

**REPORT TO:** Safer Policy & Performance Board  
**DATE:** 14<sup>th</sup> June 2011  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise  
**SUBJECT:** Halton Safeguarding Children Board  
**WARDS:** All

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 This report seeks to inform the Safer Policy & Performance Board of the work of Halton Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB).

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION:**

- (i) That the Safer Policy & Performance Board note the contents of the report.

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The Children Act 2004 required each local authority to establish a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006. Halton Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) was in place by February 2006.

3.2 Section 14 of the Children Act 2004 states that the core objectives of the LSCB are:

- a. to co-ordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area of the authority; and
- b. to ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for that purpose.

3.4 The core functions of LSCBs as set out in primary legislation and regulations includes:

3.4.1 Thresholds, policies and procedures, monitoring and evaluation functions –

HSCB has established processes to scrutinise practice across the borough; for example, multi-agency file audits, specific audits of safeguarding children practice in Adult Services and Section 11 audits of organisations with a legal duty to safeguard children. The Board also uses a performance framework in the form of a Report Card. This data-based tool enables the Board to track the progress of multi-agency work against set targets relating to its priorities. The Report Card has been revised to focus on two key priority areas: children and

young people are protected from significant harm; and children and young people who have been subject to significant harm are supported effectively and appropriately to prevent further harm.

Regular reports are received by the Board from the Lead Conferencing and Reviewing Manager in the Safeguarding Children Unit. In the last report for January – March 2011, there were 77 children and young people subject of a Child Protection Plan as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011.

The Policies and Procedures Sub Group has ratified a number of policies, procedures and practice guidance over the year and has recently launched the revised Pan-Cheshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children Procedures. Work is currently progressing on a Pan-Cheshire basis on Missing from Home & Care, Child Sexual Exploitation and Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy and Childhood protocols.

#### 3.4.2 Training:

HSCB and the Children's Trust have worked together to provide frontline events to practitioners and managers to promote working together and raising the standards of practice across the workforce. The Board also delivers a multi-agency training programme, managed by the Training Sub Group, which in addition to core courses on safeguarding process and practice has included input to events such as the annual Anti-Bullying and Third Sector conferences. The Board also works with the Safeguarding Adults Board to provide opportunities for the Adults' and Children's workforce to train together.

#### 3.4.3 Recruitment and Supervision:

A joint Safer Recruitment Sub Group reports to both Safeguarding Boards. It has driven forward the delivery of Safer Recruitment training across the children's workforce, as well as producing practice guidance for managers and selection panels. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) also reports regularly to the Board to ensure it meets its functions in relation to investigations of allegations concerning persons working with children.

#### 3.4.4 Private Fostering:

The Board has overseen a campaign to raise awareness of private fostering within the borough. This has included distributing information to the community, via the Safe Parenting Handbook, as well as to practitioners. This issue has also been incorporated in to multi-agency training. A multi-agency development group has met regularly to progress this work, and the Board receives an annual report on private fostering.

#### 3.4.5 Communicating and Raising Awareness:

Community involvement is a focus of the Board's work, supported by the recruitment of two Lay Members in November 2010. The Lay Members represent the community on the Board, establishing further lines of communication between the public and the Board and vice versa.

#### 3.4.6 Functions relating to child deaths:

The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) has met regularly to consider the factors related to the deaths of children across the borough. A number of work streams have been initiated by this group, such as the Early Years Child Safety Directory, work by Children's Centres highlighting safety equipment and a joint Child Safety Campaign between the HSCB and Children's Trust.

#### 3.4.6 Serious Case Reviews:

The Board continues to monitor the implementation of recommendations and Action Plans from Serious Case Reviews. The HSCB Executive monitors Action Plans and coordinates dissemination of learning from national, regional and local Serious Case Reviews. Regular Serious Case Review workshops are now included in the HSCB training programme.

## **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The Board holds the Children's Trust accountable for ensuring services deliver improved outcomes for children and young people. The Board is responsible for challenging all relevant partners of the Trust on their performance in ensuring children and young people are safeguarded in the borough. A protocol was agreed between both in 2010 to ensure clarity about local accountabilities underpinned by effective local challenge.

4.2 Although there is no longer a statutory requirement for local areas to have a Children's Trust, the strong partnership arrangements are reflected in the commitment to continue in Halton. A Children & Young People's Plan continues to be produced to which the HSCB is a formal consultee.

4.3 The strength of partnership working in Halton and robust accountability arrangements were reflected in the recent Ofsted and CQC announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services in Halton which rated both as good with outstanding capacity for improvement. The Children's Trust and HSCB are jointly responsible for ensuring implementation of the action plan developed from the inspection recommendations.

- 4.4 The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 introduced a statutory requirement for Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) to produce and publish an Annual Report on the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area. The purpose of the Annual Report is to provide an assessment of the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard children, set against a comprehensive analysis of the local area safeguarding context. It should recognise achievements and the progress made in the local authority area as well as providing a realistic assessment of the challenges that still remain.

The HSCB Annual Report is used to inform the content of the Children & Young People's Plan produced by the Children's Trust.

## **5.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

The comprehensive spending review has led partners to reassess their financial and in-kind contributions to the Board. However, there continues to be a commitment to partnership working and an understanding that this is the best way to ensure that the children and young people of Halton are safeguarded. To this end the Board is ensuring that it is focussed upon its core business.

Regular meetings between the Chief Executive of Halton Borough Council, the Lead Member, HSCB Chair, Director of Children & Young People Services and officers of Halton Borough Council take place to discuss a range of issues and explore risks.

## **6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

Equality and diversity issues are integral to the work of Halton Safeguarding Children Board as children may be more vulnerable due to factors related to their gender, age, disability, ethnicity or sexuality. They may also be more vulnerable due to their family's socio-economic background or their legal status, for example a child in a Private Fostering arrangement or a Child Looked After.

This is an area identified by the Board as a key focus for its work in 2011-12. It has changed some of its reporting mechanisms to ensure recording of diversity. The Board is also seeking to engage with communities whose views may not have informed its work previously, such as the traveller community and faith groups. This work will be enhanced by the newly appointed Lay Member roles and the work being undertaken with the Children's Trust to establish a young people's Board. This work is underpinned by the HSCB's new Communication and Participation Strategy.

## **7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

Halton Safeguarding Children Board holds the Children's Trust accountable for progress towards meeting its priority that children and young people will feel safe at home, in school and in their communities.

### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

The Safeguarding Children training activity undertaken by Halton Safeguarding Children Board aims to ensure that those working with Halton's children and families or parents/carers develop their knowledge and skills to safeguard children in order to ensure that the borough's children receive good quality services and timely interventions where necessary.

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

The Board has identified areas contributing to the health and wellbeing of children in the borough. Specific areas which HSCB is responsible for reporting on include:

- i) The work of the Child Death Overview Panel which identifies modifiable factors that could have potentially prevented or prevented the death of a child.
- ii) Serious Case Reviews where children have died, or suffered life threatening injuries where abuse and neglect were a factor, and multi-agency lessons can be learnt to prevent such situations occurring again.

### **6.3 A Safer Halton**

The effectiveness of safeguarding children arrangements in Halton is fundamental to making Halton a safe place for children and young people. This includes the virtual world.

### **6.4 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified

### **8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**