

REPORT TO MEMBERS

1. Meeting:	Improving Lives Select Commission
2. Date:	28th January 2015
3. Title:	Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2013-14
4. Directorate:	Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board

5. Summary

Since April 2010, Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) have been required to publish an annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding children in the local area. This report introduces the 2013-14 Rotherham LSCB Annual Report and offers background information to it.

6. Recommendations

The Improving Lives Select Commission is requested to receive this report as an introduction to the 2013-14 Rotherham LSCB Annual Report, updating on the requirements and work of Rotherham's Local Safeguarding Children Board to safeguard children and young people in the borough.

Proposals and Details

The requirement for LSCBs to produce and publish an annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding children in the local area is mandated in the Children Act 2004 (S14a) as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Under the recently revised statutory guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children* (HM Government March 2013), the annual report should:

1. provide a rigorous and transparent assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services. It should identify areas of weakness, the causes of those weaknesses and the action being taken to address them as well as other proposals for action. The report should include lessons from reviews undertaken within the reporting period

2. be published in relation to the preceding financial year and should fit with local agencies' planning, commissioning and budget cycles. The report should be submitted to the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council, the local police and crime commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
3. list the contributions made to the LSCB by partner agencies and details of what the LSCB has spent, including on Child Death Reviews, Serious Case Reviews and other specific expenditure such as learning events or training. All LSCB member organisations have an obligation to provide LSCBs with reliable resources (including finance) that enable the LSCB to be strong and effective. Members should share the financial responsibility for the LSCB in such a way that a disproportionate burden does not fall on a small number of partner agencies.

Key priorities for Rotherham LSCB within its Business Plan and highlighted in the 2013-14 Annual Report.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation has a devastating impact on its victims. Awareness about it at a professional and a community level has increased significantly, highlighting a level of need in the borough requiring a robust commitment and response from all organisations which was, historically, not as good as it should have been.

The LSCB has provided some excellent training and awareness sessions for professionals working with families and the community. It has audited the risk assessments used on child sexual exploitation cases and identified some improvements which have been implemented. The priority for support for victims is currently being progressed with the Health and Well Being Board and commissioning groups within the borough.

Child Neglect

The neglect of a child's physical and emotional welfare has a corrosive effect on the wellbeing if not tackled at an early stage. Children suffering neglect is the biggest category of those who are suffering significant harm in the borough and require a Child Protection Plan. Neglect is a multi-faceted issue and requires effective multi-agency working.

In 2013 the LSCB undertook a review of cases where children had been seriously neglected. The review, the key findings of which were briefly outlined in last year's RLSCB annual report, highlighted the importance of identifying neglect early, utilising assessment tools designed to assist in identifying neglect and in assertive interventions with the aim of addressing the factors underpinning the neglectful parenting.

The challenge to all agencies working with children and families is to ensure the review's lessons are implemented. To this end, the RLSCB disseminated the review's key lessons through presentations at a range of high level strategic inter-agency meetings, including the Improvement Panel.

Domestic Abuse

The impact on children of living in a household with Domestic Abuse affects all aspects of their wellbeing. There is a high correlation between the children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan and the presence of Domestic Abuse in the family. Often this is in combination with mental health and substance misuse issues.

In 2013 the Council's Improving Lives Select Commission Scrutiny Review of Domestic Abuse was completed. The focus of the review recommendations was to develop more integrated domestic abuse service provision that had clear protocols and pathways for all risk levels that were understood by every partner agency. It was also recommended that domestic abuse should be more integrated at a strategic level so that other work streams were addressing the impact it has on victims.

By responding to the review recommendations, Rotherham will be able to;

- Evidence its local compliance with the national Violence Against Women and Girls' agenda
- Evidence that the Domestic Abuse Priority Group (DAPG), on behalf of the Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP), are proactive in reducing the risk of domestic homicide in line with emerging national best practice that is focused and coordinated
- Enable the actions of agencies to withstand scrutiny in a Serious Case Review or Domestic Homicide Review
- Respond to victims and their families effectively

As part of the service developments the local authority, police and other partners are implementing a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). As part of the MASH a domestic abuse hub is being developed that will see police officers, social workers, independent domestic violence advocates and other professionals working together to provide an effective and timely response possible to domestic abuse. This will include the use of a Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment Matrix to enable professionals to identify risks, protective factors and the most effective response for individual children and their families.

In March 2013 the definition of domestic abuse was changed to include young people aged 16-18. In 2013-14 there were 13 young people aged 16-17 referred to MARAC in Rotherham. To respond to the change in definition and that this was a previously under recognised and under resourced area of need, the DfE provide funding for a Young Persons Domestic Violence Advocate (YPVA). The model for this in Rotherham is for the YPVA to have key responsibility for the high risk cases that are referred to MARAC and to provide specialist advice to professionals on cases of under 16's. In 2013-14 there 328 (of 455) case referred to MARAC which encompassed a total of 518 children.

A priority area identified for improvement within the borough is the multi-agency response for children and their parents where there is domestic abuse and the victim has no recourse to public funds. This issue has been shared and awareness raising undertaken with partner agencies through the use of case studies.

Early Help

The number of children and young people in the borough who are at risk of significant harm, are taken into care or have concerns about them referred more than

once is high / increasing. Providing the right help at the right time for children and their families can and does prevent problems from escalating.

In the past 12 months, the Local Authority has developed an early help dashboard to provide the LSCB members and advisors with an overview of activity in the borough. This includes caseload information relating to child/young person/family support provided by, amongst others:

- Children's Centres
- Targeted Family Support Team
- Integrated Youth Support Service
- Learning Support Service

The dashboard also includes information on Family CAF numbers, as well as drawing on regionally agreed indicators for measuring the effectiveness of early help. Rotherham is benchmarking positively in some aspects of Early Help impact measurement (specifically in relation to CIN numbers and statutory assessment volume), whilst in others there is the potential to infer we are being less successful. However, whilst we have a high rate of children on a child protection plan per 10,000 (with an out-turn figure of 70 in 2014, compared to 59.3 in 13), our rate of children per 10,000 who are subject to S.47 investigations is lower than the latest national and stat neighbour average, and whilst this is a significant increase locally on the previous year (up from 89.5 in 2013 to 110 in 2014), it is potentially a positive indicator, reflecting that more children at risk of significant harm are being identified and are receiving a statutory assessment of their wellbeing more quickly and effectively. Similarly, whilst our LAC numbers have increased in 2014 when compared to our 2013 out-turn; we are still below the latest stat neighbour average. This increase could equally evidence that our capacity to move children into care sooner is as a direct consequence of identifying the need t be cared for outside of the family sooner. The LSCB Performance Sub Group have requested more detailed information in future stimulate more in depth analysis of early help effectiveness. The Quality Assurance subgroup receives quarterly reports on the Family CAF QA activity in the borough, and the recently established LSCB multi-agency review group will also oversee the audit of early help cases in the next business year.

Voice of the Child

Listening to what children and young people say is key to understanding their needs, planning to keep them safe and providing effective services.

The LSCB has listened to what children and young people say through:

- The results of the Lifestyle Survey.
- The work of the Looked After Children Council on experiences of children in the care of the local authority..
- The work of the Youth Cabinet on self harm issues.
- The advocacy support work for children on a child protection plan.

7. Finance

The LSCB has its own budget financed by member agencies, the key agencies for such financing being Children's Social Care Services, Children's Health Services, and the Police. A budget statement is included in the RLSCB Annual Report.

8. Risks and uncertainties

The publication of the Jay report and the recent Ofsted inspection of children's services and the LSCB will require the LSCB to review its priority areas of focus, the operation of its sub groups and strengthen its relationships with other partnership boards. This will be driven via an Improvement Plan and reported to the Improvement Board.

9. Policy and performance information

The LSCB will continue to provide a rigorous evaluation and challenge to agencies and services to support families and keep children safe.

10. Background Papers and Consultation

The Children's Safeguarding Performance Information Framework 2012
Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009
Working Together to Safeguard Children - A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children: HM Government 2013
Rotherham LSCB Annual Report 2013 - 14
Rotherham LSCB Business Plan 2014-15
Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers: Ofsted 2013

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