

## **Learning and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**23 January 2013**

Report of Assistant Director for Children's Specialist Services & Chair of City of York Safeguarding Children Board [CYSCB]

### **Bi-Annual Safeguarding Update**

#### **1. Introduction**

At a meeting of the Committee in June 2012 Members agreed to receive a six monthly update on key children's safeguarding issues. This report, jointly prepared by the Assistant Director for Children's Specialist Services and the Chair of the CYSCB updates the committee on national and local developments over the past six months.

#### **2. City of York Safeguarding Children Board [CYSCB] – Chairs Update**

Our Local Safeguarding Children's Board oversees the quality and robustness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for the city. An update from the Independent Chair – Roger Thompson includes:

- *Updates on Serious Case Reviews*

There are currently two Serious Case Reviews, commissioned by the CYSCB, and still to be concluded. The first relates to the death of a young child, where the main concerns were about the adequacy of the pre-birth assessment. The Report has been accepted by the Board but cannot be concluded until the related Criminal Justice process has been finalised.

The second case relates to serious sexual exploitation of a young person. In this matter, there are a number of lessons to be learned by all agencies, Children's Services, Police, Health and Education as to how cases involving sexual exploitation should be managed.

In both Serious Case Reviews, there will be the need to consider what information should be published. The Secretary of State expects the CYSCB to publish the reports, but in both cases there are significant reasons relating to the impact on the parties involved why this should not happen.

The CYSCB works with all member agencies to ensure that emerging lessons and associated practice implications are routinely disseminated to relevant practitioners and managers.

#### Recommendation

A high level summary of key lessons learned is included in the next safeguarding briefing to this Committee.

- *Neglect*

I have reported to this Committee in June 2012 the CYSCB thematic review of child neglect. This review was prompted by two learning lessons reviews of serious cases of neglect in York.

To further our understanding of this complex issue and to strengthen our local multi agency response the CYSCB delivered a regional conference on this subject. This conference held York on 21<sup>st</sup> November had as its keynote speaker Professor Eileen Munro, author of the 'Munro' review into child protection.

The delegates, 120 in total, were drawn from a wide range of professional backgrounds including Police, Health, Social Care, Education and the Private and Voluntary sector. Feedback from those attending was very positive and a follow up evaluation and practice implications report is being prepared.

#### Recommendation

Feedback and emerging practice implications from the Neglect Conference are presented to a future meeting of this Committee.

### **3. Other Childrens Safeguarding Development**

- *Working Together to Safeguarding Children – Draft Guidance*

The Government's consultation has now concluded, but no decision has as yet been received about the final government intentions. There is no expectation of significant changes, but the relatively

newly appointed Children's Minister, Edward Timpson, who might influence the direction to be taken. Preliminary work is in hand to look at a future assessment model.

One key issue that is sure to be emphasised within the document is the responsibility of Local Safeguarding Children Boards to keep a keen watch over the quality and performance of all agencies who deliver services to children and young people. This specific issue is addressed later in this paper.

- *Child Sexual Exploitation [CSE]*

A CYSCB Stakeholder Group has made good progress in developing multi-agency procedures and practice guidance for responding to concerns about CSE in York. Key developments include the North Yorkshire Police information sharing tool and specific arrangements to address early intervention via a risk network. This group has been looking at the recent Rochdale Review, and its implications for York will be considered at the next meeting. A copy of the Rochdale Review is attached at Annex A.

- *Strengthening the Quality Assurance [QA] Role of the CYSCB*

As mentioned above, the new Working Together document will undoubtedly stress the importance of all LSCBs maintaining a keen watch over the quality and performance of member agencies in relation to safeguarding. This greater emphasis on the QA role of LSCBs is reinforced by the experience of those authorities who have recently been inspected under the new Ofsted framework. These authorities report a rigorous testing by Ofsted of their LSCBs QA monitoring arrangements.

Aligned with this greater emphasis on QA monitoring is an expectation that Local Safeguarding Children Boards take a broader view of safeguarding. This requires Boards to have a better understanding about the general safety of, and specific risks for, children in their area. Such issues could include for example, road safety.

To address these issues the CYSCB is developing a local performance scorecard across a broad range of issues.

## Recommendation

Details of the CYSCB's revised monitoring and performance framework is presented at a future briefing to this Committee

- *Improving the Outcomes for Our Looked After Children*

Taking children or young people into public care is always an intervention of last resort. Such action is only taken when every other alternative has been safely explored. However, for some children becoming looked after is a necessary protective step. For these children the local authority and its partners have a statutory duty to ensure that they enjoy the best possible outcomes. Board members will recall endorsing York's Looked After Children Strategy 2012 – 2015 at a previous meeting.

This strategy was developed and is overseen by a multi-agency strategic partnership for Looked After Children. The strategy, which focuses on nine key outcomes, was identified in partnership with our current looked after children and care leavers.

These outcomes are described as key thematic areas :

Respect and Involvement; Good Safe Placements; Relationships; Identity; Education; Health; Emotional Wellbeing; Moving to Adulthood and Corporate Parenting.

Each of these outcome areas are underpinned by a detailed action plan with an identified lead professional for each. Progress against these action plans is reported to the Council's Corporate Parent Group, the Show Me That I Matter Panel (York's children in care council) and to the Childrens Trust, the YorOK Board.

- *Safely Reducing Our Looked After Population through strengthened Prevention and Early Intervention*

### Background

An analysis of York's looked after population trend over the past years highlights continued and significant growth. The reasons behind the overall growth in the looked after population are varied and complex.

The increase in the care population in York to a high of 256 in 2011/12 has its origins in a significant increase in admissions during the period 2007 – 2009.

This period coincided with a heightened awareness of child protection issues brought to the fore through a series of high profile child protection cases including 'Baby Peter'. An analysis of the activity at the time also highlights a period of escalating drug and alcohol misuse and domestic violence. This was also a period where arrangements to identify and refer children for whom there may be concerns were greatly improved contributing to a 'net widening' effect for cases coming to children's social care.

During this period the number of children entering care as a result of the local authority's legal interventions rose sharply.

The number of children entering care reached its peak in 2008/09 when 111 children became looked after. At the same time the number of children entering care on a voluntary basis reduced significantly. Such a pattern is clearly indicative of a period of high concerns both for children and young people 'at risk' but perhaps also a reaction to the high profile criticism levelled at authorities where they were perceived to have failed to act robustly in some cases.

A more recent overall reduction in new entrants to care is encouraging and may reflect the impact of the introduction of more recent developments (including the children's Front Door) to support families and prevent concerns from escalating – the two key strands of our early intervention and prevention strategy.

- *Integrated Family Support Service*

At the heart of our arrangements to safely reduce the looked after population is a determination to provide help and support to children and their families to prevent the escalation of emerging problems.

'Dream Again' York's Children and Young People's Plan 2013 - 2016 includes as a key priority a commitment to intervene early and effectively to secure a happy family life for all our children in York.

The introduction of the city's new Integrated Family Service will make a significant contribution to the delivery of this priority. This new service, which will incorporate York's response to the national Troubled Families initiative, is described in detail in Annex B.

The success of this new initiative will depend on the continued strength of partnership working at a preventative level. The newly established teams can quickly become hubs for the co-ordination and delivery of this support. An important measure of success will be the reduction in the number of children and young people and families whose problems escalate and require higher levels of specialist intervention.

#### Recommendation

As part of future safeguarding briefings, the Committee should receive an update on the impact of the Integrated Family Service.

#### **4. Summary of Recommendations**

- i. A high level summary of key lessons learned from case reviews is included in a future Safeguarding briefing to this Committee.
- ii. Feedback and emerging practice implications from the Neglect Conference are presented to a future meeting of this Committee.
- iii. A detail of the CYSCB's revised monitoring and performance framework is presented at a future briefing to this Committee.
- iv. As part of future safeguarding briefings, the Committee should receive an update on the impact of the Integrated Family Service.

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#### **Annexes:**

**Annex A** - Rochdale Review

**Annex B** - Cabinet Member Decision Paper – Integrated Family Service