

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 21 November 2013

REPORTING OFFICER: Independent Chair, Halton Safeguarding Children Board

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People and Families

SUBJECT: Halton Safeguarding Children Board : Annual Report 2012-13

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Executive Board with Halton LSCB Annual Report 2012-13 for information.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Executive Board

- 1) welcome the report;**
- 2) note the recommendations; and**
- 3) ensure that appropriate action be taken to address the matters raised.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Keeping children and young people safe and promoting their welfare continues to be a high priority for the Council and partner agencies. The Lead Member for Children's Services attends the LSCB Main Board as a participant observer, and the LSCB Chair meets with the Lead Member, Chief Executive and Strategic Director on a quarterly basis to ensure there is an effective working relationship between the Children's Trust and LSCB, and that the LSCB is working effectively.

3.2 The LSCB Annual Report provides a rigorous and transparent assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. It should identify areas of weakness, the causes of those weaknesses and the action being taken to address as well as other proposals for action. The report includes lessons from reviews undertaken within the reporting period including: Serious Case Reviews, Practice Learning Reviews and Child Death Reviews. The report also lists the contributions made to the LSCB by partners and

details the LSCB's expenditure.

From November 2013 LSCBs become subject to inspection in their own right. The LSCB Annual Report is a grade descriptor within the inspection framework. It is published in the public domain.

3.3 In terms of the report's content:-

- The **Chair's Executive Summary** references the significant NHS reforms, publication of the revised *Working Together* guidance, capacity amongst partners to deliver effective safeguarding services, revisions to the inspection framework and service provision in the priority areas of child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse and children in care;
- The **Accountability Arrangements** between the Children's Trust and the LSCB which include more robust challenge reporting between the two, and political accountabilities via the Lead Member and Chief Executive;
- **Safeguarding Activity** includes data across the safeguarding continuum from Early Help to Child Protection, Children in Care, including Children in the Care of Other Local Authorities living in Halton and Adoption;
- **Learning from Practice** includes Practice Learning Reviews, audits and child death processes;
- The **Local Authority Designated Officer** section has been included to provide information on allegations management;
- **Private Fostering** contains a summary of annual activity;
- **Voice of Children and Families** provides evidence from partners on their how practice and service delivery has been influenced by children and families and future commitments;
- The **Lay Members** provide an overview of their role;
- **Training Activity** summarises multi-agency training and impact on outcomes for children and families;
- The **Sub Groups** section outlines progress and forthcoming priorities of the Sub Groups – Scrutiny & Performance, Policy & Procedures, Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Children, Learning & Development and Safer Workforce;
- **Priority Areas** reports on progress in relation to Early Help, Domestic Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation;
- The **Progress against Business Plan 2011-13** highlights the achievements and intended impact;
- The **Budget** reports on the financial viability of the Board.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The LSCB has an action plan in place to ensure compliance with the revised guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children* published

March 2013. This has required revisions to safeguarding policies and procedures, including Halton's Levels of Need Framework and Pan-Cheshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children Procedures.

5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The LSCB is currently funded via contributions from the Council, Schools, Cheshire Constabulary, NHS Halton CCG, Cheshire Probation and Cafcass. Currently the LSCB is financially sustainable. However contributions have reduced during recent years with the LSCB losing contributions from Connexions, the Child Death Grant and year on year reductions from the Schools Forum. The Cheshire & Merseyside LSCB Chairs are undertaking an analysis of LSCB budgets which will be reported to the Directors of Children's Services.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The LSCB and Children's Trust have a formal protocol in place that sets out the accountability arrangements between the two. The Safeguarding Children Board is a formal consultee of the Children & Young People's Plan. Also, the Safeguarding Children Board's priorities are referenced in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

The LSCB has statutory functions regarding training, supervision and safer recruitment to support a skilled, competent and confident workforce across the partners working in the borough with children & young people, families and adults who may be parents/carers.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

The safeguarding of children is fundamental to their health and well-being. The LSCB is expected to influence the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment by ensuring it takes into account safeguarding children priorities.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

The effectiveness of Safeguarding Children arrangements is fundamental to making Halton a safe place of residence for children and young people. The LSCB is working closely with Halton Domestic Abuse Forum as one of the LSCB's priority areas is the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people.

In addition the LSCB has been working to develop links with the Licensing Board as this is a fundamental area in terms of identifying potential community areas of activity in relation to child sexual exploitation.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The LSCB Annual Report is expected to provide a rigorous and transparent assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. This includes identifying areas of weakness which impact on outcomes for children in the borough, and will be a focus for future Ofsted inspection of the Local Authority. The risk is that an inspection may take place before there is evidence that the work being undertaken to address priorities for improvement has evidenced impact.

The LSCB Independent Chair, Audrey Williamson, has resigned after chairing the LSCB since it was formed in 2006. Audrey has made a huge contribution to the development of the LSCB, ensuring that the LSCB operates as a robust strategic partnership and offering both challenge and support as appropriate. Halton and Cheshire West & Chester are working together to appoint a replacement as Audrey is also resigning from her role as Independent Chair of Cheshire West & Chester LSCB. An advert has been placed requesting expressions of interest to Chair both, or one, LSCB. Interviews are due to take place on 16th December. The recruitment process is being led by the respective local authority Chief Executives as set out in *Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2013*. Should Halton fail to appoint to the post, interim arrangements will be progressed.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Children Act 2004	DfE Website	Tracey Holyhead
Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013)	DfE Website	Tracey Holyhead

