

		AGENDA ITEM 5
		CYP/27/11
Committee:	Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	29 September 2011	
<u>Essex Local Safeguarding Children Board</u>		
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Report to Children's Overview and Scrutiny

Essex Local Safeguarding Children Board

Purpose of Report

It is intended that this report will give a brief overview of the role and functions of the Local Safeguarding Board and the detail of the review of its governance and structure currently underway in Essex.

A short term work plan has been agreed to address the most pressing issues, this is attached at appendix 1.

Board's Role and Functions

The work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board Children in Essex should be seen in the wider context of the partnership arrangements that aim to improve the overall wellbeing of children and young people in the area. Whilst contributing to these wider partnership goals the LSCB has a particular focus on safeguarding and a responsibility for co-ordinating and ensuring the effectiveness of what member agencies do individually and together to safeguard children.

The Board has specific functions connected to this role, in summary they include:

Thresholds, Policies and Procedures

- Developing policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area of the authority, in Essex these have been developed jointly with both Southend and Thurrock and are known as the SET Procedures.
- Ensuring that thresholds and processes around referral and intervention are clear and understood across the partnership.
- Agreeing inter-agency procedures for s47 enquiries and developing local protocols on key issues of concern such as children abused through prostitution; children living with domestic violence, substance abuse, or parental mental illness; female genital mutilation; forced marriage; children missing from school; children who may have been trafficked and safeguarding looked after children who are away from home.
- Supporting the local Children's Partnership in ensuring that the local arrangements for undertaking a common assessment are clear about when it is appropriate to use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and when it is appropriate to refer a possible child in need to children's social care services.
- Ensuring that single agency and inter-agency training on safeguarding and promoting welfare is provided in order to meet local needs.
- Ensuring that effective policies and procedures are in place, in line with national guidance, for checking the suitability of people applying for work with children and ensuring that the children's workforce is properly supervised.
- Ensuring that robust quality assurance processes are in place to monitor compliance with requirements to support safe practice, including audits of vetting

practice and sampling of compliance with checks with Criminal Records Bureau and Independent Safeguarding Authority registration.

- Ensure that robust quality assurance processes are in place to monitor compliance by relevant agencies within their area with requirements to support safe practices, including audits of vetting practice and sampling of compliance with Criminal Records Bureau checks and Independent Safeguarding Authority registration.
- Ensuring that there are effective policies and procedures in place to deal with allegations against staff.
- Ensuring the co-ordination and effective implementation of measures designed to strengthen local private fostering notification arrangements.
- Ensuring that procedures to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who move between local authority area are established.

Communications and Raising Awareness

The LSCB should communicate widely to agencies and groups in the area the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and raising awareness of how this can best be done.

The Board should encourage agencies to listen to and consult with children and young people ensuring that their views are taken into account in planning and delivering safeguarding and promoting welfare services.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The LSCB should monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of what is done by the local authority and board partners individually and collectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and advise them on ways to improve. This should include the overseeing of the undertaking of joint-audits of case files to evaluate multi-agency working.

The LSCB should publish an annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area.

Planning and Commissioning

The LSCB should participate and be represented in the local planning and commissioning of children's services to ensure that the children's trust or equivalent partnership and other local children's services planners and commissioners take safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children into account.

Serious Case Review

The LSCB should undertake reviews of cases where abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected and either a child has died, or a child has been seriously harmed and there is cause for concern as to the way in which the authority, their Board partners or other relevant persons have worked together to safeguard the child.

Child Death Panel

The LSCB has responsibility for reviewing the deaths of all children. In order to fulfil this responsibility the LSCB must be informed of all deaths of children, normally resident in the LSCB's geographical area. This duty includes the establishing of a multi-agency child death overview panel.

Review of Governance

At its meeting in June 2011 the Local Safeguarding Children Board in Essex commissioned a Review of Governance intended to ensure that the constitution and governance are both up to date and properly reflect the contribution required by the Board to hold safeguarding arrangements in Essex to account.

This review had been requested as part of an earlier independent evaluation of the Safeguarding Board but had become delayed due to imminence of the Munro Report and key appointments in social care.

It was agreed that the review process be led by the (interim) Independent Chair supported by a planning group drawn from partner organisations and an executive steering group comprised of LA, NHS, Police and Probation representatives and report to the September LSCB Board meeting.

The review recognised that the Boards recent work has been dominated by a significant workload related to serious case reviews and the terms of reference were agreed to ensure that the Board following the review has in place arrangements that reflect the much more extensive contribution expected in statutory guidance. The review has considered carefully the additional demands which naturally arise in discharging those functions in such a geographically large County. The review has also sought to consider arrangements that will help co-ordinate the work of ESCB with that of the Essex Safeguarding Adults Board (ESAB).

Emerging Proposals and Themes

Structure

- The creation of a small, very high level, strategic leadership group intended to support the work of both the ESCB and ESAB
- The reconfiguration of the Board Sub Committee structure to ensure capacity to address **all** of the Boards statutory functions and also those areas for improvement identified in inspection
- The need to ensure that the Boards relationship with other elements of the strategic partnership is clear

Membership

The results of consultation suggest a need to ensure that membership arrangements are clarified. This responds to concerns expressed about the size of the Board and a lack of clarity of the role of members.

- **Full members** – who will be from statutory partners as set out in Working Together **and in addition** representation from other agencies whose contribution is considered by the Board to be essential
- **Associate Members** – nominated by those organisations which have important contributions to make but which do not require to be present at all meetings

Within these arrangements the review has recognised the need and benefit of shared representation such as in the case of the NHS, District Councils and the voluntary sector where a single or small number of agency representatives can represent and report back to the rest.

The review will also set out the full range of professional advisers who will be expected to support the work of the Board on both a standing and regular basis.

Sub Committee Structure

Both a functional and a locality focus have been considered for the sub committee structure with advantages and disadvantages being identified for both. Whilst at present discussion has tended toward a more functional approach this aspect is likely to be subject to further consideration by the Board.

However it is likely that the proposals for sub committees will be on the following lines;

- **SET Procedures:** to continue the development of policy and procedures with neighbouring Boards in Thurrock and Southend
- **Workforce Management:** a new configuration to ensure more complete and effective scrutiny of highly labour intensive services, covering the workstreams of training & staff development and all aspects of employment (e.g. safer recruitment, appraisal etc)
- **Performance Management:** with a more defined brief to cover the workstreams of performance, scrutiny, audit and quality assurance.
- **Communications:** a new sub committee charged with the important responsibility of assisting the Board ensure effective communications throughout the County with practitioners, managers, people who use services and the public
- **Serious Case Review:** to re-instate the standing sub committee to ensure continued learning from serious case reviews drawing on local regional and national experience. The Sub Committee would also have the important responsibility of tracking progress on all serious case reviews commissioned in Essex from beginning to completion of all actions arising from the final report
- **Child Death Overview Panel:** maintain existing arrangements but strengthen reporting arrangements

The review has also identified the need to ensure effective communication between sub committees as much of the work is related and it will be proposed that there is a regular meeting of sub committee chairs with the Independent chair of the Board to ensure cohesion in the allocation of work (linked to the Business Plan) and its progress.

The review has also identified the need to explore further the possibility of creating a Young Peoples Forum, directly associated with the Board and which will give young people the opportunity to comment upon and influence safeguarding strategy.

The review has also acknowledged the great significance of the Managed Clinical Network and identified the need to ensure that its access and relationship to the LSCB is clarified. There is strong preference that in order to strengthen leadership that sub Committees are, wherever possible, chaired by a full Member of the Board.

Leadership and Culture

In commissioning the review the Board were very clear about the need to set out arrangements for leadership and the culture expected of the Board as an equal and coherent partnership. Accordingly the final report will set out;

- The particular statutory responsibilities of the LA alongside those of partner agencies
- The role and function of the Independent Chair to the Board which will have a clear and strong emphasis on the role of the ESAB as a Partnership
- Arrangements for supporting the personal development of the Board and its members
- Board meeting timetable which will distinguish between business meetings and development time which will suggest an increase in the number of Board meetings each year
- A system of delegations to make best use of the sub committee structure and ensure that the Board has the opportunity to discuss key areas of risk to vulnerable people in Essex
- Proposals to develop a sensible programme of joint work with ESAB

Constitution

The Boards constitution will be brought up to date following the latest revision to Working Together to Safeguard Children and will follow the basic statutory requirements to ensure that it remains clear but non contentious.

Support to the Board

The Board currently receives dedicated support from the LSCB support team which is hosted by the County Council. However there is a need to clarify what can reasonably be expected from this team including the Board manager along with further clarification of the expectations of the various professional advisers to the Board.

The review will also make some provisions to consider the way in which support of both Essex Local Safeguarding Children Board and Essex Safeguarding Adults Board may be better co-ordinated.

Next Steps

During discussions in both the Steering and Planning Groups it was acknowledged that the LSCB should allocate sufficient time to be able to fully consider the detail of this review. Accordingly it is proposed that a special meeting of the Board be convened at the earliest opportunity to consider the review as a single item, rather than as part of an already busy business agenda.

Simon Hart
(Interim) Independent Chair
Essex Local Safeguarding Children Board

Appendix 1: Short Term Work Plan

Work stream	Actions	Progress / Timescale
Governance Review	Establish Executive Reference Group	The executive reference group is in place
	Establish task group	The task group is in place with wide representation from Board members
Lay Members	Lay Member Recruitment	Work underway to produce a full protocol for the proper engagement of lay members to the Board covering role function and recruitment arrangements to be in place by end of 2011
Annual Report	Producing Annual Report	First draft complete rewrite underway to create simplified and Working Together compliant document to be finalised October 2011
Forward Plan	Draft plan produced	Forward plan presented to Board in Sept meeting
Overview & Scrutiny	Ensure engagement between LSCB and Member Scrutiny	Simon Hart (Interim) Independent Chair engaged with Members, report going to Childrens Overview and Scrutiny
Local Authority Chief Executives / partner Leaders	Engagement between Board and Leadership Group	Simon Hart (Interim) Independent Chair engaged with Leadership Group
Board Business Plan	Draft Business Plan	Draft completed