

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>Meeting date:</b>	<b>13 October 2016</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) Annual Report 2015/16 Herefordshire Safeguarding Adult Board (HSAB) Annual Report 2015/16</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Cabinet member children and young people's wellbeing</b>

## **Classification**

Open

## **Key decision**

This is not a key decision.

## **Wards affected**

Countywide

## **Purpose**

To report on the annual reports of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) and Herefordshire Safeguarding Adult Board (HSAB), which address the work of multi-agency partners in Herefordshire in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults within the county, including achievements and areas for improvement, and priorities identified for 2016/17.

## **Recommendation(s)**

### **THAT:**

- a) the annual reports and effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements for children, young people and vulnerable adults in Herefordshire as assessed by the boards be noted;**
- b) the strategic priorities identified by the board be used to inform future decision making by the council; and**
- c) any further areas that the safeguarding boards should be focusing attention upon to provide challenge regarding the council's functions to safeguard vulnerable groups be identified.**

## **Alternative options**

1. This report is to inform and enable cabinet to consider the HSCB and HSAB annual reports. Cabinet could therefore suggest alternative activities or priorities for consideration by either board.

## **Reasons for recommendations**

2. To ensure cabinet are aware of the work of the boards and future priorities, and have the opportunity to ensure the compatibility of any future council activity with those ongoing priorities.

## **Key considerations**

3. The information provided below in relation to the two safeguarding boards' annual reports should be considered within the context of safeguarding within Herefordshire.
4. From a children and young person's perspective the impression can be one, influenced perhaps by ongoing national coverage, that abuse is perpetrated by 'strangers', or is historic in nature. Although this is correct to an extent, the reality both in Herefordshire and elsewhere is that it is very much a current and ongoing problem, and that the vast majority of child protection issues happen within the family, and in the child's home. It is also important to recognise that the abuse can take many forms, it is not only physical and sexual abuse that the board and agencies seek to protect children from, emotional abuse and serious neglect is a very real problem in the county, as it is across the country. These forms of abuse can provide particular challenges for professionals to recognise, respond to and deal with, but can be as damaging to the child or young person's long term health and wellbeing as better recognised and understood forms of abuse. It is of note that emotional abuse and neglect are the main reasons for children being made subject of a child protection plan. Additionally, children and young people find themselves increasingly exposed to, and at risk from, harmful individuals and material as a result of the accessibility of the internet and social media at a younger and younger age. This undoubtedly is contributing to the increase in the number of children at risk of child sexual exploitation being identified in Herefordshire.
5. From an adult perspective, the introduction of the Care Act 2014 has necessitated a new approach to working with adults at risk, with professionals having to balance the need to protect vulnerable people with the recognition that individuals are entitled to make unwise choices. The Act has also placed domestic abuse firmly as a safeguarding matter. Financial abuse is an ongoing risk to our more vulnerable

Herefordshire residents particularly the elderly, and with an increasingly elderly population the challenges for partners involved in keeping residents safe from such abuse is likely to grow. In addition to these types of abuse which we know take place within the county, emerging threats such as modern slavery require a co-ordinated and multi-agency response, and these threats are particularly prevalent in areas with significant numbers of migrant workers, such as Herefordshire.

6. The work of both boards is a critical element of the ongoing challenge to keep the most vulnerable members of our Herefordshire communities safe from harm. It is well known to both the boards and the various partner agencies involved in the safeguarding of these children, young people and vulnerable adults that a number do regrettably come to serious harm. As such the importance of effective boards and the effective coordination of high quality services, as reflected in the annual reports should be recognised.

### **HSCB annual report 2015/16**

7. The HSCB annual report details a number of developments in 2015/16 within the priorities set for that period. Key developments, impact and continuing areas for development are detailed below.
8. Priority 1 – HSCB is a truly effective agent for change and has a real impact for children and young people.
  - a. Assessment – Mainly achieved, with effective delivery of multi-agency training the ongoing area of work.
9. During the year HSCB established a child sexual exploitation (CSE) sub-group in order to drive improvements in our collective response to this threat within Herefordshire. Further details of this work are provided below.
10. The performance information and quality assurance processes established by the board have been used directly to highlight areas for improvement then drive change which delivers better outcomes for children. An example of this was in relation to the high level of children on child protection plans. In response to this the board commissioned work which challenged decision making, the planning and review process and the effectiveness of the planning. This has led directly to a reduction in the number of children on such plans, a greater focus on early help and intervention for the child or young person, and greater opportunity to give the appropriate attention to those at greatest risk in order to keep them safe. There is however recognition that work remains within this area, and this is reflected in the 2016/18 priorities (see below).
11. Priority 2 – To improve the recognition and response to child sexual exploitation (CSE) and missing children and young people.
  - a. Assessment – Steady progress, but with areas for improvement remaining, particularly in relation to children who go missing, and appropriate support for those who have been subject of CSE.
12. This has led directly to clear pathways, guidance and tools to support recognition, referral and response to CSE. Extensive work has taken place over the year to raise awareness of CSE, including a multi-agency conference in March 2016, close work with the licencing authorities, and delivering key messages to children and young people. This has in turn led to an increase in the identification of cases. Further, as a result of challenge from the board, parents and children are more involved in the development of plans to keep them safe when risk is identified. The Board recognises

that there remain areas for improvement in relation to our response to CSE in Herefordshire, for example to ensure return home interviews of missing children are of good quality, and children who have experienced CSE receive appropriate post abuse support, and as such it continues to be a priority area for the Board in 2016/18.

13. Priority 3 – To support increased resilience in individuals, families and communities.
  - a. Assessment – Some progress. Future focus must now be on the early help services effectively identifying needs and concerns relating to children and families, and services then address those needs through effective planning and interventions.
14. This priority area of the Board aligns with a key priority within Herefordshire's Children and Young People's Plan, and covers the whole spectrum of provision of services to children and families. The aim is always to improve the early identification and response to critical issues affecting children and young people's development.
15. In support of this the Board has led the development and promotion of the "Levels of Need" document in Herefordshire, which acts as a guide to support professional judgement when considering help that children and families need and when to refer concerns.
16. The Board has also both supported and challenged the development of the Early Help Strategy and offer, which is a priority in Herefordshire's Children and Young People's Plan and is led by the Children and Young People's Partnership.
17. Our plan for the year 2015-16 set out some key areas for improvement, for example a reduction in referral and re-referral rates to children's social care. Whilst re-referrals have reduced compared to the previous year, indicating positive outcomes for children following first referral, they are still high and focus will remain on this area. Specifically HSCB will be working to ensure that effective decision making is taking place at the early stage of identification of needs.
18. Priority 4 – To safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people who are abused and/or neglected.
  - a. Assessment – Some progress, with continuing area of focus being the quality and effectiveness of decision making and partnership engagement within the child protection process, and that the needs of children and young people are identified and addressed earlier, to prevent them being drawn into the child protection system.
19. Details of HSCB scrutiny of a particular aspect of the child protection process has been provided above, and one of the priority areas for the HSCB for 2016/17 is assuring itself that the child's 'journey' through the child protection process results in positive outcomes for the child. The Board will continue to scrutinise this area and this will include Board members observing child protection conferences to establish the quality of multi-agency working to safeguard children.
20. HSCB will also be working to ensure that:
  - The process and decision making at the initial stages of the child protection process (strategy meetings/ section 47 investigations) comply with statutory guidance, and the decisions are consistent with the levels of need in Herefordshire.
  - The child protection planning and review process (child protection conferences/ core groups) are truly multi-agency and consistent with guidance and procedures.

- Child protection plans are effective in reducing/ eradicating the risk of significant harm to children.

21. Additionally, Members will note the inclusion of the voice of children and young people within the annual report, and the HSCB are committed to ensuring this is at the centre of understanding the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding in the county.

### **Priorities for 2016/18**

22. Reflecting on the achievements through 2015-16, and considering data and other evidence alongside the need to ensure continuous improvement, the HSCB has set four priorities for 2016-18. These priorities will ensure focus is maintained on the key areas identified in order to ensure children and young people in Herefordshire are and remain safe, and are detailed below:

- The Board will continue to seek to ensure best practice in recognising and responding to CSE, expecting good intelligence reporting to allow disruption of CSE activity, and that practitioners utilise the guidance and tools available to help recognise and respond to CSE concerns.
- The board will concentrate on the child's journey through the child protection process, to seek assurance that effective planning and intervention takes place with children and families to reduce risk. This will be considered alongside early help services and checking that help and support is continuous through "step up" and "step down" services.

23. Linked to this the HSCB will be looking in 2016/17 at the early help offer in Herefordshire, that needs are identified and effectively responded to.

24. A further area of priority focus in 2016/17 will be the issue of childhood neglect, and ensuring there is an effective multi-agency childhood neglect strategy in place.

### **HSAB annual report 2015/16**

25. HSAB identified four priorities for the 2015/16 period. These priorities, together with examples of progress made against them and continuing areas for development are detailed below.

26. Priority 1 - Partnership working

- a. Assessment – Steady progress since the Adult Safeguarding Board was placed on a statutory footing in April 2015, with future focus being on embedding the engagement of all partner agencies within Herefordshire with the Board, and promoting the importance of the adult safeguarding agenda amongst all partners.

27. This period saw adult safeguarding boards placed on a statutory footing for the first time. HSAB took this opportunity to review its meeting structure, streamline membership, and reduce meeting frequency in order to allow greater time to be spent by partners on making meaningful progress against the priorities set.

28. Herefordshire Council, in conjunction with the CCG, Police, Healthwatch and CQC, has introduced a new approach to the quality assurance of care and support services offered in the county. The new quality assurance framework is designed to ensure

that local services provide the appropriate care and support that individual adult's need. Continued work is now required to embed that assurance framework.

29. Priority 2 - Prevention and protection

- a. Assessment – Steady progress, with the need to place further emphasis on preventing abuse across the county.

30. The structure and response of the advice and referral team has been reviewed, and there has been great emphasis on the promotion of 'making safeguarding personal' and the new Deprivation of Liberty standards within our workforce (further details below).

31. The work of the board and partner agencies within Herefordshire can be seen to be improving the proportion of those people who use services and feel safe and secure as a result. A government commissioned national survey showed that in Herefordshire this proportion rose from 83.90% in 2014/15 to 88.00% in 2015/16, which provides positive evidence of the impact of the changes being implemented.

32. Priority 3 - Communications and engagement

- a. Assessment – Some progress, evidenced by the work detailed below, further work remains in relation to ensuring that we are consistently capturing the voice of the service user, and that others fully understand the work of the board.

33. The board has worked with other boards in the region to develop shared safeguarding policies and procedures. These have been adopted by the board and shared with providers and partners in order to promote a shared and consistent approach to safeguarding across Herefordshire.

34. The board has supported work to raise awareness and understanding of the law relating to mental capacity and deprivation of liberty. This has impacted significantly on the number of requests for assessment, with an increase seen, so ensuring those who most need assessment and advocacy now have access to them.

35. In February 2016 a joint communications group was established across, HSAB, HSCB and the Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership. It is important that we now develop this group to ensure a co-ordinated and effective approach to our communications across the three partnerships.

36. Priority 4 - Operational effectiveness

- a. Assessment – Steady progress, with a particular area for future work being to embed the 'making safeguarding personal' approach across Herefordshire to the extent it has been achieved by the Local Authority, supported by the development of multi-agency training for adult safeguarding.

37. During 2015/16 HSAB gave particular focus to making safeguarding personal (MSP), this being the process by which we put the adult at the centre of our work. This included the council launching an intensive training programme for staff. A review of the impact of this work conducted in April 2016 identified that as a result there was an increased proportion of service users and their representatives who's views had been sought and considered in relation to the outcomes they wanted from the safeguarding process, and then asked at the end of the process whether they felt those outcomes had been met. This is very positive, but the board recognises that this review also

showed there is further room for improvement, and as such this will remain a priority area.

38. In 2016/17 the HSAB will continue to prioritise the following areas:

- Effectiveness of partnership working (particularly promoting a shared and universal understanding of safeguarding, increased involvement of the voluntary sector, sharing the correct data, and connectedness with other boards).
- Prevention of harm and protection (particularly service user involvement, good mental health and greater focus on prevention).
- Increased communication and engagement of public and professionals (particularly understanding the work of the board, reaching out to smaller and community organisations, and continued focus on MCA and Deprivation of Liberty standards).
- Operational effectiveness (particularly challenging single agency issues, shared learning, links in commissioning and public health, embedding the competency framework and developing multi agency training).

39. The HSAB annual report sets out work plans to deliver on the priority areas.

## **Community impact**

40. The partners represented on the boards have statutory responsibilities for services in Herefordshire that safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults. The boards have a statutory duty to scrutinise, challenge and support this work. The HSCB and HSAB are key mechanisms for challenge, supporting and promoting improvement of these services within the authority. The annual reports and priorities going forward not only identify areas of safeguarding that require sustained focus and improvement, but also complement and support the work of the other partnerships in Herefordshire such as the Children and Young Persons Partnership focus on early help, neglect and safeguarding, and the Community Safety Partnership's focus on domestic abuse.

## **Equality duty**

41. The safeguarding boards pay due regard to The Equality Duty on public bodies and others carrying out public functions, specifically that public bodies consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work. This is particularly evident for example through the work of HSAB in embedding the 'Making Safeguarding Personal' approach within Herefordshire, so tailoring the service delivered to the individual's particular wants and needs, and ensuring that the voice of the adult informs decisions. A similar example within the HSCB is that there is a particular emphasis on ensuring that the child and parent(s) have the appropriate opportunity to express their views within child protection conferences so their needs can be fully considered within the decision making.

## **Financial implications**

42. The Safeguarding Boards receive contributions from partner agencies to fund the organisation and work of the boards. A budget is set out and reviewed throughout the year and any risks identified.

## **Legal implications**

43. The statutory functions of the Safeguarding Boards are found under the 1989 and 2004 Children Acts. There should be a clear framework to allow the HSCB to monitor the effectiveness of local services.

44. Section 13 of the Children Act 2004 requires each Local Authority area to establish a Safeguarding Board and specifies who should be represented on the Board.
45. The statutory objectives and functions of the HSCB as set out in Section 14 of the Children Act 2004 are:
- To coordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area; and
  - To ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes
46. Regulation 5 of the LSCB Regs 2006 sets out the functions of the Safeguarding Boards in relation to the above objectives.
47. Each local authority must establish a Safeguarding Adults Board. The board has three core duties:
- To develop and publish a Strategic Plan;
  - To provide an annual report of how effective the local services have been; and
  - Commission safeguarding adults reviews (SARS).
48. Under statutory guidance each of the safeguarding boards has a duty to produce annual reports on the effectiveness of safeguarding children and adults respectively in the area. The reports should provide a rigorous and transparent assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services. It should also identify weaknesses, causes of these and action to be taken to address them.

## **Risk management**

49. There are a number of identifiable risks associated with a reduction in the effectiveness of either or both boards. The boards both have a statutory responsibility to ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements within Herefordshire. Ineffective safeguarding arrangements directly increase risk to the most vulnerable members of our community, this risk being both high in probability and impact on individuals, evident from previous high profile cases in other areas, which in turn carries legal, political, reputational and financial risks to the partner agencies involved.
50. The current identifiable risks to the effectiveness of the boards are the ongoing threat to the appropriate resourcing of the boards' work inherent in the financial challenges facing the contributing partners, organisational changes within partner agencies which can on occasions also be linked to those ongoing budget reductions, partners disengaging from the work of the boards as a result of reduced management resilience within their own agencies, uncertainty of future board structure and role as a result of ongoing reviews and scrutiny (for example the recent Wood report on Safeguarding Children Boards) and increased demand for safeguarding services through greater awareness of safeguarding and increased public confidence to report.
51. The two boards and the Community Safety Partnership run a joint risk register in order to monitor and manage these risks where appropriate, and this is subject to regular review.

## **Consultees**

None

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – HSCB Annual Report 2015/16

Appendix 2 – HSAB Annual Report 2015/16

## **Background papers**

- None identified.