

Learning and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee

17 July 2013

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

Bi-Annual Safeguarding Update

1. Summary

At a meeting of the Committee in June 2012 Members agreed to receive a six monthly update on key children's safeguarding issues. This third 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 no ongoing Serious Case Reviews, commissioned by the CYSCB. At the January briefing three reviews were highlighted including the lessons from a completed serious case review. A summary of the high level lessons learned included:

The serious case review found that the issue of child sexual exploitation (CSE) was not sufficiently understood and as a result the child although being seen as being 'in need' was not considered to be in need of protection. In effect the focus was often on the child's behaviour rather than on the possibility that she was being sexually exploited. Positively, the review recognised that awareness of CSE has improved significantly across all the agencies.

Two individual agency reviews were undertaken by Children's Social Care due to concerns raised around the quality of assessment in each case. The first case [Case 1] related to a family with a history of potential sexual abuse and neglect. The second [Case 2] related to a child who was found to have received non-accidental injuries following being returned home after previously been removed from her mother's care.

The individual agency reviews highlighted shortfalls in assessment practice with Case 1 stressing the need for assessments to fully *take full account of past history of the family and the nature of family engagement with professionals*. The case further highlighted the need of practitioners to understand the often complex issues associated with dealing with child sexual abuse.

Case 2 stressed the need for social workers in assessments to *understand what they are observing; using various tools of assessment; how to use the information gathered to inform planning and future intervention; and how to evaluate if that particular intervention/plan is working towards the intended outcome*.

A learning lessons review has recently been commissioned by the CYSCB exploring the circumstances surrounding a child who was returned to its parents care after being diagnosed with a brain injury and multiple fractures. The review will examine the actions of Children's Social Care and the hospital.

Recommendation: The scrutiny committee to continue to receive summarised briefings of cases reviewed by the CYSCB

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.

In January 2013 the committee asked to be kept apprised of the emerging practice implications from this work and how these will be implemented.

The challenge to all agencies working with children and families is to ensure the review's lessons are implemented.

To this end, in addition to the highly successful conference, the CYSCB Unit undertook a range of interagency briefings to disseminate the reviews key lessons.

The CYSCB has incorporated the lessons of the thematic review into its business plan and will act to monitor the effectiveness of interventions. Performance measures are being developed which will look to reducing the number of repeated interventions. Emphasis also needs to be placed on reducing the age at which the intervention is assessed as having a positive impact on the child's wellbeing.

Work is underway with the Police and Children's Social Care exploring the use of warnings with parents where there is evidence of neglectful parenting. The warnings are designed to act as a 'marker' to parents with the primary aim of motivating change. However, should the warning not be heeded, the approach will make it easier for the police to pursue a criminal enquiry under the Children and Young Persons Act 1933

Peer Review

The Assistant Director, Children's Specialist Services and with agreement of the independent chair of the CYSCB invited a peer review of the Board's functioning, processes and support from specialist safeguarding colleagues in East Riding.

The key lines of enquiry for this review were set locally and were specifically targeted at those areas where national policy change, regulatory change and our own intelligence suggested we needed to consider.

These included:

- Quality Assurance Framework
- Business Planning
- Strategic Leadership and Development
- Public Interface
- Delivery of Local Authority Designated Officer function
- Workforce Development

Feedback from this process will inform the wider review of the CYSCB and its support arrangements agreed at the January Board meeting.

It is right to report that, given the intended focus on areas where we have identified vulnerabilities through self assessment, the early findings confirm some of our concerns. These findings are not published, however they will inform the overall Board review and a further update on this work will be the focus of the next briefing.

Recommendation: An update on the review of the CYSCB to be presented to the December 2013 scrutiny briefing.

3. Other Children's Safeguarding Development

Revised Working Together 2013 [came into force on 15 April 2013].

This document provides guidance on effective multi-agency working to safeguard children. It represents a radical shift in the way that the child protection system will operate in England. This includes a new approach to the oversight of serious case reviews, new guidelines for assessing the needs of vulnerable children, and a huge reduction in the level of national child protection guidance.

Headlines:

The guidance is clear that "safeguarding is everyone's responsibility" and other headlines include:

- The reinstatement of statutory timescales for assessing the needs of vulnerable children, which had been removed from the consultation documents.
- A removal of the distinction between initial and core assessments, replaced by ongoing, locally developed, assessments of need.
- A change in the governance arrangements for independent Chairs of local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs), who will now be appointed and held to account by the local authority Chief Executive rather than the Director of Children's Services.
- The establishment of a national panel to hold LSCB Chairs to account on whether serious case reviews should be carried out, which independent reviewers should be commissioned to lead the

review, and to challenge any decision that the report should not be published.

- A requirement on LSCBs to develop a local framework for learning and improvement, including regular reviews of cases that may not meet the criteria for a full serious case review, as part of an ongoing process of learning and development.

New Ofsted Inspection Framework

On 12th April 2013, the Chief Inspector of Ofsted announced plans to inspect local authority child protection and services for children who are looked after under a single, combined framework. This new framework will see a shift to a more outcome focused methodology and consequently requires a corresponding ability by the Local Authority and its partners to explicitly demonstrate effectiveness in terms of improved outcomes for the children they serve.

Headlines:

From November 2013, the framework will include:

- A judgement grade of 'requires improvement' that will replace the current 'adequate' judgement
- Grade descriptors to describe 'good' in each of the following three key judgement areas:
 1. the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection
 2. the experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence
and;
 3. leadership, management and governance
- A review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and will include a graded judgement of this effectiveness.

Recommendation:

A briefing setting out the preparation and planning arrangements for York's next inspection is presented to the December scrutiny committee.

Annual CYSCB Report

This draft report [at Annex 1] sets out the progress and activity of the CYSCB over the last year.

When complete and following further consultation with partners this document will include a two year business plan.

Some key areas of work to highlight for today's meeting include¹:

- New Quality Assurance Framework
- Allegations Against Professionals – Local Authority Designated Officer activity
- Child Sexual Exploitation – Local and Regional Collaboration

4. Changes in Children's Social Care

Vision

In light of the changing policy / regulation and financial landscape Children's Social Care has undergone a programme of very significant transformation over the last eighteen months.

Transparency and clarity have been the watch words in delivering these changes and a comprehensive vision document for staff and partners has been prepared.

[A copy is attached at Annex 2]

Looked After Population

York's Keeping Families Together programme has driven systemic change across the children's services community. This programme seeks to maintain a relentless focus on preventative intervention. The impact of this work / approach has seen a sustained and significant safe reduction in the number of children becoming looked after. In the past twelve months the total overall population has reduced from 260 to 223.

Recommendation: An update on the trends in York's Looked after Children's population is presented to the December 2013 scrutiny committee meeting.

¹ [Note: The independent chair will update on these issues at today's meeting.]

Front Door

Arrangements for receiving and responding to any concern for a child or young person are currently being revised to reflect the changes set out in Working Together 2013.

These changes will see:

- The collocation of Police / Social Care (adults and children) / Health colleagues in West Offices.
- A revised threshold document setting out the response arrangements to differing levels of concern.
- Greater use of the Customer Services functions available at West Offices

Recommendation: A progress briefing on the above developments is presented to the June 2014 meeting of this scrutiny committee.

Troubled Families

The government has announced a five year extension of this programme which provides a payments by results framework for local authorities to focus family support services on those families with specific characteristics of vulnerability.

The programme in York has recently been endorsed by the national programme monitors and is led in York by a programme Board chaired by the DCS.

4. Summary of Recommendations

- i. The scrutiny committee to continue to receive summarised briefings of cases reviewed by the CYSCB.
- ii. An update on the review of the CYSCB is presented to the December 2013 scrutiny briefing.
- iii. A briefing setting out the preparation and planning arrangements for York's next inspection is presented to the December scrutiny committee.

- iv. An update on the trends in York's Looked after Children's population is presented to the December 2013 scrutiny committee.
- v. A progress briefing on the children's 'front door' developments is presented to the June 14 meeting of this scrutiny committee.

REASON: To allow Members to be fully informed on key children's safeguarding issues in York.

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Annexes:

Annex 1 – Draft Annual CYSCB Report

Annex B – Vision for Children's Social Care in York