

Bath & North East Somerset Council

DECISION MAKER:	Councillor Chris Watt Lead Member Children's Service	
DATE of DECISION	On or after 1 st August 2010	E2148
TITLE:	Annual Report on the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board arrangements for Bath and North East Somerset	
WARD:	ALL	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
Appendix 1 – Review of 3 year Strategic Plan 2008 – 2011 and Annual Report and Business Plan 2010 - 2011		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 To provide an annual report in respect of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) arrangements for Bath and North East Somerset, and the individual member agencies' contribution to this. Within this, to reference the review of the 3 Year Strategic Plan and outline the Annual Report and Business Plan 2010 – 2011.
- 1.2 To provide an update in respect of national safeguarding developments and how these have been responded to locally.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To approve the report and actions being taken within the Annual Report and Business Plan's Work Programme for 2010 – 11.
- 2.2 To note the arrangements being made to compile the first new Annual Report of the LSCB, to be published in April 2011.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The LSCB is resourced by pooled contributions (in cash and in kind) from its constituent members.

4 THE REPORT

The work of Bath and North East Somerset's LSCB

4.1 Bath and North East Somerset Council has duties under the Children Act 1989 to provide services to families and children in need, including those in need of protection, and for looked after children. These duties are primarily undertaken by the Children's Service who work in partnership with other Council Services, statutory agencies and voluntary organisations to identify, assess and provide services to children in need in Bath and North East Somerset.

4.2 In recognition that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children requires effective coordination in every local area, the Children Act 2004 required each Local Authority to establish an LSCB by April 2006. The revised Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006 detailed national guidance for the establishment of and governance arrangements for LSCB's. The LSCB is the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how the relevant organisations in each local area will cooperate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in that locality, and for ensuring the effectiveness of what they do.

4.3 The LSCB and its activities are part of the wider context of Children's Trust arrangements. The work of the LSCB contributes to the wider goals of improving the wellbeing of all children. Within the wider governance arrangements its role is to ensure the effectiveness of the arrangements made by individual agencies and the wider partnership to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

4.4 Bath and North East Somerset's LSCB became operational from 1st April 2006. The Director of Children's Services delegated the role of Chair to the Divisional Director, Children, Young People and Family Support Services. The Board has been established in accordance with the legislation and guidance detailed above and is being updated in light of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010.

4.5 The work of the LSCB is taken forward through its Annual Reports and Business Plan Work Programmes. In 2008, it compiled and published a 3 Year Strategic Plan 2008 – 2011, the purpose of which was to anticipate the position of the safeguarding dimensions of Children's Service in Bath and North East Somerset in three years time, and to make plans to achieve it. Progress with this Strategic Plan has been reviewed each year and in March 2010 a Work Programme established for 2010 – 11. This is publicly accessible on the Council's website. The LSCB reviews progress with its Work Programme through its four business meetings, its annual development day and business planning processes; and its stakeholder events. An ambitious Work Programme was established for 2009/2010 and this has largely been implemented and provision made for the completion of outstanding actions.

4.6 The Work Programme for 2010/11 has detailed actions to achieve seven key outcomes:

- Protection from violence, maltreatment, neglect and sexual exploitation.
- Children are protected from accidental injury and death.
- Children feel safe from bullying and discrimination.
- Children feel safe from crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school.
- Children have security, stability and are cared for.
- The LSCB works effectively and efficiently and influences other strategic partnerships.
- Training – to ensure that all staff are sufficiently trained in safeguarding awareness to play their part in protecting children from the risk of significant harm.

4.7 There are robust arrangements in place for the provision of inter-agency safeguarding training – with the Children’s Service, Health and the Police jointly funding a training coordinator post and training courses – and each member agency takes responsibility for the provision of any single agency training to supplement this. A sub group of the LSCB, the Training Management Committee, coordinates this work: undertakes an annual audit of training needs, and publishes an annual training programme. Work is progressing to systematically evaluate the impact of this training upon staff practice and performance, and upon outcomes for children and families.

4.8 Robust arrangements are in place for the review and quality assurance of all child protection work through the multi-agency Safeguarding Children Sub Committee of the LSCB. The Sub Committee provides six monthly reports to the Board. Arrangements are also made for child protection performance reports to be presented to this Panel and the Partnership Board for Health and Wellbeing.

4.9 The LSCB has operated as an effective partnership during the past year. There has been good and consistent commitment from all member agencies: the sub group and lead groups have taken forward work in respect of the five aims of the staying safe outcomes: robust links have been maintained with other partnerships and stakeholders: the LSCB has contributed to the refresh of the Children and Young People’s Plan: and continues to work well across Local Authority boundaries – taking the lead in further development of the South West Shared Procedures and chairing the West of England Child Death Review Panel.

4.10 The LSCB has anticipated, and responded to Government guidance and the revisions to Working Together to Safeguard Children (see below) – has strengthened its Terms of Reference: appointed an interim Independent Chair (and will be recruiting on a permanent basis): the Director of Children’s Service is now a core member of the Board: has started work to review the overall structure of the LSCB and its sub groups to achieve effective arrangements and active participation: is making arrangements for the Lead Member Children’s Service to join the Board as a participating observer and to recruit and support 2 lay members who will contribute to greater public scrutiny of the Board’s activities: and will continuously review the effectiveness of the governance arrangements with the Children’s Trust Board.

4.11 Working in the field of safeguarding children is challenging and requires the deployment of suitably qualified, skilled, experienced and committed front line staff and managers who are well supported, supervised, trained and valued at every level within their organisation; work effectively with other professionals and families; and are respected by and have the trust of local communities and the public. The recruitment and retention of such staff, especially within Children's Social Care and key areas of Health and the Police, is a major challenge. This is recognized at a national level with provision made with the Government's Response and Action Plan following Lord Laming's Report. The immediacy of this challenge must not be overlooked. The recruitment and retention of front line social workers and team managers has been particularly pressing in Bath and North East Somerset. A local strategy successfully addressed this during the first half of 2010 but previously gaps meant that resources were stretched.

4.12 Effective safeguarding arrangements are built around the consistent provision and effective deployment of resources by the Council and its partner agencies. The Council and its partner agencies must continuously review the resources they allocate to safeguarding services to ensure that these are sufficient to fulfil their statutory duty to cooperate to safeguard children and young people. The Council has made extra provision for investment in front line staff involved in safeguarding work and the appointment of an Independent Chair and enhanced quality assurance and challenge arrangements. The Children's Trust Board must also make provision for this within its annual assessments of local need.

The National Context

4.13 At the time of the last annual report, the Government had just published its Response and Action Plan following the publication (in March 2009) of Lord Laming's 'The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report'. The July 2009 report summarised the key points and actions arising from the Laming Report and the Government's Response. Since then, the following have been completed:-

- The Government consulted upon and then revised the core statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children – and published this in early 2010.
- Within this, the Government strengthened policy and practice in relation to Serious Case Reviews by revising Chapter 8 of Working Together – and this was published in advance. Ofsted has revised the evaluation framework for Serious Case Reviews, with a sharper focus on learning. The Government has just advised that henceforth Serious Case Review Overview reports will be published.
- Ofsted has introduced a framework for new annual inspections of child protection in Local Authority Children's Services – inspecting contact, referral and assessment arrangements in Social Care Services. (The first annual inspection in Bath and North East Somerset was conducted in May 2010).
- Ofsted has introduced a rolling programme of inspections of safeguarding and looked after children arrangements, on a 3 year cycle.

- Ofsted is applying a new school inspection framework with a stronger focus on safeguarding.
- The Care Quality Commission Annual Health Check of all NHS Trusts in England includes assessing the quality of safeguarding arrangements against core standards criteria.
- The Government has published a new set of national indicators.
- A new leadership programme for Directors of Children's Services has been introduced.
- The Social Work Taskforce has reported back to Government with recommendations for measures to improve capacity in the Social Work Taskforce.

4.14 The Government has also introduced a duty for the LSCB to compile and publish an annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area. This report should provide an assessment of the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, set against a comprehensive analysis of the local area safeguarding context. It should recognise achievements and the progress that has been made in the local authority area as well as providing a realistic assessment of the challenges that still remain.

4.15 The report should demonstrate the extent to which the functions of the LSCB as set out in Working Together are being effectively discharged. This should include assessments of policies and procedures to keep children safe, including:

- the policies and procedures for the safe recruitment of frontline staff;
- an assessment of single and inter-agency training on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to meet the local needs;
- lessons learnt about the prevention of future child deaths which have been identified by the Child Death Overview Panel; and
- progress on priority issues (for example, child trafficking, sexual exploitation and domestic violence).

4.16 Annual reports should also include a clear account of progress that has been made in implementing actions from individual Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) completed during the year in question, plans to evaluate the impact of these actions and to monitor how these improvements are being sustained over time. This also applies to SCRs commissioned in previous years where any actions remained outstanding at the start of the reporting year. Where SCRs have been commissioned but not completed the annual report should note action already taken to learn lessons arising from the relevant cases. Common themes and recurring recommendations may be addressed together but the report must be clear on action taken in response to individual SCRs.

4.17 The report should provide robust challenge to the work of the Children's Trust Board in driving improvements in the safeguarding of children and young people and in promoting their welfare.

The LSCB must send a copy of the annual report to the Children's Trust Board. The Children's Trust Board in turn will be expected to respond to reports through the local Children and Young People's Plan. In preparing the Children and Young

People's Plan, Children's Trust Boards will be expected to draw upon the advice from and the findings in the LSCB annual report, and show how they intend to respond to the issues raised.

This requirement will come into force from 1 April 2010. This will mean that a LSCB must publish its first report by 1 April 2011. Children's Trust Boards must produce a Children and Young People's Plan by 1 April 2011. The LSCB and the Children's Trust Board, within the parameters set by legislation, should work together to ensure that the LSCB annual report is developed in time so that it can be properly considered and effectively utilised by the Children's Trust Board.

Summary and conclusions

- 4.18 The LSCB has made clear plans and provision for progressing its Strategic Plan, and an ambitious Work Programme for delivering this in 2010/11. Its capacity will be stretched to fulfil the very full local and national agenda. This is at the heart of proposals to review the existing arrangements for the Board. The Work Programme has been developed in anticipation of that national agenda as well as local need, and the LSCB has undertaken preparatory work to position itself to implement the recommendations requiring local actions. Local arrangements have been made to implement the revisions to Working Together to Safeguard Children. The new inspection frameworks has brought a sharper focus on front line practice and how agencies work together. All member agencies will need to assess how they resource their safeguarding activities and services.
- 4.19 National developments have refocused attention on child protection activity within the wider staying safe remit. The Baby Peter case, lessons from other Serious Case Reviews, and local experience have all emphasised the importance of the quality of front line practice and decision making, consultation and supervision arrangements and how agencies work together – and the arrangements that are in place to quality assure these and achieve quality improvement. This LSCB must ensure that robust arrangements are in place across all agencies – and will challenge them to evidence this.
- 4.20 Arrangements are in place to review the governance arrangements with the Children's Trust Board and to ensure that the two way accountability for safeguarding children is robustly implemented. The compilation and use of the Annual Report will underpin this. A first draft of the Report will be presented to the LSCB and then the Children's Trust Board in September 2010. Arranements have been made for the draft report to be presented to the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Panel in November 2010.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance. These issues are identified within the Service Risk Register.

The risks associated with ensuring effective safeguarding arrangements are assessed and managed by the LSCB and its constituent members.

6 EQUALITIES

6.1 Promoting diversity and supporting individual identity and recognising and valuing the racial and cultural diversity of Bath and North East Somerset's communities and a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice are values underpinning the work of the LSCB.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 All members of the LSCB and its sub groups and lead groups have been engaged in the review of the 3 Year Strategic Plan and the compilation of the Annual Report and Business Plan, and its Work Programme for 2010-11.

7.2 Staff from all member agencies, and from the statutory, voluntary and community sector working with children and families, and young people and carers, have been consulted via the LSCB's stakeholder event.

8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

8.1 Social Inclusion; Young People; Human Rights.

9 ADVICE SOUGHT

9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Council Solicitor) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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Background papers	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Reports of the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board on the effectiveness of the LSCB arrangements in Bath and North East Somerset – 21st July 2008 and 20th July 20092. Reports for Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 18th May 2009 – Safeguarding Children Performance Report
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	