

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2014/5

Covering Report

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REASON FOR ITEM

The Hillingdon Safeguarding Children Board has a statutory duty to publish an Annual Report on the effectiveness of child safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the Borough. Once agreed by the Board, the report is submitted each year to the Chief Executive, the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board. It is due to be considered by Cabinet in October 2015.

SUGGESTED COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

It is recommended that the Committee note the report and comment as appropriate on the suggested priorities for the current year.

INFORMATION

1. Background and context

The Committee is advised that Steve Ashley was appointed to the role of Chairman for the Adult and Children Boards on 23 April 2015 this year.

The Chairman has a clear brief to improve the functioning and effectiveness of both Boards, this process has begun and will be accelerated over the year. The delivery will be supported by a Safeguarding Hub supporting the work of both safeguarding boards.

The Chairman has put forward proposals for an Executive Board. This will consist of a small group of senior officers from each of the statutory partners; it includes the lead member for Children's Services. This will be the decision making body for the LSCB and will focus on those issues that require senior level decision making. The Executive Board will task an Operations Group that will include additional non statutory partners, members of the third sector, and those responsible for operational delivery. The Operations Group will manage the thematic sub-groups and ensure that Board priorities are being supported and driven forward.

The new Chair has been clear that the Board structure must be efficient and effective and is in place not only to hold partners to account, but to resolve those issues that are preventing or interfering with the effective safeguarding of our children. These proposals have been well supported by partner agencies. The progress of the Board will be reported at regular intervals throughout the coming year.

The attached annual report should be seen in the context of these forthcoming changes. The information below provides a summary of current children safeguarding services and the work that has been undertaken this year. It fulfils the legal requirement contained in Working Together 2013 [NB 'Working Together' was updated in March 2015 however the report criteria have not substantially changed]. The report is required to contain the following elements:

- 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.

2. Report Summary

Attached to this paper is an executive summary that provides further detail on the contents of the report. The Chairman would highlight the following issues contained within the report:

LSCB Improvement Plan

Following a grading of "requires improvement" on Board performance by Ofsted in December 2013 an improvement plan was put in place. Progress has been made against each identified area but the Board requires further work to be graded as 'good' or 'excellent'. In particular, the Board still needs to improve its levels of auditing activity and training. A performance framework has been developed but is not yet in full use.

Assessment of the quality of safeguarding

To be confident of the effectiveness of the partnership the Board requires regular data, both quantitative and qualitative. Although a start has been made on this with the agreement of the Performance Web, section 11 and school audits in the forthcoming year and a multi-agency audit programme, the Board does not have sufficient data from the reporting year to be confident of the quality of practice.

The performance of partner organisations with regard to safeguarding provides mixed assurance for the Board. The Development of a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub is positive, though further development is required to ensure that the contribution of all agencies is embedded.

Children's Social Care has achieved a degree of stability, reducing their assessment backlogs and reducing staff turnover but now needs to consolidate this progress and increase the number of permanent, employed staff.

The Hillingdon Hospital was subject to a CQC inspection during October 2014, with the report being published in February 2015. The overall rating was that the hospital "Required Improvement".

The Deputy Director of Nursing and Deputy Lead Doctor for safeguarding attended the Board in March 2015 to update on progress since the inspection. The Board was encouraged by the rapid progress at the hospital following the inspection and will continue to monitor this.

Taking the points above into account, the Board is cautious about an assessment of the effectiveness of safeguarding across the Borough. Further work is needed by both the Board and its partners before we can be assured that children and young people are as safe as they can be across the Borough.

Serious case reviews

No Serious Case Reviews were published in the year. One was completed and published in April 2015. This concerned a teaching assistant from a local secondary school who was convicted of sexual activity with a female pupil. The Board accepted the eleven recommendations made in this case and will oversee the implementation of these through the Learning and Improvement Framework.

Finance

Levels of resourcing remain confusing and are currently inequitable and insufficient to manage an effective Board. This issue will be a priority for the new Chairman.

Stephen Ashley

Independent Chairman of the Hillingdon Local Safeguarding Children Board.

24th August 2015

BACKGROUND PAPERS

LSCB Annual Report 2014/15 - Executive summary

LSCB Annual Report 2014/15