

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY PANEL	Agenda Item No. 5
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Report of the Director of Children's Services

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REPORT TITLE: Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board.

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to comment on the work and progress of the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board [PSCB] in improving the safeguarding arrangements for children in Peterborough. It sets out the challenges to the PSCB of its own development and relationship with the Children's Trust, and summarises the practice performance and developments in the arrangements for safeguarding children in Peterborough.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The panel should scrutinise and consider:

- if they are satisfied with the delivery of services to safeguard children, and
- the future direction of the PSCB

3. LINKS TO SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

Safeguarding is a corporate priority and there are some key targets and indicators in relation to safeguarding that are in the LAA.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Development of the PSCB

The Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board is a statutory Board established under section 13 of the Children Act 2004. Its purpose is to co-ordinate and ensure the effectiveness of local arrangements and services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and in so doing having regard to the five every child matter outcomes and provision of optimum life chances for children and young people.

The report of Lord Laming published in March 2009 which commented on the effectiveness of Children's Trusts and Safeguarding Boards reflected on the need for Children's Trusts to effectively discharge their section 10 and section 11 responsibilities and recommended that the safeguarding Board should scrutinise the delivery of those services and report to the Trust on how well it is doing through an annual report. It also clearly recommended that the Chair of the Board should now be required to be independent.

The PSCB has a tradition of an independent chair, however, in December 2008 the then independent chair retired after two years in the role. The DCS took on this role temporarily but with the recommendation from Lord Laming this became untenable even as a temporary measure. The PSCB has had a transitional independent chair since June 2009 and it is hoped the role will be successfully recruited to in January 2010.

In September 2009 the PSCB had a development day and considered the future arrangements of the Board and its relationship with the Children's Trust. A new governance model is to be established which forges a strong collaboration of the two entities and the interface between delivery and scrutiny. This model has been debated at both the Trust and the Board and will be signed off by both in January 2010. It is attached as an appendix for your information.

Reflective of this new model the PSCB undertook an analysis and evaluation of safeguarding services delivered by the Trust measured against the recommendations of the Laming Report. As a result of this the first task of the shared function group – the stay safe partnership – will be to draw together all delivery arrangements into a comprehensive Safeguarding Strategy.

A further development for the PSCB is the arrangements for all Serious Case Reviews [SCR's] to be evaluated by Ofsted and for the rating of these to inform the overall performance rating of Childrens Services and the Local Authority through the inspection and CAA framework. Following two previous SCR's being rated as inadequate the PSCB improved the procedures, processes and support to staff involved in these. In particular the briefings given to authors of Individual Management Reviews [IMR's] and the action plan framework have received praise from Government Office.

There has been one SCR since which was evaluated as adequate by Ofsted.

In accordance with the Children Act 2004 a Child Death Overview Panel [CDOP] has been established jointly with Cambridgeshire and this now has an established reporting mechanism. This panel looks at all child deaths and analysis the local information and trends for causes of child deaths.

Early in 2010 the collaborative stay safe partnership will establish a Quality assurance programme that fulfils the requirements of the Board and the Trust and will also develop further the media and communication strategy.

Following on from Lord Laming's report, the Board will co-ordinate the consultation of the changes to the national guidance "Working Together to Safeguard Children" (2006) and then amend all local safeguarding policy and procedures.

4.2 Summary of Service Delivery

In 2006 the Joint Area Review [JAR] rated safeguarding inadequate, and in December this year the annual Ofsted rating was that children's services performed adequately. There has been a transformation in the way the business of Childrens services is organised and delivered. That transformation is not yet complete and a full integration model and delivery through localities plan will be achieved by April 2010.

However, Children's Social Care has undergone some changes which has included relocation and co-location of services, an increase in the number of qualified social workers and an improved performance management framework. Of the eleven key safeguarding performance indicators that are monitored, whereas in 2006 we were only achieving equivalent to our statistical neighbours and national average on one indicator, the Department is now achieving above on seven indicators, equivalent on one and the other three have all achieved the local targets set.

The number of initial assessments and their timeliness has improved. Effective assessment and care planning has reduced the numbers of children in care and the number of children subject to a child protection plan. There are dedicated children in need teams offering earlier support and improved services such as placement support, threshold to care and family group conferences.

All children subject of a child protection plan have an allocated qualified social worker, there are no children that have been subject of a plan for more than two years, and re-registration is 10% against a target of 16%. This suggests that intervention is effective.

The service underwent an unannounced inspection in July 2009 and despite the vulnerabilities of vacancies in Referral and Assessment service it was found that the response to referrals was “timely, consistent with thresholds and helped keep children safe.” Managers are, however, consistently aware that the quality of work must be maintained and to this end, quality assurance audits are regularly undertaken. As a result of these, practice notes are issued and training/development initiatives are put in place.

There has been a reduction of the numbers of children in care and the current rate per 10,000 is 80. This is still higher than our statistical neighbours.

All children in care have a allocated qualified social worker and the timeliness of statutory reviews at 98% remains consistently above the average target.

Placements are very stable at 8% which is in the upper quartile performance for the UK.

Vulnerabilities remain in the referral and assessment service because of the repeated inability to appoint permanent managers and staff but the throughput of work is currently manageable. Quality of decision making and case work will continue to be scrutinised and developed. 2010 will see the service remain a citywide one but develop integrated teams for children in need children in care, and safeguarding. This will strengthen the strategic multi-agency performance and complement the good multi agency working that operates at practitioner level in response to safeguarding.

5. KEY ISSUES

The committee need to consider that sufficient is being done to strengthen safeguarding services both operationally and strategically, and consider that the governance arrangements between the PSCB and the Childrens Trust is sufficiently robust.

6. IMPLICATIONS

The implications of the new governance and accountability framework are that all partner agencies will need to ensure that managers and staff are working to the new model.

7. CONSULTATION

All Children’s Trust and Safeguarding Board partners have been consulted about the changes proposed.

8. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The expected outcomes of the proposed strategic model and governance arrangements will be to improve safeguarding further for children in Peterborough.

9. NEXT STEPS

Once approved in full, the new model will be implemented. This is expected to be from March 2010.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

The protection of children in England: A progress report. Lord Laming. March 2009-12-24
Charting the improvements September 2009

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Governance and Accountability Framework
Appendix 2 - PSCB and Children’s Trust Governance Model

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