



<u>Committee and Date</u>	<u>Item</u>
Young People's Scrutiny Committee	
26 September 2017	
	<u>Public</u>

Covering report for the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2016-2017

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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) 2016-2017 is attached as Appendix A for your attention. The report will be presented by the Interim Independent Chair of the SSCB; Ivan Powell and covers the reporting period between April 2016 and March 2017.

1.3 The SSCB annual report 2016- 2017 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 2016-2017.

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 strengthened Shropshire's response to neglect to make sure that it is fit for purpose.

In November 2016 SSCB held its biannual conference on the theme of childhood neglect attended by 130 multi-agency delegates. The conference launched the Neglect Strategy and delivered workshops on the commissioned NSPCC "Graded Care Profile 2" (GCP2) which focuses specifically on the lived experience of the child and the impact on their safety, well-being and development.

Work has taken place throughout 2016-2017 relating to the length of time children and young people were subject to child protection plans. Focused work is being undertaken on children who are subject to a child protection plan for 9 months or more to consider whether the case should progress into Public Law Outline process or care proceedings.

Domestic Abuse

Children's Social Care have improved the step down process with children stepping down from child protection to Child in Need for a minimum of twelve weeks, before step down to Early Help. A six week period for handover of a case from CIN to Early Help has been implemented to ensure that step down plans are robust.

Shropshire Recovery Partnership have raised awareness amongst social workers on how and when to make a referral to their service.

Regular domestic abuse triage meetings now take place in COMPASS and notifications are sent to schools to alert them to domestic abuse incidents where children have been present in the household.

The SSCB dataset has been revised and will be an area of on-going development alongside the collation of domestic abuse data to monitor the effectiveness of the revised domestic abuse strategy.

The SSCB was of the view that the revised all-age Domestic Abuse Strategy 2017-2020 would need to include a more robust and comprehensive approach to the safeguarding of children affected by domestic abuse. Based upon information and findings the SSCB provided a challenge and recommendation report to the Community Safety Partnership in January 2017.

As a result the SSCB hopes to see:

- Clarity around governance arrangements for leading the domestic abuse agenda across the partnership.
- A fully operational voluntary perpetrators programme.
- An increase in referrals to MARAC.
- Effective use of evidence based assessment tools.
- Improved provision of services for children and young people affected by domestic abuse, influenced by the views of children and young people.
- More sophisticated performance monitoring to measure outcomes in relation to domestic abuse and its impact on children.

Missing Children (including CSE and trafficking)

In 2016 the SSCB, through joint partnership funding, commissioned a comprehensive review of agencies response to CSE in Shropshire. The purpose of the review was to inform SSCB on what more needs to be done to maximise strategic links and address any gaps in CSE service provision locally.

The review found that:

- Significant activity has been coordinated by SSCB across a range of functions including training, communications and the development of an infrastructure that promotes information sharing in respect of CSE.
- Dedicated resources have been secured within the Local Authority and Police.
- An award winning Sex and Relationships Education curriculum is on offer to nearly all Shropshire children.
- Significant work has taken place to engage with private care providers, many of whom are caring for children placed in Shropshire by other Local Authorities. This has resulted in tangible outcomes for individual children e.g. every child in residential care has a trigger plan.

Developments as a result of the review have included:

- Local data was used to inform a revised CSE Strategy and action plan which is being monitored by the CSE sub-group.

- The CSE pathway, assessment tool kit and practitioner guidance was revised to ensure clarity of role and responsibilities of Children's Social Care and partner agencies in relation to victims of CSE.
- Revised terms of reference for both the CSE sub-group and the CSE Panel.
- The CSE Panel is now much more strategic, as opposed to case focused, enabling the panel to pick up on trends, themes and links, as well as supporting prevention and disruption.
- Individual cases are now managed through the case management processes within the local authority.
- The revised Thresholds document references CSE and has been re-launched via briefing sessions.
- An intelligence form has been developed to ensure vital information is shared with the Police and CSE Panel.

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.

Shropshire Council were presented with a challenge from SSCB when two Health Visitors were removed from COMPASS on the basis that they could not access their electronic systems. SSCB was concerned that this would impact on the effectiveness of the domestic abuse triage and information sharing which was enhancing decision making. Following discussion with the Lead Commissioner in Public Health the issue was resolved with an IT solution being provided.

The SSCB Executive considered an assurance report from MAPPA which highlighted the risk whereby there is a culture in **Children's Services** to close cases at the point where an offender is sentenced to custody. This was of particular concern as some families choose to take children on prison visits and this is not always appropriate.

Children's Social Care acknowledged that on occasions it is appropriate that ongoing work is undertaken with a family even when the offender is sentenced to custody. Children's Social Care have not been made aware of any cases where it was felt that a child was being placed at risk by attending prison visits prior to the assurance report from MAPPA. No cases had been

raised or formally escalated via the SSCB escalation policy. A briefing has been issued to social workers regarding consideration of the appropriateness of prison visits and to ensure that clear guidance is provided to the parent or carer.

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, there is also a reduction in children within the child protection system. However, numbers of looked after children have increased by 3.9%, partly due to the emerging challenges of accommodating unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Further development in strengthening families through early help services should assist with keeping children safe and improving their wellbeing without recourse to child protection and looked after processes.

Performance measurement has demonstrated improvements in practice as a result of multi-agency audits and learning. An identified area for improvement and challenge to partner agencies is improved data collection and analysis.

The Board has begun to respond to findings from the Wood review of LSCBs and the new legislation of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The SSCB Strategic Governance Group has begun to consider new local safeguarding arrangements, primarily with a review of the effectiveness of the SSCB Business Unit. The review has sought to streamline processes within both the LSCB and Adults Safeguarding Board Business Units by joining both units to maximize efficiencies and create more joined up working across safeguarding issues.

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) Councillor David Minnery
Local Member
Appendices Appendix A - SSCB Annual Report 2016-2017

