Review of Cardiff
Local Safeguarding Children Board

October 2009
1. INTRODUCTION

Local Safeguarding Children Boards

1.1 Local Safeguarding Children Boards are required to co-ordinate the activities of each person or body represented on the Board in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in their area and to ensure the effectiveness of those activities. Each Board partner retains their own existing lines of accountability for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children by their services. The LSCB does not have power to direct other organisations.

1.2 This report provides an overview of the effectiveness of the LSCB arrangements to safeguard and protect children within its area. A separate report on the local authority responsibilities for safeguarding children has been completed.

2 PROCESS AND EVIDENCE CONSIDERED

2.1 This report is based on the written self evaluation by the Chair of the LSCB of the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and fieldwork carried out by CSSIW inspectors, Suzanne Griffiths (lead inspector), Margaret Wearing and John Williams.

2.2 Interviews were held with

- Chair of Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Vice chair of Local Safeguarding Children Board who was also the lead nurse of the Cardiff and the Vale NHS Trust and a representative on the Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Police and education representatives on the Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Officers and members of the local authority, as part of the review of the local authority arrangements to safeguard children

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Cardiff currently has a two tier LSCB: a Strategic Executive Group (SEG) chaired by the Corporate Director for Social Services and Lifelong Learning in the local authority and a main, operational, LSCB chaired by the Chief Children’s Officer from the local authority. The strategic board agrees resources and ratifies strategic decisions made by the LSCB. It meets 2/3 times a year and the main board six times a year. Borne of the transition from ACPC to LSCB the structure aims to ensure that senior representatives of statutory agencies could
commit time and utilise the links they with the other partnerships. The LSCB members interviewed felt that it worked for the authority and its partners. The LSCB business plan for 2009/10 includes a review of its structure and chairing arrangements, including those of sub-groups which will begin with use of the LSCB Self Assessment and Improvement Tool (SAIT). The timing of the review will enable it to take account of NHS changes and their significance locally for the LSCB.

3.2 The LSCB has clear links with the Children and Young Person’s Partnership (CYPP) and there are relevant links between the LSCB business plan and the children’s plan. The link to the Local Service Board and other partnerships are less clear, although there is some overlap of membership between the two. At present relationships rely primarily on the roles of individuals rather than written protocols and the effectiveness of this, including how constituent agencies of the LSCB are held to account on safeguarding matters, should be monitored.

3.3 The LSCB tried but failed to appoint an independent chair: the decision was taken to appoint a chairperson from one of the core statutory agencies. Membership consists of statutory partners with some voluntary sector representation. The LSCB plans to develop a wider safeguarding network of community based organisations. Some members expressed the view that the LSCB remains at an early stage of development, in part because of the diverse range of issues that a city authority has to address. To date much LSCB time has been taken up with establishing the board and its work agenda: arrangements were in hand to develop a more systematic review beginning with the planned use of the SAIT.

3.4 The LSCB has terms of reference, four standing subgroups and a specific format for the operation of task and finish groups to undertake other work. Inspectors were advised that there was an audit subgroup although this was not listed in the written information provided. There is a current business plan, with strategic objectives, and a comprehensive set of LSCB standards. There is a corresponding action plan with specific tasks and timescales for the current year.

3.5 The LSCB receives limited funding from two partner agencies, costs in excess of this have so far been met by Children’s Services. A budget profile for the costs of the LSCB has been drawn up: the SEG is to consider this and identify how the funding is to be made available. Funding, for a business manager and development officer has recently been secured on a temporary basis, including a contribution from the CYPP. Ensuring the LSCB has adequate resources to be effective and fulfil its responsibilities will be an important element of its planned review.
3.6 The LSCB primary focus remains child protection although it has begun to consider performance information about some wider issues e.g. levels of children experiencing accidents and bullying.

3.7 Prior to being asked to provide information for this review, the LSCB had revisited the audit undertaken at the time of the original Victoria Climbie Inquiry with exploration of supplementary issues that appeared relevant in the light of the Baby P case. Key agencies provided written information and there was a commissioned programme of interviews with LSCB members. This culminated in a discussion at a LSCB meeting in January 2009 from which a report was drafted. This report was submitted to WAG as the LSCB’s response to the request for a self audit.

3.8 The findings of this verification exercise concur with the evaluation undertaken by the LSCB.

4 COORDINATION OF THE LSCB

4.1 Senior level agency membership of the LSCB has remained consistent which has enabled it to meet objectives in the establishment phase. The current business plan includes specific actions and timescales to meet key development objectives and move the LSCB on.

4.2 The LSCB has links with the Children and Young Person’s Partnership and respective plans contain common elements. The LSCB has also initiated development events with other partnerships, the CYPP, Community Safety Partnership, and Health Alliance that has enabled them to begin identifying shared areas of interest.

4.3 To date the LSCB has had limited resources and business management capacity although temporary funding for a business manager and a development and co-ordinating officer, which includes a contribution via the CYPP, has recently been secured. A budget profile for the costs of the LSCB has been drawn up; a significant level of resources will be required to fund the ongoing work of the board and the SEG is to consider how this can be taken forward.

4.4 Strengths
- Consistency of senior level commitment across agencies.
- Links with the Children and Young Person’s Partnership and clear links within published plans.
- Comprehensive business plan.

4.5 Areas for development (no more than 5)
- The SEG work to secure the necessary resources from partner agencies
- Develop membership in line with paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6 of the statutory guidance
• Continue work with other partnerships on clarifying roles and responsibilities and common interests and priorities, including how the LSCB holds other partnerships and constituent local agencies to account on safeguarding issues.

5 THE EFFECTIVES OF THE ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 The LSCB receives and considers performance data drawn from a variety of sources: although the core is currently drawn largely from the Children’s Services management information the LSCB has begun developing a broader suite of information. This is intended to support development of an inter-agency performance framework incorporating results based accountability as the business management / development capacity of the LSCB increases.

5.2 The subgroups meet regularly as have some task and finish groups: there is evidence of outputs from all particularly the range of protocols that task and finish groups have produced and the e-learning package developed by the training group. The LSCB has adopted a set of standards for its work and, during the week of the review, was assessing itself against the LSCB Self Assessment and Improvement Tool (SAIT).

5.3 Inter-agency case auditing is not well developed: some recent work has been undertaken in relation to re-referrals and tools to support this work. This will support further development of this function.

5.4 The training subgroup is joined with that of a neighbouring LSCB which brings advantages in terms of the range and volume of training that is available. The LSCB has agreed to explore the potential benefits of considering other joined functions.

5.5 The frontline staff in social services had limited understanding of the work of the LSCB and its relevance to their work.

5.6 Strengths
• Development of an e-learning package for basic / level 1 safeguarding awareness raising training.
• A productive mental health subgroup which has contributed to the development of a protocol for working with children whose parents have alcohol, drug misuse or mental health problems.
• Adoption of standards for the LSCB.

5.7 Areas for improvement
• Development of the inter-agency quality assurance role of the LSCB.
• Ways of promoting the work of the LSCB and improving how it reaches out to and links with frontline staff and managers in all agencies.