

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

12 July 2012



PLYMOUTH SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD UPDATE

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

The new Ofsted framework for the inspection of schools has been published and was introduced in January 2012. Safeguarding is no longer a “Limiting Judgement” for the overall Ofsted judgement of a school. There are now four key judgements in an Ofsted inspection of schools around “achievement”, “quality of teaching”, behaviour and safety” and “leadership and management”. The school’s commitment to safeguarding will be inspected within the judgements for “behaviour and safety” and “leadership and management”. Ofsted has a clear statement that the requirement to evaluate the school’s compliance with statutory requirements on safeguarding remains. The PSCB has asked Headteacher member representatives for a report on school experiences of the new safeguarding inspection arrangements and the matter will be considered further at the next Full Board meeting in September.

The consultation draft on the new Working Together document in response to the Munro Review has now been released with indications that the guidance will be much shorter than the current version. The consultation closes on the 4th September 2012 and the PSCB will be collating member agency comments into a collective response. This will not stop individual agencies from responding to the consultation in their own right.

Ofsted has published their inspection framework for the inspection of child protection in local authority areas. This will be in place from May 2012. There is still an intention for there to eventually be a joint inspection framework which will involve Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, HMI Constabulary and HMI Probation undertaking joint inspections. The newly published framework will consider how effectively the local authority leads partnership working and how effectively local services contribute to the protection of children and young people. All inspections will be unannounced.

Ofsted has recently clarified its position in relation to the requirement for a three year rolling programme of Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks for school or college staff, stating that it is not necessary to have three yearly CRB checks carried out on staff who have unbroken service (no break of service of 3months or more). It is however still recommended for agency staff. Should schools and colleges continue with the 3 year rolling programme of CRB checks, Ofsted will deem this a misuse of limited financial resources.

The PSCB Business Manager and I have met with the Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development from Plymouth City Council and representatives from the Human Resources Team to discuss their ideas on how best to advise schools and colleges so that safer employment practices can best be maintained given this very clear statement from Ofsted. It has been recommended that a 3 yearly declaration by staff will be introduced as a new control measure in the absence of the formal 3 year CRB vetting arrangements.

Local Developments

Safer Internet Day was celebrated locally through a joint PSCB/Plymouth University event. The day was a practical fun day for children and young people, parents and carers and practitioners to explore the Internet and to consider how to stay safe. Participants included nearly 300 children from the City, drawn from early years settings, primary and secondary schools. Volunteers drawn from social care and educational courses at the University and from ICT programmes assisted, as did school staff and representatives from other PSCB member agencies including the Police, Youth Service, Fire and Rescue Service and Social Care.

At the 22 June PSCB Full Board meeting, Plymouth City Council was presented with the Safer Employment Quality Standard Kitemark Award in recognition of the work that has been completed in this important area of safeguarding practice. Employment policies, procedures and working practices in Plymouth have been externally assessed and moderated by the PSCB Chair. The PSCB is now looking for other partner agencies to similarly demonstrate working to the said standard in order to kitemark their safer employment practices.

The Peninsula LSCB Chair's Group are exploring the possibility of a uniform data set of performance indicators for the four LSCBs to use. This would be of particular benefit to those agencies who provide a service across the whole Peninsula. The PSCB will examine the draft proposals and decide whether to adopt or otherwise.

The results of the staff surveys carried out as part of the Section 11 Audit process have now been evaluated and Chief Executives of all the agencies have been sent copies with evaluations that have been carried out as part of the process. Individual agencies will be expected to take account of the auditors areas of consideration and ideas for improvements that have been identified by their own staff. This years' Section 11 Audit will commence in November 2012, the Peninsula LSCB Chair's Group are currently exploring various options for the best method to use, including an option for peer assessments as an alternative to completion of the Section 11 paper audit.

At the request of the Peninsula LSCB Chair's Group, the other 3 LSCB's (i.e. Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, Devon and Torbay) have joined with the PSCB E-Safety Group. This is in recognition of the success the PSCB has had in this important area of safeguarding. The new Peninsula E-Safety Group will continue to be chaired and led by Plymouth.

The number of sub groups operating as part of the PSCB has reduced from six to four in order to maximise the best use of resources and avoid duplication/overlap of work streams.

The groups now remaining are:

Learning and Professional Practice
Policy, Procedures and Safer Employment Practice
Serious Case Review
Child Death Overview Panel

The 2012/13 Business Plan was ratified at the June PSCB meeting and will be available for reference on the PSCB Website shortly.

Work is underway on the PSCB Annual Safeguarding Report and is due for completion by the end of August 2012.

The 2012 PSCB conference held on 28 June, around the subject of 'Safeguarding Disabled Children and children with complex needs' was well attended by 200 individuals from a range of agencies throughout the city.

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
5 July 2012