

MEETING:	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	7 FEBRUARY 2013
TITLE OF REPORT:	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING IN HEREFORDSHIRE
REPORT BY:	DIRECTOR FOR PEOPLE'S SERVICES

1. Classification

Open

2. Key Decision

This is not a key decision

3. Wards Affected

County-wide

4. Purpose

To respond to the Task & Finish review of children's safeguarding in Herefordshire

5. Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) The contents of the action plan is noted and that Members support the overall response.**
- (b) That the Committee confirm that, given the overlap, updates for progress on actions in the plan are subsumed in the progress reports for the Children's Improvement Plan.**

6. Key Points Summary

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned a Task and Finish Group to undertake a review of Safeguarding Arrangements for Children in Herefordshire which was undertaken in July, 2012.

- The review focussed on safeguarding arrangements for Looked After Children in Herefordshire in relation to partnership working in education, health, Youth Offending Service and social care and considered the arrangements for 16/17 year old homeless young people.
- The review found from the data available, that in most cases referred the newly developed family support worker in the 16+ service was able to work with the family and young person, and find a solution that allowed the young person to remain within the family home, demonstrating that the relationship between early intervention through the family support worker to be successful
- However the review also noted that co-location of Children Service's teams, health professionals and the police would help to both speed up processes and prevent any cases from being missed.
- The review also noted that, paperwork and caseloads were the biggest problems for social workers.
- The review also considered the demands on Herefordshire by children from other local authorities placed in private placements within the County.
- The review also concluded that, whilst there was a collective will to work collaboratively to improve multi-agency safeguarding, there was also a need for greater mutual understanding between agencies.
- The task and finish group made a number of recommendations, the executive responses to which are attached. However, in summary these are as follows:
 1. Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) will ensure that the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee regularly scrutinizes the activities of the HSCB by providing its annual report and Business Plan to committee for challenge.
 2. A Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is in development and a progress reports will be made to the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
 3. Mechanisms, processes and practice in relation to Child Protection Strategy meetings are in the process of being improved.
 4. Posts have already been added to the establishment to ensure that the staff can be recruited and retained in the Looked After Children service.
 5. Additionally resources have recently been made available to speed up the progress of development and implementation of Frameworki, the electronic record keeping system.
 6. Regular reports will be made to Health and Social Care Overview Committee will be made on the development of Frameworki, in the context of the overall current improvement plan.
 7. Discussions are currently underway to determine how the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) can meet the needs of Looked After Children.
 8. The Government has initiated proposals for an improved system for notification of placements of children placed across local authority boundaries.
 9. A programme of Safeguarding Seminars has been developed for delivery during 2013.
 10. The need for appropriate and proportionate information sharing between all local authority multi-agency partners is contained within statutory guidance and is currently being reinforced through improvements in practice.

7. Alternative Options

7.1 None

8. Reasons for Recommendations

8.1 To ensure a robust response to the Task and Finish group report.

9. Introduction and Background

9.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned a Task and Finish Group to undertake a review of Safeguarding Arrangements for Children in Herefordshire which was undertaken in July, 2012. This report contains the executive response to the recommendations.

10. Key Considerations

10.1 The task and finish group carried out a valuable exercise and many of its recommendations reflect the improvements either ongoing or initiated additionally, as a result of the recent Ofsted inspection. Therefore many of the actions taking place in response to this report, will be absorbed into the ongoing improvement plan.

11. Community Impact

11.1 The improvements planned will lead to a positive impact on the most vulnerable children and families in Herefordshire.

12. Equality and Human Rights

12.1 By the nature of its work Children's early help and child protection services, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to -

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it."

13. Financial Implications

13.1 There are no additional financial implications to this response, other than costs already accounted for in other improvement plans.

14. Legal Implications

14.1 Legal requirements have been considered as a factor in the review and recommendations.

15. Risk Management

15.1 Risks to delivery/non-delivery of the action plan have been considered and will be captured

within the improvement plan risk register which is reviewed regularly.

16. Consultees

16.1 Directorate Leadership Team

17. Appendices

17.1 Executive Response Action Plan

18. Background Papers

18.1 Safeguarding Arrangements for Children in Herefordshire – Review Report.