

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 23rd September 2010

REPORTING OFFICER: Chair of Halton Safeguarding Children Board and Strategic Director, Children & Young People

SUBJECT: Halton Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of the publication of Halton Safeguarding Children Board's (HSCB) Annual Report 2009 -10 as agreed by the HSCB Main Board on 21st September.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Executive Board Members endorse the Halton Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) Annual Report 2009-10.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 sets out 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.
- 3.2 The report should provide robust challenge to the work of the Children's Trust Board to safeguard children. It will therefore be used by the Children's Trust Board to inform the Children & Young People's Plan.
- 3.3 The report will also provide information to the Chief Executive and Lead Member as part of their responsibility to hold the Director of Children's Services accountable for the effective working of the LSCB.
- 3.4 The report highlights the considerable amount of work undertaken by HSCB and the developments that have taken place over the past 12 months. These are in line with the core functions of LSCBs as set out in primary legislation and regulations. This 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 focuses on three key priority areas: improving parenting support to children in need of safeguarding; ensuring that robust safeguarding processes are in place; and, improving outcomes for children in need of safeguarding. (Section 6 provides an up-date on the Report Card.)

The Policies and Procedures Sub group has ratified a number of policies, procedures and practice guidance over the year. This has included revisions to the Pan-Cheshire Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy Protocol, review of the HSCB Escalation Process and guidance on the purpose of Core Groups, as well as ratification of the Child Protection Procedures of a number of agencies.

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.

3.4.3 Recruitment and Supervision:

The Board has a Safer Recruitment Sub group that 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. The Annual Report also highlights the plans to broaden the remit of the Safer Recruitment Sub group by amalgamating with its counterpart in the Adult Safeguarding Board structure ensuring a more effective use of resources.

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:

There has been progress in involving young people in the work of the Board by developing a "Shadow Board". Two events took place during the year and there are plans to develop this work further in the year ahead.

Community involvement will be a focus of the Board's work in future as recruitment to the role of Lay Member is planned for 2010. Two Lay Members will 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 and Near Miss Panel (CDOP) have met regularly to consider the factors related to the deaths/near misses 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. In addition the HSCB Executive also reviewed overall learning from Serious Case Reviews. The report from this exercise has been endorsed by the Board and will be incorporated in a review of training and a requirement for all HSCB member organisations to have a system in place for disseminating the learning from Serious Case Reviews to frontline staff.

3.5 HSCB continues to progress with a robust business plan which will build on the work already undertaken by the Board. (Section 9 of the Annual Report identifies all key activities identified for 2010-11.)

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The HSCB Annual Report is used to inform the content of the Children & Young People's Plan which is produced by the Children's Trust. The Annual Report is one of the means whereby the Safeguarding Children Board holds the Children's Trust accountable for safeguarding children in the borough in order to ensure the effectiveness of the work of all partner organisations, including the local authority, in meeting their duties relating to safeguarding children.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no other implications arising out of the report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Priority 4 in the Children & Young People's Plan states that: Children and young people will feel safe at home, in school and in their communities. Halton Safeguarding Children Board holds the Children's Trust accountable for progress towards meeting this priority. A protocol has been agreed between the two Boards in order to enable the Safeguarding Children Board to effectively challenge and scrutinise the work of the Children's Trust. (See Appendix 2 in the Annual Report.)

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

The Annual Report comments on the Safeguarding Children Training activity undertaken by Halton Safeguarding Children Board. The aim of the training is 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 Annual Report comments upon areas Halton Safeguarding Children Board has identified as 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 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, and multi-agency lessons can be learnt to prevent such situations occurring again.

6.3 A Safer Halton

The Annual Report highlights the work undertaken with the Safer Halton Partnership on the reduction of domestic abuse.

6.4 Halton's Urban Renewal

None identified

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

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

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

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.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.