

UPDATE ON CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING

Report By: Director of Children's Services

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To update Scrutiny members on the recent changes and improvements in aspects of safeguarding our young people following on from the independent report of local services by Steve Love in autumn 2008, and also taking account of issues arising from national events after 'Baby P' and the Laming report.
2. To report on specific progress against the action plan from Steve Love's report.

Financial Implications

3. All costs are currently being met by CYP Directorate funding and HSCB funding

Background

Governance arrangements.

4. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. At the same time we must ensure that governance of children and young people's safeguarding remains a key priority of the HSCB so that it remains effective. Appendix 1 illustrates simply the inter relationship between the Children's Trust, the Safeguarding Board and other local groups for information.

Key performance indicators for Children and Young People's Directorate.

5. Staff changes and recruitment and retention issues have affected some of our performance in the last six months. A recent drive in focussing with team managers on performance issues has begun to show tentatively some improvement, particularly in regard to initial assessments in May and June to date. There is clearly more to do and a high focus on this area remains. Attached as Appendix 2 is a brief performance indicator summary.

Staffing changes within CYPD

6. There have been a number of significant staff changes. Kim Drake, Assistant Director Safeguarding and Vulnerable Children joined the authority on the 8th June and has already identified an ambition to address some key issues with increased energy and rigour. Suzie Goodman (interim HoS) has been contracted for a further three months to work at service manager level and provide some much needed continuity. At service manager level - Lisa Green will be joining us on 30 June and Roger Lindsey will be joining us on 3 August. Daniel Crampton is remaining with us for a further six months as interim service manager, again to provide continuity. Other staff have been recruited (current figures for social workers are 54/57) and we will continue a rigorous recruitment campaign across local, national and international boundaries. In addition for the first time, in October this year, we will be presenting an opportunity for further recruitment at the national ADCS and ADSS conference.

The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Board (HSCB)

7. There has been a drive this year to improve the strategic leadership and effectiveness of the HSCB. A restructure of the board and its various sub groups has taken place to ensure high level commitment from appropriate agencies. All groups have been refreshing membership, terms of reference and key priorities. This has been further enhanced by more frequent meetings of the board and a number of development days are planned, the first of which is later this month. As current chair of the board I can confirm that a significant culture change has begun and I feel much more confident that the board will really begin to deliver a more proactive and effective role. Maggie Blyth, an independent chair has now been appointed and will take up post soon subject to references.

External Review

8. The external review by consultant Steve Love on the CYPD, its key partners in both the Children's Trust and HSCB, led to a significant number of changes, many of which have been already been addressed by the safeguarding board re its focus, the tightening up the role of the business manager and the refreshed senior management within the directorate. However there is still more to do. This work along with the responses required to the Laming Report and the various action plans from Serious Case Reviews will now be streamlined into the new development and business plan of the HSCB. It has been noted that there are a number of overlaps between these various action plans and it is important that whilst we have an appropriate audit trail we focus on improving practice across our services rather than the board becoming bureaucratic and ticking boxes. The newly formed Quality

assurance sub group of the HSCB, chaired by Sue Doheny, will focus upon monitoring our progress and regular exception reporting to the HSCB board.

Training and Development

9. Training and Development regarding the specifics of child protection as well as addressing improvement in our ways of working needs to be improved further. Currently the HSCB sub gp are carrying an audit of training to identify gaps; it is likely this will require further strategic commitment and resources. This will be linked into the whole Children's Services workforce reform strategy.

Serious Case Reviews (SCRs)

10. Following Baby P it would be true to say nationally that referrals and Serious Case Reviews are in the spotlight. Herefordshire has been involved recently in supporting two external local authority SCRs. In addition we are near the conclusion of a Serious Case Review for Herefordshire which is going through the legal prosecution system at the same time. Unfortunately a further Serious Case Review has been initiated in Herefordshire.
11. It is the role of the HSCB to ensure that lessons learned from each of the Serious Case Reviews are noted, action plans drawn up and local services improved. In terms of future inspection and also improving our practice various agencies are addressing some of the initial aspects of the Serious Case Reviews already. These include a focus on record keeping and child files, inter agency information sharing, improving links between adult services (particularly DASH) and Children's Services.

Information Sharing

12. Reinforcement of effective information sharing practices is required across agencies in light of Laming and also in response to some of the issues emerging from SCRs. A protocol is likely to be needed with a refresh and appropriate training to ensure all staff are up to date with requirements.

GOWM Review of Social Care for CYP

13. At a recent review we had some discussion about all of the above points and recent changes. It was recognised that we are making a lot of improvement and that we are on a journey. At the same time the services remain somewhat vulnerable to spot inspection under the new Ofsted framework. We do not receive a formal judgement from these regular reviews but we think that they are watching our progress with interest and will be here for a further meeting in July. In preparation for possible inspection and for CAA we have begun a series of event across agencies to identify all of our strengths and areas for improvement.

Update on Steve Love report action plan

14. The HSCB have recently agreed that the number of action plans emerging are becoming cumbersome to manage and some have a number of overlap areas. Subsequently this report, a response to Laming and the lessons learned from recent SCRs will be condensed into a single action plan for the HSCB.
15. For scrutiny purposes Appendix 3 provides an exception RAG rated report of the action plan. Each of the actions has been updated with a RAG rating and some commentary provided by the lead officers.
16. In summary, of the 28 actions:
- 9 are marked green, as completed
 - 2 are marked amber/green, as some parts are still to be completed
 - 10 are marked amber indicating that most of the work has been completed but further action is required. It is not clear from the commentary received the timescales for the subsequent action.
 - 1 is marked amber/red as staff sickness means that activity is currently on hold
 - 4 actions are marked red and will not be achieved in the timescale - revised timescales need to be agreed
 - 2 actions are marked no data as, despite chasing, no information has been provided by the lead officer.
17. Attached at Appendix 4 is a brief overview of the new Ofsted Framework for CAA for your information.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the

Scrutiny members note the recent actions and debate any issues arising from the report.

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 Inter relationship between the Children's Trust, the Safeguarding Board and other local groups
- Appendix 2 Brief performance indicator summary
- Appendix 3 Safeguarding Action Plan
- Appendix 4 Overview of Ofsted Framework for CAA

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Scrutiny report on Review of Children's Safeguarding – 30 March 2009