

MEETING:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	19 MARCH 2010
TITLE OF REPORT:	SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILDREN IN HEREFORDSHIRE - TOP TEN QUESTIONS FROM I&DEA/CFPS
PORTFOLIO AREA:	SAFEGUARDING AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards Affected

County-wide.

Purpose

To inform Councillors of safeguarding arrangements for children within Herefordshire using the I&DeA/CfPS top ten questions to ask.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision.

Recommendation(s)

THAT Children's Services Scrutiny Committee consider the information provided.

Key Points Summary

None.

Alternative Options

None.

Reasons for Recommendations

None.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The I&DeA/CfPS has produced a draft guide for Councillors to assist in the proper scrutiny of safeguarding arrangements for children in their area. This report gives key information to Herefordshire's Children's Services Scrutiny Committee based on the I&DeA/CfPS ten

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
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questions to ask.

Key Considerations

The top 10 questions to ask

1. How effective is the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) in holding individual agencies to account and ensuring multi-agency working through the safeguarding procedures and operational performance oversight?

Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board-(HSCB), holds agencies to account in the following ways:

- It has a Quality Assurance sub group which has a rolling audit programme and oversees action plans from Serious Case Reviews.
- Annual Section 11 audit is undertaken by the Board which holds agencies to account for a range of Safeguarding activities. Action plans are developed and monitored to improve practice across the Board partners.
- HSCB has a Policy and Practice Sub group which ensures that a comprehensive set of policies procedures and guidance is available to all staff across Board agencies in delivering safe services to children and young people.
- HSCB acts as the Stay Safe Outcome Group for the Children's Trust providing a report card on 5 key priorities and is accountable to the Children's Trust Board for its performance on these.

2. Does your LSCB have sufficient resources, both financial and human, to undertake its role effectively and deliver the LSCB business?

Resources for HSCB are tight and we try to keep this work efficient with the Board having a Business Manager, an administrator and a part time training officer. The Director of Quality and Integrated Commissioning has offered a part time Project Officer in kind for the next financial year and West Mercia Police have offered in kind support from an officer to help with audit activity. The subgroups are 'staffed' by constituent members of the Board and the work of these groups is undertaken by partners across the professional spectrum of the Board.

In order to maximise resources we are looking at two possible models around combining the Board business unit with that of the Children's Trust or the emerging Adult Safeguarding Board.

3. Is the relationship between the LSCB and the Children's Trust clear and working effectively to improve outcomes for children?

Yes. The newly agreed Constitution of the HSCB ensures that accountability and challenge is built in to its relationship with the Children's Trust. The recent consultation on the new The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 clarifies the relationship between the Children's Trust and the Safeguarding Children Board and we have referred to this guidance when developing local arrangements. The Independent Chair of HSCB sits on the Children's Trust Board and reports monthly on the progress of the Stay Safe outcome group priorities. The Vice Chair of the HSCB sits on the Children's Trust Management Group and leads on the Stay Safe outcome priorities.

Quality and performance

4. What kind of case audit, performance management and quality assurance activity does your LSCB perform to improve the quality and effectiveness of local multi-agency practice and any lessons to be learned?

The Quality Assurance and Evaluation Sub Group have conducted a number of specific audits for HSCB. These include multi agency audits on themes from safeguarding practices, single agency audits on child protection, and a section 11 safeguarding audit on statutory agencies. The HSCB will progress as part of the Business Plan 2010-11 bi monthly multi agency practice audits. The

HSCB will incorporate the lessons learned from these audit into the level 2 safeguarding multi agency training.

5. How is the LSCB gathering and using the experience of children, young people and families to inform improvements to safeguarding arrangements?

The HSCB is developing its participation with children and young people in partnership with the Children's Trust Board. A participation strategy is being developed across the two which will be ready by April 2010. The Board has regularly consulted young people through specific surveys, research and running a shadow board.

The HSCB has completed a questionnaire with young people to establish individuals' knowledge of safeguarding procedure, their attitudes, and their likely behaviours if they became aware of a potential safeguarding issues.

This survey indicated that further awareness training is required and this is part of the HSCB Business for 2010-11.

6. Is there a robust needs assessment for safeguarding and are the trends in demand and performance monitored and well understood?

The primary focus of safeguarding accountability in the Children and Young People's Plan will be found as part of the improvement priority. It set out strategic safeguarding activities and allocates them to the Children's Trust or Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board; by doing this the respective roles are clearly defined as to the safeguarding responsibility.

Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board will lead upon evaluating the impact in particular of integrated data set, its work on Serious Case Reviews and Child Deaths, it's monitoring of inter-agency procedures and its assessment of individual agencies' performance.

From this work Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board will prepare its annual report on Safeguarding and will recommend Safeguarding improvements priorities to contribute to the needs assessment for the Children's Trust and for the Children and Young People's Plan.

7. Are there adequate early intervention or prevention services in place for those children and families before a crisis is reached or harm occurs?

Yes there is a range of services across agencies. These will be better coordinated once the No Wrong Door locality teams are up and running. Appendix B shows a range of services provided to children and families in crisis.

8. Are these services reaching the most vulnerable groups e.g. children with disabilities, children in families affected by substance misuse, domestic violence or parental mental illness and children from refugee and asylum seeking communities?

Yes in many cases. We have dedicated Children With Disabilities service which aligns with a range of associated health services at the Kite Centre. Herefordshire has a Hidden Harm strategy and Group which reports into the HSCB which coordinates responses to children affected by parents who misuse substances. The multi agency DASH team use CAF on all cases with children and young people to identify need and assess risk.

9. Do all Child Protection Plans contain specific, achievable, child focused outcomes intended to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. Are these measurable and are those protection plans routinely reviewed?

We aim for all Child Protection Plans to have SMART actions which focus on key issues and what needs to change to minimise harm. All CP plans are regularly reviewed in Herefordshire by independent child protection professionals. Quality and timeliness are monitored through a QA process and reported up to the Assistant Director for Safeguarding.

**10. What is the quality and frequency of supervision and training given to frontline staff?
Does supervision routinely address practice and performance?**

Supervision varies from agency to agency. The new Working Together 2010 (due to be published in March) addresses this by advising on core generic principles to be applied across agencies. In Social Care regular supervision is mandatory. We have just signed off a refreshed policy which outlines expectations and parameters. All front line staff will be supervised formally at least once more month on their casework by an experienced manager.

Community Impact

- 2 The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children’s Board (HSCB) works with Herefordshire Children’s Trust by reporting on a regular basis through the Stay Safe Outcome Group of Herefordshire’s Children’s Trust. The Children’s Trust has a Shadow Board made up of young people who are consulted on key issues around safeguarding.

Financial Implications

None.

Legal Implications

None.

Risk Management

None.

Consultees

None.

Appendices

Appendix A – structure diagram for Herefordshire Safeguarding Children’s Board

Appendix B - services offered to children and families when relationships are at breaking point

Background Papers

- None identified.