



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Young People's Scrutiny Committee
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<u>Item</u>
7
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Covering report for the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2015-2016

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1. Summary

1.1 The Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board is required to publish an annual report on the effectiveness of child safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the local area. This is a statutory requirement under section 14A of the Children Act 2004. The report should be submitted to the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, the local Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board

1.2 The annual report of the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) 2015-2016 is attached as Appendix A for your attention. The report will be presented by the Independent Chair of the SSCB; Sally Halls and covers the reporting period between April 2015 and March 2016.

1.3 The SSCB annual report 2015- 2016 provides an account of the activities, development and impact of the Board and its partners in fulfilling their statutory responsibility of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in Shropshire. The report identifies areas for improvement and future challenges for effective multi-agency working to improve outcomes for children.

2. Recommendations

The Young People's Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note and comment on the information in the attached Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2015-2016.

3. Report

The SSCB determined three main priorities for action during the year:

- Neglect
- Domestic Abuse

- Missing children (including child sexual exploitation and trafficking)

Good progress has been made against these priority areas and is summarised as follows:

Neglect

Following a Serious Case Review published in November 2015 SSCB has begun a review to strengthen Shropshire's response to neglect to make sure that it is fit for purpose. As part of this review consideration has been given to the Neglect Assessment tool, for use by practitioners across each level of need, including Early Help, Targeted Help and Specialist Help. Shropshire will adopt the Graded Care Profile as a practical tool to give an objective measure of the care of children to help identify and intervene in cases of child neglect.

A multi-agency Neglect Conference took place in November 2016, where the Graded Care Profile was launched.

Domestic Abuse

Performance data presented to SSCB in relation to the frequency that children are exposed to domestic abuse has shown an increase in repeat exposure of 3 or 5 incidents or more. This coupled with local MARAC data indicates that reported incidents of domestic abuse are increasing, although Shropshire figures remain low in comparison to national estimations.

SSCB has recently commissioned a multi-agency audit to take a deep dive into a case sample of repeat incidences of domestic abuse and to cross-reference these cases with those presented at MARAC and their status within the safeguarding system.

In the coming months SSCB will work with partners via the Pentagon of Partnerships to progress the following agreed actions in relation to Domestic Abuse:

- Community Safety Partnership to lead on review and refresh of the Domestic Abuse Strategy in early 2017, to include impact and support for children who witness domestic abuse.
- Domestic abuse to be the focus of a partnership workshop in March 2017.
- Ensure that the service specification of the 0-25 Emotional Health and Well-being Plan includes the need for therapeutic/support services for children affected by domestic abuse.
- Review the terms of reference of the Domestic Abuse Forum.
- Explore development of closer links between Compass and the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator.
- Establish a Voluntary Perpetrator Programme

Missing Children (including CSE and trafficking)

CSE

Children Services successfully recruited a CSE and Missing Operational Lead in June 2015 to act as the main point of contact for both front line staff and key agencies for consultation, information or support for any CSE or missing children concerns.

In November 2015 the CSE Panel moved into operational services within Children's Social Care to ensure that CSE becomes embedded in day to day safeguarding work.

SSCB has continued to raise awareness of CSE through multi-agency training and local campaigns such as Say Something if you See Something and Chelsea's Choice.

Chelsea's Choice, a nationally recognised CSE awareness raising theatre production was rolled out across all local authority maintained secondary schools and academies in Shropshire reaching an audience of over 8,000 students.

Due to a number of repeat referrals in to CSE Panel SSCB commissioned a multi-agency audit to review the effectiveness of our response to CSE. The audit looked at 6 cases against criteria from the Ofsted Joint Targeted Area Inspection.

Partner funding has been secured to build capacity around CSE and commission an independent review of the response to child sexual exploitation in the county. The purpose of the review is to inform SSCB on what more needs to be done to maximise strategic links and address any gaps in CSE service provision locally.

Young Solutions have recently been commissioned to roll out a programme to raise awareness of CSE within the commercial sector to embed the work of the local 'Say Something if You See Something' campaign which was launched in 2015.

Missing

Following HMIC's criticism of the 'unauthorised absence' category in relation to young people when missing West Mercia Police have reviewed the process and have agreed to remove the 'unauthorised absence' category from the Joint Missing Protocol. The 'absent' category has also been removed within West Mercia, whilst this is being reviewed nationally. As a result all children and young people who now go missing are classed as medium or high risk.

SSCB has identified that there continues to be an increase in the number of OLAC going missing. West Mercia Police have been reinforcing and

reminding the care homes of the procedure when a young person goes missing. There also remains concern over the number of return interviews not completed for OLAC. The CSE and Missing Operational Lead within Children's Social Care is now tracking all missing notifications for OLAC and sending a letter to the placing authority and IRO reminding them of their responsibilities in carrying out the return home interview.

The challenge of completion of return interviews for OLAC will be addressed through proposals put forward by West Mercia Police and Shropshire Council.

Responding to Challenges

During the course of the year the SSCB has presented a number of challenges to partner agencies. Challenges provided to Shropshire Council and the responses are outlined below.

Evolution of Compass: - Shropshire Council reported that multi-agency engagement will continue to develop with Police joining Compass in early 2016. Health visitor engagement is also progressing. There have also been improvements in the engagement of Police and Health representatives in strategy meetings and discussions. Children's Social Care is ensuring that there is connectivity between Compass and the Channel Panel where children are at risk of radicalisation.

Early Years Strategic Inquiry: - This has been considered by Shropshire Council Early Years and Childcare Service. The overall quality of Early Years provision in Shropshire, as judged by Ofsted, remains good compared to local, national and statistical neighbours. The Early Years' service is also committed to carrying out safeguarding reviews with all of the settings on an annual basis which has a positive impact on the overall quality of safeguarding provision within the Early Years settings.

Return interviews for LAC: - Shropshire Council has been challenged by the SSCB around the poor rate of return interviews for looked after children placed within Shropshire by other local authorities. The LSCB is aware that this group is over represented in the statistics of children missing. Although the responsibility for commissioning return interviews for these children lies with the placing authority, given the numbers of such children placed in Shropshire (more than 400) and their particular vulnerability, together with the need for Shropshire to ensure that it is doing everything it can to ensure the safety of children resident within the area, as well as understand fully any risks there may be the SSCB has asked that this is considered further by the local authority, the Police and the Private Provider's forum. This is being taken forward during 2016-17.

Multi-agency Challenges for 2016-2017

Wood Review

In January 2016 the Government announced a fundamental review of the role and function of LSCBs within the context of local strategic multi-agency working.

The Wood Review signals the beginning of a time of considerable change for LSCBs. It is essential that partners continue to work together in LSCBs as we take the recommendations forward to make the required change happen. The SSCB Governance Group, (comprised of representatives from the Local Authority, Police and CCG – who will be collectively responsible for the new local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements) will propose the future direction of travel for multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in Shropshire.

Performance

An identified area for improvement and challenge to partner agencies is improved data collection and analysis. For SSCB to be able to evidence impact effectively multi-agency data must be made available and be supported by a narrative from partner agencies. Meaningful data can then be interrogated with confidence and will provide the SSCB with robust performance data that can be used alongside audit findings and other learning in order to highlight good practice and identify areas for improvement.

Mainstreaming our response to CSE

SSCB has recently commissioned a review of Shropshire's strategic response to CSE in order to establish the next stages in embedding and mainstreaming our response. Funding has been secured from partner agencies in order to build upon the foundations of this work in 2016-2017.

4. Conclusions

Evidence suggests that Shropshire agencies are generally effective in keeping children safe across Shropshire, and that more children and families are receiving help at an earlier stage. We have seen a significant reduction in the number of referrals to Children's Social Care as a result of ensuring that children and families receive early help to meet their needs. Overall, however, there is a slight increase in children within the child protection system. Numbers of looked after children have reduced with the development of effective edge of care services. Further development of effective early help services should assist with keeping children safe and improving their wellbeing without recourse to child protection processes.

Developing a consistent approach to hearing the voice of children and young people, parents/carers and professionals is an area for development in 2016-2017. Good foundations have been put in place with the development of a Student LSCB and in order to deliver effective safeguarding measures SSCB needs to continue to use this feedback effectively to influence service delivery and provide challenge to partners.

The quality assurance processes of the Board need to be strengthened to allow service user feedback to be coupled with robust data analysis and audit findings. This will provide robust evidence of impact regarding the effectiveness of safeguarding systems and practice in Shropshire. Quality assurance reporting aligned to the journey of the child will build on SSCB's revised performance framework to ensure that SSCB is able to evidence that children and young people receive the right service at the right time.

The SSCB has long maintained a focus on looked after children placed within Shropshire from elsewhere. New challenges associated with CSE, FGM and the PREVENT agenda demand that this is further developed. Much work has been done between the Police and the Local Authority with the Private Care Providers and placing authorities which has resulted in improved practice and reduced safeguarding concerns for this population of young people.

Within Shropshire, SSCB is developing collaborative working with a number of statutory and non-statutory partnerships, influencing priorities and commissioning, and identifying common purpose, cross-cutting themes and ways in which the partnerships can 'add value' and improve outcomes for children and families. Areas of joint working include the development of the 'Think Family' approach and tackling the 'hidden harm' of domestic abuse and substance misuse.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)
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Councillor David Minnery

Local Member

Appendices Appendix A - SSCB Annual Report 2015-2016
