
**Learning and Culture Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

22 January 2014

Report of the Assistant Director for Childrens Specialist Services

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 childrens safeguarding issues. This is fourth report updates the committee on key local and national safeguarding developments since July 2013.

2. City of York Safeguarding Children Board [CYSCB]

Our Local Safeguarding Children Board is responsible for overseeing the quality and robustness of the multi agency safeguarding children arrangements for the city. In previous updates the independent chair of this Board provided an overview of activity and developments. However this review period has seen significant change to our local arrangements including the resignation of Roger Thompson as the long standing chair of the Board.

In these circumstances, this report takes the opportunity to update members on the details of the above changes and it is hoped that there will be an opportunity to introduce the new independent chair to the Committee when it meets on 22 January.

Changes to CYSCB arrangements

The July 2013 update informed members of a peer review commissioned by the local authority and its partners to consider the effectiveness of our local board arrangements. This review was prompted by a significant shift in national policy (set out in a revised Working Together 2013), a new Ofsted inspection framework and a need to ensure that the Board is fit for purpose in this new operating environment.

Details of the key lines of enquiry for this review were included in the July 2013 update.

The review confirmed some key strengths in the city including good partnership working, strong workforce development and examples of good practice at the front line. However, the review also found some areas for further development and improvement. These included the need to:

- strengthen the Board's performance monitoring arrangements
- strengthen independent challenge from the Board
- improve the Board's public profile
- improve the Board's engagement with children, young people and their families
- ensure sufficiently senior representation on the Board

It is worth noting that all of the above issues, strengths and areas for development are identified as the key lines of enquiry set out in the new inspection framework for Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs) introduced in April 2013.

In response to the above findings a detailed improvement plan was promptly agreed by the Board. Since August 2013 this improvement plan has achieved rapid and significant progress against all of the above areas.

Of particular significance are the development of a new qualitative performance management framework and the introduction of an involvement strategy for the Board. Progress reports on both of these work streams are appended to this report (Annex 1 and 2).

In August 2013 and unrelated to the above developments, Roger Thompson the then independent chair decided to resign. Mr Thompson had occupied the role for six very successful years and took the view that it was time to step down. Mr Thompson also took the view that in the new operating environments for LSCBs the appointment of the independent chair should be reviewed on a two yearly cycle.

A recruitment process led by the Chief Executive of the local authority and chief officers from the Board's key statutory partners saw the appointment, in November 2013, of Mr Simon Westwood to the role of independent chair for the Board.

Mr Westwood, a retired experienced senior manager in Children's Social Care, took up this role in December 2013. Following his current induction he will chair the January 2014 meeting of the CYSCB.

A more detailed briefing on the CYSCB improvement plan will be presented in the July 14 update.

Recommendation: The committee is respectfully invited to acknowledge the long standing contribution of Mr Thompson as the chair of the CYSCB.

A more detailed report on progress against the Board's improvement plan is presented as part of the July 2014 update.

Update on Serious Case Reviews

There are currently no ongoing Serious Case Reviews (SCR) commissioned by the CYSCB. However, the board's serious cases panel continues to review and monitor the implementation of any recommendation arising from previous SCRs and learning lessons reviews.

This issue is addressed further within the Children's Social Care update

Multi Agency [Section 11] Audit of Safeguarding Arrangements

Local Safeguarding Children Boards are required to co-ordinate a biennial multi agency audit of local safeguarding arrangements. This process involves each of the agencies represented on the Board undertaking a self audit and sharing their findings to produce a composite picture of their individual and collective effectiveness in safeguarding children. The outcome of this process will be the subject of a regional challenge event in mid January 2014 and the outcome will be available when this report is presented on 22 January.

Recommendation: The Committee receives a verbal update on the outcome of the Section 11 audit regional challenge event.

3. Other Childrens Safeguarding Developments

Thematic Inspection of York's Early Help Offer

The local authority and its partners have received notification that Ofsted will inspect the local arrangements for Early Help. This inspection conducted under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2000 will look to identifying common themes and to highlight good practice and areas for developments across all of those authorities included in this process.

Ofsted inspectors make no judgements regarding the quality of work in individual local authorities although they will provide verbal feedback at the end of the process. A copy of the letter of notification is included (Annex 3) and this letter provides more detail on the process of the inspection.

Recommendation: A report on the outcome of the thematic inspection is included in the July 14 briefing.

4. Changes in Childrens Social Care

Contacting us about children

New information and signposting for professionals who wish to contact the local authority about a child / young person has been published. This refreshed information sets out in very clear format how to make a referral about a child. Behind this new signposting sits some significantly strengthened referral and assessment arrangements. These arrangements ensure that that every referral receives an effective and proportionate response. The materials described will be presented to the meeting.

A more detailed briefing on these changes will be presented to the July 2014 meeting.

Recommendation: A detailed update on developments within childrens social care is presented to the July 2014 meeting.

Responding to Lessons Learned

As part of a continuous improvement process managers within childrens social care have developed a detailed practice improvement plan [PIP] which incorporates all of those lessons learned from both local and national case reviews. This PIP makes explicit links between lessons learned and local practice standards and expectation. Although quite a detailed and operational document it is included at (Annex 4) for Members information and review.

The implementation of this plan is further supported by the introduction of the Principal Social Worker role within the authority.

Looked After Children

The review period has continued to see a reduction in the number of Looked After Children. At July 2013 there were 223 children looked after by the local authority. On 31st December this number had further reduced to 215.

A brief analysis of this cohort of children and young people highlights:

- there are 15 children placed for adoption who are likely to leave care in the first 6 months of 2014
- the number of children placed in external independent foster placements (with an average annual cost of £55k) has reduced from 16 in September 2013 to 8 on the 31st December 2013
- the number of young people placed in external residential placements (with an average annual cost of £162k) went from 10 in September 13 to 11 at 31st December 2013

These figures broadly reflect the projections set out in the Keeping Families Together strategy.

The progress of our Looked After Children is routinely reported to the Corporate Parenting Board.

Recommendation: A further update on the progress of the Keeping Families Together strategy is presented to the July 14 meeting.

5. Summary of Recommendations

- i. The committee is invited to acknowledge the long standing contribution of Mr Thompson as the chair of the CYSCB.
- ii. A more detailed report on progress against the Board's improvement plan is presented as part of the July 14 update.
- iii. The committee receives a verbal update on the outcome of the Section 11 audit regional challenge event.
- iv. A report on the outcome of the thematic inspection is included in the July 14 briefing.
- v. A detailed update on developments within childrens social care is presented to the July 14 meeting.
- vi. A further update on the progress of the Keeping Families Together strategy is presented to the July 14 meeting

Reason: To allow Members to be fully informed on key childrens safeguarding issues in York

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Annexes:

Annex 1 - Safeguarding Development Officer (SDO): Progress report
October - December 2014

Annex 2 - Involving children and young people in the work of the
CYSCB

Annex 3 - Ofsted thematic inspection – early help – Notification Letter

Annex 4 - Practice Improvement Plan Dec 2013 – Feb 2014