

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

Cabinet Member(s)	Councillor David Simmonds
Cabinet Portfolio(s)	Deputy Leader & Education and Children's Services
Officer Contact(s)	Paul Hewitt - Children and Young People's Services Lynda Crellin (Independent Chairman of the LSCB)
Papers with report	LSCB Annual Report

1. HEADLINE INFORMATION

Summary	<p>Presented to Cabinet, this is the Annual Report of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) for the year 2012-13.</p> <p>It is for information and gives a view on effectiveness of children's safeguarding in Hillingdon, and identifies priorities for future action and attention.</p>
Contribution to our plans and strategies	<p>This report will contribute to the Children and Young People's Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy in order to ensure that Hillingdon's children and young people are kept safe.</p>
Financial Cost	<p>The LSCB is jointly funded by LBH, NHS Hillingdon and other partners, there are no additional costs linked to this report.</p>
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Children, Young People and Learning
Ward(s) affected	All

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Note this report and takes account of its conclusions in future planning for children's services and;
2. Notes the efforts being made to secure sufficient social work and other staff in order to provide an effective quality service at all stages of the children's pathway.

Reasons for recommendation

To note the work of the Board, its conclusions on the work of Children's Services during 2012/13 and the priorities mentioned in order to ensure Children and Young people remain adequately safeguarded at all times.

Policy Overview Committee comments

The draft report was considered and noted by Children, Young People & Learning Policy Overview Committee on November 27th 2013.

The Committee welcomed what it considered to be a comprehensive and positive report. Members noted that they were encouraged by the overall assessment of safeguarding in Hillingdon being a cautious 'good' and by the examples of positive outcomes being achieved for children and families.

The Committee also welcomed the report's commitment to securing a sufficient number of social workers; increasing the retention rate of permanent staff; and reducing the Council's reliance on agency staff. A lack of stability with social workers is an issue that the Committee has long been aware of as having a detrimental impact on the Borough's looked after children and one that it has been eager to address. With this in mind, Members endorsed the report and recommendations.

Although the Committee heard that the issue of low attendance at the LSCB had been acknowledged and was being addressed by the independent chairman, it wished to place on record its view that this was unacceptable for a body overseeing the safeguarding of vulnerable children. The independent Chairman's recent letter regarding the importance of attending to all parties concerned was, therefore, commended by Members.

3. INFORMATION

Supporting Information

3.1 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 under The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This is the fourth annual report under the new requirements and the Board are required to publish this report by 1 April 2014. *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 Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board'. The annual report will be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board and to the Community Safety Partnership in February 2014, following Cabinet's consideration first.

3.2 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 and;
- Contributions made to the LSCB by partner agencies, and details of expenditure.

3.3. Summary of Findings

3.4 The Board uses a variety of methods, including performance information, inspections, reports from local agencies and case reports and audits, to reach its assessment. On current evidence, the Board's assessment is that safeguarding achieves a cautious 'good' against the current Ofsted standards.

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: 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. It is also noteworthy that there have been no serious case reviews in Hillingdon over the last year.

3.5 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

3.6 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 and those affected by domestic violence and more effective engagement with children and young people.

3.7. There are however, some important risks and concerns. Although numbers of children on child protection plan has stabilised and there are many very positive changes and enhancements recently introduced into children's social care, levels of permanent staffing in children's social care continues to cause concern in respect both of service quality and management oversight. Over recent months the anticipated placement stability has not materialised. During a recent Safeguarding practice diagnostic carried out by the Local Government Association (LGA) the lead reviewer particularly noted the impact of this on the

recruitment of both permanent and agency staff. In addition, a benchmarking exercise has found that Hillingdon's pay structure is below that of neighbouring authorities. This was acknowledged by the Council and this matter has now been addressed.

3.8. 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 by the Council are fully multi agency and target their work effectively in order both to reduce those coming into the child protection system, or to facilitate swifter action if children are identified as being at risk of significant harm.

3.9. All agencies continue to experience quite dramatic change and financial constraints, and this puts at risk the available time and energy for safeguarding, both at operational and strategic level. 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.

3.10. 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 and the LSCB remains keen to hear from commissioners how this problem is to be addressed

3.11 Similarly, there appears to be limited resources and services for Parents with learning disabilities and children with disabilities are under-represented within the cohort of children within the child protection system as a whole.

3.12 The new Ofsted single inspection regime has been launched recently and the first tranche of inspections commenced in November 2013. The inspection will scrutinise child protection (including early help) and services for children looked after and care leavers. It will include inspections of adoption and fostering services (previously stand alone) and a new element assessing the effectiveness of the LSCB. As part of the Munro report and the implementation of its recommendations locally, which are currently being reviewed by a Policy Overview Committee Working Group, an independent review of the LSCB will be taking place and the Board looks forward to contributing to that in due course.

Financial Implications

The LSCB is jointly funded by LBH, NHS Hillingdon and other partners. As such, there are no direct additional costs associated with this report.

4. EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendation?

The remit of the LSCB is to ensure that all agencies are working together effectively to keep children safe. It does this by monitoring the effectiveness of all agencies to this end, and by making recommendations for priority action. This ensures that all agencies which have a

statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (Children Act 2004) are able to carry out their functions. The Board's work is therefore critical in ensuring that children and young people in Hillingdon are safeguarded and that risks are minimised as much as possible.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

LSCB members and staff were consulted in preparation of the annual report. One of the continuing priorities for the LSCB is to engage better with children young people and their families and with staff, in developing priorities and monitoring the effectiveness of services.

5. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance notes the recommendations in the report and confirms there are no additional costs linked to this. It is noted that in 2012/13, the Council contributed £61,250 to the running costs of the LSCB.

Legal

The LSCB retains its statutory functions within Children's services and is legally compliant in constitution and membership as reflected in Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance 2013. The new guidance came into force on 15 April 2013.

This guidance covers:

- the legislative requirements and expectations on individual services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; and
- a clear framework for Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) to monitor the effectiveness of local services.

This document replaces Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010); The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (2000); and Statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 (2007).

The Children and Families Bill 2013 takes forward the coalition Government's commitments to improve services for vulnerable children and support strong families. It underpins wider reforms to ensure that all children and young people can succeed, no matter what their background.

The Bill will reform the systems for adoption, looked after children, family justice and special educational needs. It will encourage growth in the childcare sector, introduce a new system of shared parental leave and ensure children in England have a strong advocate for their rights.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL