hillingdon Partnership in February 2014.
2. The following areas are required elements of the Report (Working Together 2013):
 - A rigorous assessment of the performance and assessment of local services.
 - Identification of areas of weakness and the action being taken to address them, as well as other proposals for action.
 - Lessons from reviews undertaken within the reporting period, including Serious Case and Child Death reviews.
 - Contributions made to the LSCB by partner agencies, and details of expenditure.
3. The Board uses a variety of methods, including performance information, inspections, reports from local agencies, case reports and audits to reach its assessment. On current evidence, the Board's assessment was that safeguarding achieves a cautious 'good' against the current Ofsted standards.

4. Evidence for this is sound practice and effective multi agency communication and collaboration as evidenced by case audit and review. Operational practice in respect of children who go missing, and who are at risk of trafficking or sexual exploitation is good and Hillingdon's work with Heathrow is nationally and internationally recognised as an exemplar. Changes within the children's pathway programme and the developments of early help and single assessments should ensure improved supervision and management oversight, alongside better early identification of problems and provision of support. Other positive areas include a good multi agency training programme, effective management of allegations against staff and strong working relationships with schools. Two lay members have been appointed to the LSCB in early 2013 and the Clinical Commissioning Group has engaged well.
5. The Board has a work plan agreed across partner agencies to ensure that, so far as is possible, children are safeguarded. The work plan has five main priorities:
 - (i) Improve LSCB functioning.
 - (ii) Assess and improve operational practice.
 - (iii) Improve outcomes for children affected by key risk issues.
 - (iv) Ensure a safe workforce.
 - (v) Learn from case reviews.
6. The Board is continuing to develop its quality assurance mechanisms and has been able to use the audit work carried out for this purpose within the Council and other agencies, as well as multi-agency audits. Improving and acting on our quality assurance mechanisms remains a priority, along with better identification and action in respect of long term neglect, those affected by domestic violence and more effective engagement with children and young people.
7. There are, however, some important risks and concerns. Although the number of children on child protection plans has stabilised, the level of permanent staffing in children's social care continues to cause concern in respect of both service quality and management oversight. This situation appears to have deteriorated since the period covered in the annual report. This is being addressed as a priority by the Council.
8. Local and national evidence highlights the importance of identifying long term neglect and emotional harm, particularly in families where domestic violence, mental illness and substance misuse are features. In light of this, and reduced resources, it is critical that the early intervention services and revised pathways currently being developed in the Council are fully multi agency and target their work effectively in order both to reduce those coming into the child protection system and to facilitate swifter action if children are identified as being at risk of significant harm.
9. All agencies continue to experience dramatic change and financial constraints, and this puts at risk the available time and energy for safeguarding, both at operational and strategic level. The Coalition Government has reduced the amount of statutory guidance. It is therefore vital that all agencies maintain focus on safeguarding issues and key risk factors in their work, with professional communication and information sharing being of paramount importance.
10. A continuing major issue is the increasing number of children who experience neglect and emotional harm, particularly those experiencing domestic violence and/or who are cared for by adults with mental health or substance misuse problems. There is a shortage of services to support these children. It has been recognised locally that the spend on Child

and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is comparatively low. I understand that a review is underway and the LSCB remains keen to hear from commissioners how this problem is to be addressed.

11. Since April 2013, the Clinical Commissioning Group has been represented on the LSCB by the Executive lead and the GP lead, and their contributions have been much valued. The LSCB monitors GPs as providers through the designated nurse and LSCB health sub group.
12. The new Ofsted single inspection regime was launched in autumn 2013 and the Council services and the LSCB separately were both inspected under this new regime in December 2013. The inspection scrutinised child protection (including early help) and services for children looked after and care leavers. It included inspections of adoption and fostering services (previously stand alone) and a new element assessing the effectiveness of the LSCB. The Policy Overview Committee (POC) had also previously commissioned a review of the LSCB and this was carried out by an external consultant just before the Ofsted inspection. These reports were not yet available at the time of writing this covering report. However, Ofsted raised the issue of the independence of the LSCB as required by Working Together, and its ability to challenge local agencies. Ofsted is likely to recommend that protocols are developed to clarify the relationship between the LSCB and other bodies.