

TITLE OF REPORT: **Safeguarding Children Unit Annual Report and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report 2018/19**

REPORT OF: **Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning**

Purpose of the Report

1. This report seeks Cabinet approval and endorsement of the Safeguarding Children Unit Annual Report and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report 2018/19 in respect of managing allegations against adults who work with children.

Background

2. These annual reports have been produced to meet statutory requirements and are presented together to illustrate the breadth of the work and activity undertaken within the Children's Safeguarding Children unit, within which the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer sits.
3. The annual reports provide a look back at key activity in 2018/19, updating on progress from previous years actions and setting out plans for progress in the current year.

Proposal

4. A summary of the key issues from each document is outlined below.
5. **Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report**

The Statutory Guidance for Independent Reviewing Officers (2010) sets a clear framework for the production of an annual report for members, senior officers and partners in relation to their work. The Safeguarding Children Unit annual report 2018/19 outlines the performance of the service, the context and requirements within which it operates, the effectiveness and impact of the service and planned developments in 2019/20.

The service continues to meet its core business of ensuring Child Protection and Looked After Children (LAC) reviews are held in a timely manner with both figures in 2018/19 being above national average and statistical neighbours. 99.1% of LAC and 100% of child protection reviews were held within statutory timescales.

The report sets out over the year progress was made in the following areas:

- A review of the structure of the Safeguarding Children Unit was completed and managerial posts created from the existing structure to drive forward performance and increase the robustness of challenge within the authority.
- Further work has been undertaken to enhance the effectiveness of the role of the IRO through improved evidence of challenge via the dispute resolution process.
- The Voice of the Child has been enhanced through increasing visits.

6. All the above have continued to be worked on during 2018/19 and the following overall priorities were identified:

- Priority 1 - Ensuring effectiveness of IRO Role.
- Priority 2 - Ensuring staff are suitably skilled, qualified and have the capacity to perform the duties of the role effectively.
- Priority 3 - Ensuring the voice of the child is heard, listened to and acted upon.

The report includes a comprehensive action plan for how the unit is implementing these priorities and is focused on the areas outlined for further development as identified by Ofsted in March 2019; the development of plans and effective challenge.

7. **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report 2018/19 in respect of managing allegations against adults who work with children**

It remains a requirement of Working Together 2018 that Local Authorities should have a designated officer (LADO) whose role is to oversee the safe and effective management of allegations against individuals who work with children, whether they are employed or working in a voluntary capacity and to ensure that allegations against people who work with children are not dealt with in isolation.

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report 2018/19 sets out the referral data for allegations against professionals and non-professionals working with children, provides profiling analysis of allegations made in Gateshead and an update of the interventions and development work completed since the previous report.

There is a decrease in the number of enquiries received by the LADO. However, this figure is more in line with the data from previous years. A new performance tracking system has been initiated which will allow the easier collection of data and provide more confidence in the figures.

The data in relation to referrals and strategy meetings held has remained fairly consistent.

In addition to core business of managing LADO enquiries and cases, the LADO has also been involved in running training sessions and awareness raising activities, chairing child protection conferences as part of their IRO role and responded to a number of Freedom of Information requests.

Recommendations

8. It is recommended that Cabinet endorses the following reports:

- a) Safeguarding Children Unit Annual Report 2018/19 as set out in appendix 2.

- b) Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report 2018/19 as set out in appendix 3.

For the following reasons:

- (i) To ensure the Council is meeting its statutory duties.
- (ii) To continue to ensure that the needs of children, young people and families continue to be met.

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APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. The reports demonstrate work undertaken within the service to support the councils Thrive agenda, by ensuring we protect the vulnerable members of our society by ensuring safeguarding services are meeting statutory requirements.
2. The reports are produced to meet statutory requirements. The Independent Reviewing Officers Handbook (2010) sets a clear framework for the production of an annual report for members, senior officers and partners in relation to their work. In addition it remains a requirement of Working Together 2018 that Local Authorities should have a designated officer (LADO) whose role is to oversee and report on the safe and effective management of allegations against individuals who work with children, whether they are employed or working in a voluntary capacity and to ensure that allegations against people who work with children are not dealt with in isolation.

Background

3. The Council and its partners remain engaged in the delivery of a wide range of activity to protect children and young people. There is a statutory duty to publish annual reports of the activities of the Safeguarding Children Unit and LADO. All such reports are presented here for endorsement.

Consultation

4. Reports have been shared with Children and Young People Portfolio Holders and will be shared with Safeguarding Children Board via its Executive for information.

Alternative Options

5. The Council must produce these annual reports for consideration, therefore no alternatives to these reports are being presented.

Implications of Recommended Option

6. **Resources:**
 - a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms there are no financial implications as a result of these reports.
 - b) **Human Resources Implications** – There are no specific implications arising from these reports.
 - c) **Property Implications** - There are no specific implications arising from these reports.
7. **Risk Management Implication** - The production and reporting of activity via the annual reports form part of control measures for Care, Wellbeing and Learning and partners via the Children's Safeguarding Board to ensure the Council is meeting statutory obligations.

8. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – There are no specific implications arising from these reports.
9. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no specific implications arising from these reports.
10. **Health Implications** – There are no specific implications arising from these reports.
11. **Sustainability Implications** - There are no specific implications arising from these reports.
12. **Human Rights Implications** - Independent advocacy is also used during the safeguarding process to ensure service users have an independent voice where appropriate.
13. **Area and Ward Implications** – Services cover the whole Gateshead area, so there are no ward specific implications