

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

5 January 2012



PLYMOUTH
CITY COUNCIL

PLYMOUTH SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

REPORT TO MEMBERS OF THE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

INTRODUCTION:

The aim of this report is to inform members of national and local developments in safeguarding within the Plymouth area and the remit of the Plymouth Safeguarding Children Board (PSCB). The report will help to identify how the PSCB is working with agencies in the local area to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

CONTENT:

National Developments

In my last report I explained that the Government had published its response to the Munro Report based on the advice of the Implementation Working Group. The response stressed that the changes that are implemented would be evolutionary aimed at long term sustained reform. At a national conference of Independent Chairs, which I attended in November, the Under Secretary of State, Mr Tim Loughton MP reconfirmed the Government's commitment to joint training in safeguarding and the need to reduce bureaucracy.

He also stated that the current arrangements for Serious Case Reviews will continue for the foreseeable future, including full publication and Ofsted evaluations. He stated that the SCIE (Social Care Institute for Excellence) systems model of reviews was "not perfect" and needed further testing before it could be considered for a prescribed model.

When questioned about the role of inspection in safeguarding, the Minister felt that further work was necessary and what is currently in operation and that proposed is not sufficiently 'joined up' and the whole area was still work in progress.

In a letter to Directors of Children's Services and Chairs of Local Safeguarding Children Boards, dated 14 December, Ofsted referred to the Under-Secretary of State's response to a Parliamentary question on the progress regarding the recommendations of the Munro Report. The Minister has decided that Ofsted's responsibility for evaluating serious case reviews should continue for a transitional period, using a more streamlined approach. With effect from 3 January 2010, Ofsted will cease making a graded judgement on the reviews and will instead set out the findings of their evaluation in an evaluation letter which will focus on how effectively the review has identified lessons to be learned and how robust are the action plans associated with the review. These transitional arrangements will end in July 2012.

The Minister also announced that all relevant inspectorates have agreed in principle to Professor Munro's proposed model of joint inspection and that there will be a progress update on this situation in March 2012.

Early in September the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) announced that they were now in a position to offer specific support to help implement recommendations from the Munro Review. £8.5 million has been made available nationally to assist with transition, especially in relation to learning and development. It is recommended that 50% of the grant is passed to LSCBs. This has happened locally and 50% of the £39000 allocated to Plymouth has been transferred to the PSCB Learning and Development budget. The Learning & Development Sub Group of the PSCB will be recommending how this funding will be utilised.

The CWDC are also organising a series of training and support events co-hosted by CWDC, the College of Social Work and SCIE and intended to support the redesign of services to enable earlier intervention and the designation of a Principal Child and Family Social Worker. There are also going to be learning and development events for LSCB Chairs.

A Freedom of Information Bill is progressing through Parliament and is due to receive Royal Assent in May 2012. This will provide the legal mechanism for changes to vetting and barring arrangements and the operation of the Criminal Bureau Records processes.

Local Developments

Safeguarding week took place between 21 to 25 November, with the Annual PSCB Conference taking place on the 23 November with the theme of 'Safeguarding Children who may be Particularly Vulnerable'. Camilla Batmanghelidjh was the keynote speaker. During the safeguarding week Barnardos also launched a pilot project for children at risk of sexual exploitation in the City, a full time project worker will be based in Plymouth for the next six months.

An audit of Statutory Duties and Associated Responsibilities for Schools in Relation to Section 175/157 of the Education Act 2002 is the subject of an agreement between the PSCB and the three Headteacher organisations in the City. Its purpose is to provide a report to the relevant Governing Body in order for them to ensure compliance with their statutory safeguarding duty. The audit will also enable the Local Authority to monitor the compliance of maintained schools with statutory guidance and provide help, advice and assistance where it is needed. Academies and other Independent Schools may also find this support very useful and have been included in the audit process. The audit will also enable the PSCB to implement their duties under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding within organisations.

As part of the 2011 Section 11 Audit process (ie the general duty on organisations to safeguard and protect the welfare of children), organisations across the Peninsula have been asked to encourage their front line staff and managers to complete an online survey related to safeguarding arrangements within their organisation.

The September PSCB and the November Executive Group received updates regarding the Alcohol Interventions for parents. A contract has now been awarded to deliver alcohol interventions for up to 200 parents per year. The service will focus on families where children have a child protection plan or are at risk. The pilot has demonstrated some excellent joint assessments with children's social care. The PSCB will receive regular updates on the progress of the scheme.

The PSCB partnership agreement was ratified by the Board in September.

I met with the Plymouth Children's Trust Board (CTB) to highlight the concern at the loss of the Young Witness Support Scheme previously operated by the NSPCC, with financial contributions from all four LSCB's across Devon and Cornwall. The CTB has been asked to consider the viability of commissioning a similar Plymouth service in the future. A member of

the CTB is currently leading a task and finish group to develop a proposal for consideration and I understand that initial discussions with the Police Witness Protection Service and their potential involvement in a new slimmed down service are underway.

Professor Eileen Munro has responded to an enquiry from the PSCB around the future of the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) process but unfortunately has reported that her national review of safeguarding did not include an analysis around the effectiveness of these arrangements. During 2012/13 the Peninsula LSCB's (ie Cornwall & Isles of Scilly, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay) will review local arrangements for delivering the most cost effective CDOP process in the future. In previous years the CDOP has been hosted by NHS Plymouth on behalf of the Peninsula LSCB's through an agreed jointly funded contract. Hosting arrangements were transferred to the Plymouth Community Healthcare CiC (new health provider services) mid year and they have been offered a one year extension to the contract commencing 1st April 2012, whilst the future delivery of the service is being considered. A decision on whether the Plymouth Community Healthcare CiC will accept the contract to host the CDOP in 2012/13 is awaited.

It would appear that work to develop the Plymouth Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub has stalled due to resourcing difficulties within partner agencies. CTB members have been asked to encourage partner agencies in the Police and Health to identify sufficient resources to ensure that this important initiative is progressed.

CONCLUSION:

The PSCB continues to ensure that agencies work well together within the city in order to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and young people. Participation in Full Board and Sub Group meetings/work programmes continues to foster effective multi agency working, the sharing of best practice and a joined up approach to resolving issues of concern. This is especially important at a time of widespread major organisational change within almost every partner agency represented at the PSCB and at a time when financial constraints continue to be a challenge to all partners.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that members note the content of this report.

Jim Gould
Independent Chair of the Plymouth Safeguarding Children Board
19 December 2011