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Working with children, parents and professionals to make our childrens' lives safer.

# **City of York Safeguarding Children Board**

## **Annual Report 2013/14**

### **Summary**

**Draft Summary –  
Annual Report of the City of York Safeguarding Children Board  
2013/14**

The City of York Safeguarding Children Board (CYSCB) is a statutory local body responsible for agreeing how child safeguarding agencies cooperate and work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and for ensuring this work is effective.

The work of the CYSCB is outlined in the statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013) which sets out how organisations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

**Our vision**

The City of York Safeguarding Children’s Board (CYSCB) has a vision for all the children of York to grow up in safety and to always feel safe.

**Key Principles** - We believe that this can be achieved through:

- listening to what children say and acting on it
- the delivery of services which work together to prevent harm
- identifying and responding to concerns early
- intervening robustly where there are suspicions that a child has or is likely to suffer harm

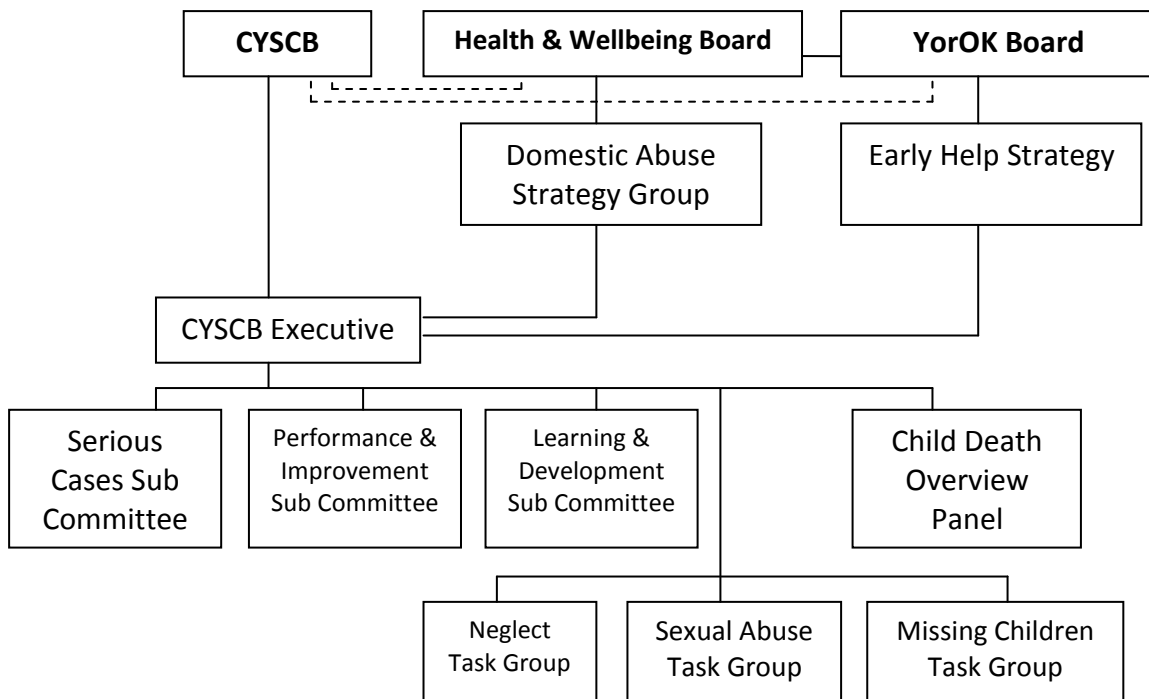
***The role of the CYSCB***

The CYSCB will:

- facilitate and promote interagency cooperation and partnership working.
- provide robust independent challenge whenever there is evidence of practice which fails to promote the best interests of children.
- support agencies in developing and improving their safeguarding practices.

- be a responsive, learning organisation which strives to continually improve, and continue to develop mechanisms which monitor its own and partner agencies' performance
- use any emerging lessons to improve practices and outcomes for children.
- seek the views of children and their families to inform how services can better meet their needs.

## Governance Structure



## Independent Chair - Summary Statement

This is my first annual report as Independent Chair of the Board. I started in this role in January 2014 and was immediately struck by the willingness of people to meet with me, share ideas, work together and their commitment to continuous improvement was positive.

The culture I encountered was child centred, open and transparent and this creates an environment where challenge is seen as positive. I want to record thanks to my predecessor Roger Thompson for his work with the Board over a number of years which has set this direction.

I would also like to thank the frontline staff and managers in all agencies across York for their work in safeguarding children. The Board recognises that the effectiveness of safeguarding across the City is dependent on the quality of the work of those in direct contact with children and young people and the support they receive through working in partnership.

I would like to thank members of the City of York Safeguarding Children Board and the Safeguarding Business Unit for the welcome they have given me as the new Chair, for their commitment to safeguarding and for their openness to further improve our effectiveness as a Board.

## **Context**

This year has been a period of significant change: the introduction of the revised national guidance Working Together 2013, and the start of a new Ofsted Inspection regime that, for the first time, includes a judgement about the effectiveness of the LSCB.

The Board has a new Independent Chair, the City has appointed a new Director of Children's Services and the Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) appointed a new Chief Nurse. I see these as positive opportunities for further creative thinking and challenge to ensure the Board continues a culture of continuous improvement in 2014 /15.

As at 1 April 2013, the CCG took on its full powers but had some conditions to be met. One of these was to ensure that a clear line of accountability for safeguarding was reflected in CCG governance arrangements and that there were arrangements in place to co-operate with the local authority in the operation of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Safeguarding Adults Board. Having provided assurances about this the CCG was fully authorised in January 2014.

During the summer of 2013 a peer review of the Board was commissioned which made a number of suggestions for improvement. An action plan has been implemented to respond to this. I have taken the opportunity as a new Chair to review the budget, support arrangements, structures and governance of the Board.

I have also prioritised developing the relationships with the YorOk Children's Trust and the Health and Wellbeing Board with the aim of making accountability more transparent, identifying synergies, reducing duplication of effort and ensuring safeguarding remains a key priority in the current financial context when all partners have reducing resources.

This will continue into 2014/15. In particular the Chair of the Adult Safeguarding Board and I are jointly committed to working together as that Board moves towards statutory status in April 2015.

Other key developments this year have been:

- This year Board approved and published the revised Integrated Working Threshold Guidance and these are supported by a prevention route map and safeguarding route map.
- Reshaping arrangements for responding to referrals to social care and the co-location of the Police Central Referral Unit (CRU) with the referral and assessment teams has improved information sharing and responses to referrals.
- Over the past year, the CYSCB has been actively involved in the Child Sexual Exploitation strategic group, chaired by North Yorkshire Police, which is developing a cross border strategy across North Yorkshire and York.
- Early in 2014 the Board set up the Safeguarding Children Involvement Group (SCIG) In order to improve engagement with young people. This has met twice and will continue to be an area for development.

I believe that the best way to protect children and young people is to ensure that they are loved and cared for; are not living in poverty or neglected and are given opportunities to learn and grow their aspirations. For those who are not so fortunate the City of York Safeguarding Board will do all it can to ensure their safety is a priority for all agencies working in the City Of York and we are committed to continuous improvement.

## **Progress during 2013/14**

### **Assurance Audit**

Section 11 (s11) of the Children and Adoption Act 2004 places a responsibility on named CYSCB agencies to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The 2013 audit highlights strengths across the partnership of the commitment to safeguarding children. However, there are some areas and themes across the partnership which require further work. The 2013 audit identified the need for development in the areas of:

- Safer working practices

- Involving children and families in service planning
- Practice supervision and accountability.

For the first time, the CYSCB joined with the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board (NYSCB) in a 'challenge event' bringing together agencies in the spirit of learning from each other. The s11 audit will be repeated in the autumn of 2014 with a challenge event hosted by the CYSCB and including the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board in December 2015. The 2014 audit will be scrutinised against the 2013 audit with particular attention paid to those areas requiring improvement.

***The Government published the new Working Together guidance in March 2013 and during the year the CYSCB has reviewed its functions, processes and work plan to ensure it is compliant with this.***

The CYSCB has:

- Commissioned a peer review to assess the effectiveness of the Board and its compliance with statutory guidance
- Reviewed and is in the process of restructuring the Board including its accountability and governance
- Developed a comprehensive Learning and Performance Framework to provide an objective oversight of the effectiveness of the early help and safeguarding arrangements in York
- Reviewed and amended the interagency procedures

***Develop and implement systems to ensure that the CYSCB maintains an organisational culture of continuous learning and improvement, and a focus on improving outcomes for children***

The CYSCB has:

- Developed a Learning and Performance Framework to identify and inform organisational and practitioner learning

- Undertaken a review of all case reviews undertaken by the CYSCB over the past seven years. The findings of the review have contributed to a restructuring of the Serious Cases Sub Committee and the way lessons will be learnt in the future
- Developed creative learning opportunity for people who work with children including master classes, targeted training and practice learning groups

***Develop and embed performance management processes to enable the CYSCB to monitor the effectiveness of systems to safeguard children and young people, and to respond to indications of emerging trends and/or risks.***

The CYSCB has:

- Developed a comprehensive Learning and Performance Framework to provide an objective oversight of the effectiveness of the early help and safeguarding arrangements in York. The focus of the framework is to gauge the impact of the work undertaken to provide early help and to safeguard children in York.
- Commissioned the Children's Trust Unit to develop a Safeguarding Children Involvement Group. This multi-agency group brings together a range of partners to develop the range, quality and effectiveness of involving children and young people
- Developed an audit process which focuses on the quality of practice and whether practice has delivered sustainable improvements for children

***Ensure that children are safeguarded from the impact of neglect***

The CYSCB has:

- Undertaken a case audit of practice in relation to children experiencing neglect. The audit focussed on each tier of need from early help to child protection services. The findings of the audit identifies further areas for development leading to the priority being renewed for 2014/15

- Embedded the learning from the thematic review and national reviews in core CYSCB training
- Ensured that neglect has been included in the Safeguarding Board and YorOK's Board's Early Help Strategy
- Ensured that improving the quality of assessments in neglect cases has been included as a priority area in the Children's Social Care business plan
- Supported Children's Social Care to develop a single assessment which reflects the findings of the thematic review's findings on the shortfalls of the previous assessment framework

***Ensure that vulnerable young people are better protected from child sexual exploitation (CSE)***

The CYSCB has:

- Joined with colleagues in North Yorkshire to form a countywide strategy group chaired by a senior police officer from North Yorkshire Police to develop a countywide strategy and coordinate joint activity and resources.
- Developed a local stakeholder group which produced a local action plan, procedures and training. This group has now been superseded by the Child Sexual Abuse Task Group.
- Established a Child Sexual Abuse Task Group; recognising the need, based on case reviews, to develop a strategy for responding more widely to child sexual abuse which includes CSE and children who sexually harm other children
- Involvement in the national working group for sexually exploited children and young people offering access to a range of research, resources and specialist expertise.
- Delivered a range of learning events including a half day briefing on responding to CSE, targeted training for those working with young people and families and learning lessons from reviews



- Co-hosted a Countywide conference on child sexual exploitation

### ***Other Areas of Improvement***

#### ***Early help***

- In 2013/14, 228 Common Assessments (CAFs) were started which provides a way of working with families to understand what support they need. Good CAFs included information and involvement from a range of professionals with the 'child's voice' clearly recorded. An audit of CAFs found their quality to be variable.
- 315 Troubled Families have been identified. The intensive work with these families has resulted in significant improvements in 117 of these families.
- Local Safeguarding Children Board's are now responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of early help. In York the CYSCB has formally agreed through the Health and Wellbeing Board that the YorOK Children's Trust Board will lead on this area and will provide assurances to the CYSCB.
- An early help strategy has been developed on behalf of the whole children's partnership by colleagues in the YorOK Children's Trust Board and the CYSCB.

The strategy aims to:

- Move towards a locality model for early help arrangements, strengthen integrated working, information sharing and proactively identify vulnerable children
- Improve quality of practice
- Improve and integrate performance monitoring
- Strengthen commissioning
- Develop the Workforce Strategy
- Improve communication

### ***Children in need***

- The newly formed Child in Need Teams are working closely with other agencies to help children who have been assessed as children in need of services.
- At end of March 2014 the CIN service was working with 271 children. 178 of these children were Child in Need (S17) (66%) and 93 children (34%) were subject to a Child Protection Plan or 'edge of care'.

### ***Child protection***

- In March 2014, 131 children were subject to Child Protection Plans. 43% were registered as being at risk of neglect, 33% at risk of emotional abuse, 4.6% at risk of physical abuse and 5.3% at risk of sexual abuse. During the period the level of children registered as being at risk of neglect reached 58% although the reason for this requires further analysis.
- The number of referrals accepted by Children's Social Care has increased from 862 in 2012/13 to 1,404 a rise of 63%. Positively the number of re-referrals has only risen by 15% from 163 to 187 over the same period.

### ***Looked after children***

- The number of looked after children (LAC) has reduced to 220 which is the lowest level since 2008/09.
- 17 children were placed outside of York which is a significant drop compared to previous years.
- 100% of care leavers were assessed to be in suitable accommodation with 79% being in education, employment or training.

## **Key Themes 2013/14**

### ***Neglect***

Defining neglect is difficult and understanding its causes challenges professionals. As a result people working with children often focus on the symptoms rather than the causes which mean that children suffer neglectful parenting for many years. A thematic review was carried out by the CYSCB in 2011/12 which found that neglect can result in significant and long lasting harm to a child. The review said that neglect can and should be identified early and once identified should result in an assertive and tenacious response. Professionals should treat it with the same urgency as any other form of abuse and should not give up until the child is no longer being neglected.

Simply we should always ask the question 'what is life like for this child?'

- More children continue to be subject to child protection plans for neglect than any other form of maltreatment. However there is clear evidence from audits that children experiencing neglect are not receiving the right help at the right time.
- Dental health is an indicator of neglect. Only 41% of children subject to child protection plans attended a dentist.

### ***Child sexual abuse***

- The number of children subject to child protection plans for sexual abuse has declined significantly since 2008 when approximately 18% of all registrations were for sexual abuse.
- Messages from reviews undertaken by the CYSCB suggest that professionals do not have a good enough understanding of sexual abuse. As a result sexual abuse can go unrecognised or the professional response is ineffective.
- North Yorkshire Police have identified that although the number of children at risk of being sexually exploited is small, children who go missing from home or care, or misuse alcohol or drugs are most at risk.

- The CYSCB has worked closely with the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board to deal with children at risk of being sexually exploited including hosting a joint conference for 200 delegates from both areas in March 2014.
- Research shows that many adults who sexually abuse children exhibit concerning sexual behaviours as children. Although the CYSCB has a process for dealing with children with sexually harmful behaviours it is not possible to quantify how many children exhibit these behaviours.

### ***Local Authority Designated Officer- Allegations against professionals***

- 49 allegations were received against childcare professionals during 2013/14.
- 39% of all allegations were substantiated, 11% unfounded (this means that something happened but was misunderstood or misinterpreted). Only one case was assessed as malicious.
- 33% of the allegations were made against education personnel, 27% against early years personnel and 11% against foster carers.
- 42% of the allegations related to sexual abuse and misconduct with 36% for physical mistreatment.

### ***Children who go missing***

- Children who go missing from home or care are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. These children are known to have poor educational outcomes and more likely to suffer mental ill-health.
- In 2013/14 - 484 children went missing from home or care.
- Looked after children and children cared for by someone other than their parents are more likely to go missing.
- Most children who go missing are aged between 14 and 16 years.
- A small number of children who went missing were found to be associating with adults who pose a risk to children.

- 53 children were reported as missing from education which is 0.26% of the school population. Most of these children are located with the remainder believed to have moved away from York. However, the tracking of these children is not sufficiently robust.

### ***Domestic abuse***

In the past year the York Health and Wellbeing Board has established a domestic violence strategy group with membership from all the relevant agencies and representatives from the CYSCB. The group role is to develop a York Domestic Abuse strategy and action plan. The Council has joined the White Ribbon Campaign which urges men to speak out against violent and abusive behaviour towards women.

The Police and the Independent Domestic Abuse Service (IDAS) work in partnership with the aim to intervene at the first incident. Cases assessed by Police as low risk of harm are passed to the early intervention worker with or without consent who will provide advice and support to the family. This approach undermines the ability of the perpetrator to discourage victims. Between February and May 2014, 93 referrals have been made for early intervention work. This project was funded by Safer York Partnership as a pilot.

Research shows that many young people are living with violence and abuse in their own relationships with a quarter of teenage girls reporting that they had been assaulted by their boyfriend<sup>1</sup>. To combat this IDAS run services for young people experiencing abuse in their relationships. Further funding was obtained from Public Health to train 17 practitioners across York to deliver and use the Respect Toolkit with 14-18 year olds who have been abusive. The Youth Offending Team (YOT) and the Pupil Referral Unit have been involved in diversionary work using the toolkit.

The City also benefits from having an NSPCC service, *Domestic Abuse Recovering Together (DART)*. Over the past year the service has worked with 15 mothers and 15 children in the DART group work programme. DART offers mothers and their children a safe environment in which they can talk about past domestic abuse and strengthen their relationship.

- Research shows that 40% of cases referred to Children's Social Care have experienced domestic abuse.

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<sup>1</sup> NSPCC , 2009

- North Yorkshire Police record that there is a child present in 18% of all domestic abuse incidents where the police attend. There are children present in 14% of incidents assessed by the police as 'high risk' and 19% of cases assessed as 'medium risk'.
- The number of repeated incidents of domestic abuse has risen. However, this is likely to be due to the success of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) which encourages victims to report all incidents of abuse.
- All cases are contacted by an early intervention worker with families provided with access to support services. Medium and high risk cases involving children are assessed by the MARAC and provided with a safety plan.

### ***Child deaths***

- The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) reviewed the cases of 14 children who died in York. The number of deaths of York Children reported to CDOP was 3. The reason for the difference is due to delays in receiving notifications.
- An analysis of the CDOP findings will be presented in the CDOP annual report which will be published in summer 2014

### **Listening to children**

- The CYSCB wants its work to be informed by children and the CYSCB has established a Safeguarding Children Involvement Group. The role of the group is to develop a range of approaches to seek and listen to the views of children.
- Children's Trust Unit will provide feedback on what children are saying in a range of surveys
- Looked after children are telling us that they are positive about their placements and feel listened to. 76% say that their placement is either 'good' or 'very good'. They feel well supported in terms of their health and education.

- Most looked after children were happy with the contact they have with their families although they report finding it difficult making contact with their social worker.
- Many Looked After children said that they did not know who their Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) was because they had not been visited by the IRO between meetings.

### **Assuring good practice**

- Although the CYSCB has been recognised by previous inspections to be effective it commissioned a peer review to provide an object scrutiny of its work.
- The review found examples of positive work especially in relation to neglect and the Board's willingness to learn and improve. However, it found that the CYSCB needed to improve its profile and do better with analysing and monitoring the effectiveness of safeguarding practice. It also found that there was insufficient attention paid to seeking the views of children.
- The CYSCB has responded to all the areas identified in the peer review and has an improvement plan to ensure that it remains effective.
- The CYSCB has improved the way it monitors and assures safeguarding practice by developing a comprehensive Performance and Improvement Framework. The CYSCB also undertakes routine audits of cases.

### **The children's workforce**

- The CYSCB provides a wide range of safeguarding training opportunities to those who work with children. The opportunities include training, master classes, practice learning groups, briefings and a conference.
- The range of learning has received very positive evaluations with 99% rating the presentation and content of courses as being either good or excellent.

- Some work has been undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning using post course surveys. However, more work needs to be done in order to be assured of the effectiveness on the learning provided.

### **Learning from experience**

- No serious case reviews were undertaken during 2013/14. However, one Learning Lessons Review and one Single Agency Review have been completed.
- The CYSCB has produced an overview report of all the case reviews undertaken over the past 7 years. The review highlighted common themes through most if not all the case reviews including the adequacy of assessments, the quality of supervision and the professional understanding of various forms of child maltreatment including neglect, sexual abuse and domestic abuse.
- The review of case reviews also found that the quality of reviews was variable as was the process for learning the lessons. As a result the CYSCB has changed the review process to include fewer recommendations which focus more clearly on achieving better outcomes for children.
- The practice lessons identified by the review have made a significant contribution to shaping the CYSCB's priorities.
- The CYSCB has undertaken regular audits of cases. The audits have identified similar lessons to the case reviews; the quality of assessment, absence of the child's voice and inadequate planning.
- A themed audit of neglect identified that the learning with the thematic review of child neglect published in 2012 have not sufficiently permeated practice or service planning.
- In response to the review along with the findings of case file audits Children's Social Care have prioritised improving the quality of assessments and improving social workers understanding of sexual abuse and neglect.



## **CYSCB's Priorities for 2014/15**

The CYSCB is continuing to develop a comprehensive Performance and Improvement framework as way of knowing and understanding what is happening to safeguard children. Based on this learning the Board has identified five key areas for further attention across the City:

### ***CYSCB priorities for 2014/15:***

#### **Early help:**

**Making sure problems are identified early and that families are provided with the right help at the right time. The CYSCB believes that where families receive the right help early later more serious problems can be prevented.**

#### **Neglect:**

**The CYSCB identified child neglect as a priority in the thematic review in 2012. However, despite some progress the findings of audits and reviews means that considerably more needs to be done if children are going to be protected from the long term damaging effect of neglect.**

#### **Child sexual abuse:**

**Child sexual exploitation (CSE) has received a lot of attention nationally and locally. Whilst CSE remains a priority, the CYSCB believes that child sexual abuse is underreported with reviews telling us that professionals need a better understanding of sexual abuse.**

#### **Domestic abuse:**

**The CYSCB recognises that there are still too many children living in families where there is domestic abuse. We also know that domestic abuse can be an indicator for neglect and has a long lasting impact on children and will often coexist with other forms of abuse**

### **Children who go missing:**

**Children who go missing from home, care and education are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. We also know that children go missing for a reason; often due to difficulties at home or in care. From the data, too many children go missing in York and that there is a need to improve the way all agencies respond. This may also be an indicator of neglect.**