

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	<b>9 October 2014</b>
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report and Business Plan</b>
<b>REPORT BY:</b>	<b>Director for Children's Wellbeing</b>

## **Classification**

Open

## **Key Decision**

This is not a key decision.

## **Wards Affected**

County-wide

## **Purpose**

To inform Cabinet of Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Board (HSCB) assessment of safeguarding in Herefordshire and of its own effectiveness within the Annual Report 2013-2014 and present to them the finalised Business Plan 2014-2015.

## **Recommendation(s)**

### **THAT CABINET:**

- (a) Notes the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements for children and young people in Herefordshire as assessed by the HSCB;**
- (b) Acknowledges the priorities of HSCB in relation to specific safeguarding issues in Herefordshire;**
- (c) Considers how Herefordshire Council is contributing to service improvement through commissioning within Herefordshire with regard to these safeguarding issues; and**
- (d) Makes any comments to the board about its future work programme.**

## **Alternative Options**

1. This report is to inform and enable Cabinet to consider the HSCB annual report and business plan. The Cabinet could therefore suggest alternative activities for consideration by the Board.

## Reasons for Recommendations

2. To ensure Cabinet is clear about the assessment of the state of safeguarding children in Herefordshire from the perspective of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board and the independent chair.
3. To ensure that Cabinet has oversight of the prioritised development work for Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board during 2014-2015.
4. To ensure Cabinet is able to make informed decisions with regard to providing and commissioning services for Herefordshire, which support the safeguarding children's agenda.

## Key Considerations

5. Councils are legally obliged to establish an effective Safeguarding Children Board. Further detail is in paragraphs 10-14 below. The annual report of Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board enables Cabinet to understand and assess Herefordshire's multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and to consider specific messages from the Board and the independent chair about the quality and effectiveness of the multi-agency work to protect children from harm.
6. Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board has set the following strategic priorities for 2013-2016:
  - Improving the experience of children, young people and families when they are supported in safeguarding systems (i.e. Common Assessment Framework, social care).
  - Improving multi-agency case work.
  - Tackling evidenced safeguarding issues in Herefordshire.
  - Improving the functioning of Herefordshire's safeguarding boards.
7. Within the framework of the strategic priorities and as a result of the annual report and Ofsted inspection, HSCB's Business Plan documents the following specific developmental areas. Cabinet reviewed the draft business plan in their meeting on 31 July 2014. Since then additional actions have been added within items a, c, d, e and f:
  - a) Ensuring that multi-agency responses to children at higher risk of sexual exploitation and those who go missing are increasingly effective.
  - b) Understanding the impact of domestic abuse within Herefordshire and improve the county's response to the issue.
  - c) Using the voice of children and families to improve services.
  - d) Developing HSCB's safeguarding training offer.
  - e) Ensuring Herefordshire's child protection policies remain up to date and fit for purpose.
  - f) Strengthening the impact of improvements resulting from HSCB's extensive

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learning activity including performance monitoring and audit work.

- g) Improving the strategic governance of HSCB, including its accountability to and influence upon other local partnerships (including the Children and Young People's Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board).
  - h) Ensuring that HSCB is effectively supported by agencies to ensure the ongoing improvement work is sustainable.
8. Cabinet will see from the annual report that there has been progress in improving the quality and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, although there is still work to do until services are of consistently good quality.
9. Cabinet will also see that during the year there has been a growing number of children who have been experiencing neglect, along with other trends in relation to domestic abuse, including emotional abuse. Child sexual exploitation is also an area requiring sustained focus. It is important that every agency involved in safeguarding arrangements also focusses its activity on the issues which cause children to be harmed, or be at risk of harm, in the first place. These are issues which the Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership, the Health and Wellbeing Board, and every agency responsible for working together to protect children from harm needs to give attention to over the next year.

## **Community Impact**

- 10. The recent Ofsted inspection confirmed that there is no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm in Herefordshire. The inspection report evidences ongoing improvements in the delivery of services to children and their families in line with the council's statutory responsibilities and the statutory duties to cooperate placed on other partners.
- 11. The annual report identifies important aspects of safeguarding in Herefordshire, which require a sustained focus to reduce things which cause children to be harmed or at risk of harm.
- 12. Families and communities bring up children and protect them from harm. There are also important issues for communities.
- 13. The Business Plan (Appendix 2) includes expectations of how and when impact will be measured and what the expected impact will be.

## **Equality and Human Rights**

- 14. Different aspects of the implementation of the business plan pay due regard to the public sector equality duty as set out below:

Under Section 149, the "General Duty" on public authorities is set out thus:

"A public authority must, in the exercise of its 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

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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."

Further development of the quality of the data and information provided to the Board will increasingly enable it to consider the different characteristics of children and families engaged in the safeguarding system, to establish whether there are specific groups who are likely to be more at risk of harm or being harmed, than others, and to monitor how, over time, those groups are better protected.

## Financial Implications

15. The business plan contains activity from a range of partners; the annual report describes some of the impact of that activity. The council costs are contained within the costs of the safeguarding and family support service, which has had significant investment in the past two years. The council also makes a contribution of £143k to the business unit of the safeguarding boards, which is 65% of the current costs. Partner agencies contribute 35%. The expansion of the work of the children's board and the adults' board, in the light of changing legislation and the need to improve quality in this area, mean that every agency is currently considering an increase in the resourcing of the unit.

## Legal Implications

16. Section 13 of the Children Act 2004 requires each local authority to establish a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) for their area and specifies the organisations and individuals (other than the local authority) that should be represented on LSCBs.
17. Section 14 of the Children Act 2004 sets out the objectives of LSCBs, which 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.
18. Regulation 5 of the Local Safeguarding Children Boards Regulations 2006 sets out that the functions of the LSCB, in relation to the above objectives referred to above.
19. As set out in the Statutory Guidance issued by the Department of Education, Working Together to Safeguard Children, March 2013 (chapter 3 paragraphs 16 – 18), the Chair of a LSCB must publish an annual report on the effectiveness of child safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the local area. The report should be submitted to the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council, the Local Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing board.
20. This report can be considered by Cabinet under the provisions set out in Part 3 of the Constitution, specifically paragraph 3.3.4.2 C – "Cabinet should only take decisions that are ... significant in terms of economic, environmental or social wellbeing of the county or a substantial part of it or of its communities".

## **Risk Management**

21. There are no risks contained within the recommendations.
22. The main risks are:
  - Messages from the Board are ignored.
  - The Board is not well functioning and does not assure the quality and effectiveness of the safeguarding system.
  - The Board fails to exercise leadership in clarifying safeguarding issues and addressing quality and impact.
  - These risks would all leave children and young people more at risk of suffering harm. The Business Plan and the governance arrangements are the mitigations against these risks.

## **Consultees**

23. HSCB Strategic Board
24. HSCB Steering Group Sub Group Chairs
25. Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Improvement Board

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - HSCB 2013-2014 Annual Report

Appendix 2 - HSCB 2014-2015 Business Plan

## **Background Papers**

- None identified.