

TITLE OF REPORT: Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report and Business Plan

REPORT OF: Interim Strategic Director, Care, Wellbeing and Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has a statutory requirement to publish an annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area. The findings of the annual report are then used to determine safeguarding priorities for the LSCB and partner agencies for the following financial year.

The report and priorities are considered each year at OSC to inform the committee of arrangements in place to safeguard children in Gateshead.

Background

1. The Children Act 2004 requires local authorities to have in place a LSCB. The LSCB is the principle mechanism for agreeing how relevant organisations in the local area will cooperate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the area and for ensuring the effectiveness of the arrangements. Gateshead has had a LSCB since 2005. It publishes an annual report and business plan which is reviewed and updated annually. The report contains details of the work undertaken by the Board, information of child protection activity and the priorities for the coming year.
2. Gateshead LSCB was independently by Gary Hetherington in 2015-2016 and a recruitment exercise is now underway to appoint a new independent chair in line with statutory requirements. This appointment will strengthen the Board's scrutiny of arrangements and partner agencies in Gateshead.

Performance and activity in 2015-2016

3. The full annual report for 2015-2016 is provided as an appendix to this report. A summary document entitled "how safe are children in Gateshead?" will also be shared with all school councils in Gateshead and other groups of young people.
4. In 2015-2016:
 - The Board made progress against its own priorities of **Leadership**, **Challenge**, and **Learning**. This included hosting a sub-regional conference to raise awareness and strengthen understanding of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), strengthening engagement with young people, receiving reports and challenging key areas of practice,

strengthening the Learning & Improvement Framework, developing revised Neglect Guidance and strengthening links with schools.

- The LSCB was subject to an inspection by Ofsted at the same times as Gateshead Council. Whilst the inspection found that the LSCB requires improvement to be good, a number of positives were noted and the Board was found to fulfil its statutory responsibilities.
 - The LSCB carried out a detailed inquiry about CSE to scope the scale of the issue locally and reassure the Board that current practice kept children and young people safe. We also arranged for training to be delivered in schools directly to young people and trained over 700 taxi drivers licensed by Gateshead Council to help them to understand their responsibilities to vulnerable passengers and how to spot the signs of CSE
 - The Board and partners continued to learn from high profile cases in other areas
 - The LSCB Missing, Sexually Exploited and Trafficked Group (MSET) discussed the cases of 43 children and young people who were reported missing from home/care and/or were at risk from CSE. Multi-agency actions were set and diversion plans established to try to reduce the risks
 - The Gateshead Local Child Death Review Sub Group was notified of the deaths of nine children in 2015-2016. The sub group reviews the death of every child resident in Gateshead at the time of their death and disseminates any relevant learning. The sub group works closely with similar groups in Sunderland and South Tyneside and feeds into the South of Tyne and Wearside Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) to review all child deaths in the sub region and establish whether there are any overall lessons to learn. The CDOP provides an annual report to each LSCB
 - The LSCB continued to consider ways to strengthen links with local communities and appointed three lay members (jointly with the Safeguarding Adults Board), a representative from the Jewish Community and a representative from the Diversity Forum
 - The LSCB continued to offer a number of interactive on-line e-learning modules to complement the existing face-to-face training package. These modules are available to access free of charge and cover areas such as basic child protection, the impact of domestic abuse, self-harm and CSE. Members are welcome to access the modules via the LSCB website to strengthen their knowledge base
5. The annual report also details partner agency performance in relation to safeguarding. In addition to the very positive inspection of Gateshead Council in 2015-2016 a number of other partners were also inspected by the relevant inspectorates. Overall arrangements were judged to be very effective. A number of partner agencies strengthened internal arrangements and also links with other partners to improve information sharing and understanding of risk. Work was also undertaken to receive and support 53 Syrian refugees, 17 of which were children and young people of school age. Partners were able to demonstrate their activity in relation to the LSCB's priorities of **Leadership**, **Challenge** and **Learning**, for example on health partner set out how named professionals challenged professionals within adult-facing departments to consider the needs of children within the family when an adult attends with a

high risk presentation. Partner agencies were also able to reassure the LSCB via the annual Section 11 audit that suitable arrangements were in place to safeguard children and appropriate consideration was given to statutory requirements.

6. The annual report also contains multi-agency and single agency performance data. Key issues to note include:
 - An increase in the number of children made subject to child protection plans than in previous years (a 5% increase at year end and this has continued to rise into 2016-2017)
 - A large increase (38%) in formal child protection enquiries and also an increase in full child in need assessments. Despite this, compliance with timescales remains high
 - Continuing high numbers of unborn babies subject to formal child protection plans compared to the rest of the country. This was challenged by Ofsted and the Board are satisfied that this is as a result of early referral and multi-agency risk assessments when concerns are identified, whereas other areas wait until much later in the pregnancy before carrying out pre-birth assessments
 - Low re-referral rates to Children's Social Care, which would suggest that families are receiving the correct level of service
 - Higher than expected numbers of children being admitted to hospital for self-harm
 - A large increase in the number of permanent exclusions from our schools

7. Our data reinforces the increasing demands on statutory services. Workloads across the system as a whole continue to increase, often against a backdrop of cuts to budgets and reduced capacity. OSC members will be aware that Early Help services in the borough are being reviewed and the LSCB will scrutinise and challenge these arrangements where necessary. Effective preventative and Early Help services across the system as a whole are vital to keep children and young people safe and to enable them to reach their full potential. Effective early intervention will enable agencies in Gateshead to tackle problems for our children and families before they become more difficult to reverse

Priorities for 2016-2017 and beyond

8. In previous years, the LSCB has produced a combined annual report and business plan; however since 2013-2014 the Board agreed the need for a longer term strategy to set out the strategic direction and key priorities of the LSCB together with an annual action plan. In order to maximise efficiency around the development of priorities, and to reinforce the protocol with the Children's Trust Board, the Board developed three year Business Plan (2014-2017) which emphasises the collective role of the LSCB membership.

9. The 2014-2017 Business Plan focuses on the specific role and remit of the LSCB in ensuring the welfare of children is safeguarded and protected, as set out in *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2015) and the Children Act 2004. The Business Plan emphasises the role of the LSCB in leading the safeguarding agenda, in challenging the work of partner organisations and in

committing to an approach which learns lessons, embeds good practice and which is continually influenced by the views of children and young people.

10. The Business Plan is based on two strategic outcomes (**protecting vulnerable children** and **preventing harm**) and three strategic business priorities (**leadership, challenge, and learning**). The focus will remain on these priorities and outcomes in 2016-2017 with some specific actions for the Board and partners to achieve.
11. The year two (2016-2017) action plan is provided as an appendix to this document.
12. In 2016-2017, in relation to **preventing harm** we will:
 - Undertake task and finish work in relation to the increase in the numbers of permanent exclusions in our schools
 - Receive the updated “Thresholds/Indicators of Need” document from Children’s Social Care and monitor the implementation
 - Consider developing a locality risk assessment model to understand where and what the priority need is
13. In relation to **protecting vulnerable children** we will:
 - Undertake task and finish work on the issue of self-harm in Gateshead to understand the data and ensure appropriate support is in place for young people who do self-harm
 - Receive reports on areas such as CSE and “legal highs” to understand the impact of operational practice
 - Continue to lead on the local implementation of the national Child Protection-Information Sharing project (CP-IS)
14. In relation to **leadership** we will do the following:
 - Strengthen links with the local community through work with lay members and community representatives
 - Receive reports on the re-design of Early Help services and consider the impact on protecting vulnerable children and preventing harm
 - Work with other partnerships to strengthen links and improve the visibility of the LSCB
 - Carry out specific pieces of work to improve engagement with young people
15. In relation to **challenge** we will:
 - Receive and challenge single agency audits of safeguarding practice from our partners
 - Develop and implement an Effectiveness Framework
 - Receive the outcome of the Families OSC review of child protection and respond as appropriate

16. And, in relation to **learning**, we will:

- Learn from what young people are telling us and use the findings to identify future themes for task and finish work
- Review the learning from the national review of LSCBs and develop an action plan to take forward local areas for development as appropriate
- Continue to review cases where there are lessons to be learned through the Learning and Improvement Sub Group (and Serious Case Review Panel when necessary)
- Review processes to understand the impact of our training offer and maintain a focus on delivering high quality training that meets demand
- Implement and embed the findings and recommendations from inspections/peer reviews as they arise and cascade the learning across partner agencies

17. Families OSC members may be aware that the Government commissioned a national review of LSCBs later in 2015 and this was published in June 2016 (the Wood Report). This report recommends a number of changes to multi-agency strategic safeguarding arrangements and the Government have agreed in principle. However, there currently are no clear indications of timescales or what this will mean in relating and LSCBs and partners are awaiting further information about when legislative changes will take place and what the requirements will be. Information will be shared with key partners and stakeholders as and when possible.

Recommendation

18. It is recommended that the Families OSC note LSCB and partner agency performance for 2015-2016 and note and endorse the proposed priorities. It is also recommended that Families OSC agree to receive updates in relation to any proposed changes to strategic arrangements as a consequence of the Wood Report.

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