

WIRRAL CHILDREN'S TRUST BOARD – 19TH MARCH 2010

Report to the Children's Trust Board on Safeguarding Arrangements

1. Introduction and Background

This report forms part of a regular update from the LSCB to the Children's Trust Board on key developments locally and nationally on regulatory reform, updates on progress of local Serious Case Reviews, key performance data and key challenges for the partnership and agencies.

2. National Reform and Statutory Guidance

The national framework for safeguarding, Working Together, was re-drafted following Lord Lamings report *The Protection of Children in England (2009)*, and a full report on the key changes intended was reported to the last CTB in January 2010. The DCSF report that it is expected that following the national consultation the revised Working Together will be published in the spring 2010. Whilst there was much in the consultation draft, there are also a number of key areas which were signalled as the direction of travel. The following is an outline of local changes made as a result:

- Independent chairing of LSCB's, Wirral has appointed an interim chair for initially 6 months, subject to mutual review annually. The funding, expected to be approximately £10,000 is met from the LSCB budget. A contract between the LSCB and the chair has been drawn up, including specification on accountability and reporting mechanisms to the DCS and lead elected member respectively. The DCS will continue to chair until June 2010.
- LSCB membership: the lead elected member will attend the first LSCB as 'participating observer' in March, Adult Social Services have been invited to attend the LSCB, adverts for lay people have been drafted and recruitment will follow in the next 3/4 months, schools have become statutory members and current membership (3 reps) will continue, other non-required agencies such as housing providers and Crown Prosecution Service can be agreed locally.
- Chapter 5 – Managing individual cases –the LA should establish with the referrer: the nature of the concerns, how and why they have arisen; what appear to be the needs of the child; what involvement they are having or have had with child/family; any information on domestic violence, mental illness, substance misuse, and/or learning disabilities. Clearer expectation of first line managers. The LA should 'ensure that practitioners responding to referrals are supported by experienced and competent first line managers' Other changes expected in this chapter which will support the wider responsibility individual agencies already have under duties within Section 11, duty to co-operate. **A key challenge for the LSCB and CTB** is how far agencies understand their duty to co-operate (Section 11 of Children Act 2004) and whether they effectively discharging those duties.
- Relationship between the CTB and the LSCB – the draft version of Working Together outlines the relationship that the two Boards are expected to have.

Work has already begun on a memorandum of understanding between the respective Boards on the role, function and responsibilities of each. This will be presented to the forthcoming Boards when full national guidance is issued.

- Also specifying that LSCB's, in exercising their functions, should keep under review the sources of referrals to local authority children's social care services and monitor the quality and action taken in response, including feedback to the person making the referral. The first report on referral sources and destination will be included within the March 2010 report.
- A new requirement for LSCBs to write an annual report which will capture an analysis of the needs of all children and young people in the area, areas for challenge and key developments. There is a specific role for Chief Executives and Leaders of Councils to ensure that they are satisfied with the safeguarding arrangements by making an assessment of the effectiveness of local governance and partnerships in place for children. The Director of Children's Services has drafted a paper on proposals for developing this area. Changes to the LSCB function requiring this as a statutory report is expected by April 2010, with first submission April 2011. Wirral LSCB will produce the first statutory report by October 2010.
- Making it clear that the Children's Trust Board has a responsibility to ensure that all their partners follow the government's Information Sharing Protocol. There has been much concern over this area of work both from the Baby Peter case and other similar cases. Much confusion has been caused by Data Protection and information sharing and there exists some local examples of agencies and individuals within agencies reluctant or refusing still to share information about children and or adults. This is a **key challenge** for the CTB who have overall responsibility for ensuring agencies understand and adhere to government guidance. Whilst local training has supported developing the understanding it needs to broaden to include adult services in mental health and in General Practice as well as drug and alcohol and social care settings.
- Serious Case Review reform – the national framework has been re-drafted and issued in December 2009. Local changes made are thus far are: independent chair from Government Office supply list is sought for each review undertaken, finance for this is about £50 an hour met from the LSCB budget; independent author is sought from same list and is approximately £50/60 per hour equating to £8-10,000 each review and met from the LSCB budget; the constitution of the SCR sub-committee and the SCR panel have been altered so that the sub-committee is not solely made up of individual agencies authors. The budget has been expanded to allow for these commitments but remains a **key challenge** for the statutory contributing agencies at a time where budgets locally are being reduced.
- SCR's in Wirral – the CF review was submitted in October 2009 and was allocated to for evaluation within Ofsted in February 2010. It was submitted to the Ofsted moderation Panel in February and as yet there has been no written feedback. The Executive Summary has not yet been published as this follows written feedback to the LSCB. A media statement on behalf of the LSCB has been prepared. A second SCR has just been agreed to be undertaken on a family of four children who were subject to court proceedings. The submission

date for this review is September 2010 (six months is the new timescale). Updates on the progress of this review will be contained within each quarterly report to the CTB.

3. Local Performance Indicators

The LSCB receive a quarterly report on key data on child protection activity which informs thresholds and service developments. This data ranges from 'front-door' activity (referral information) to allegations against staff and the outcome of these. The LSCB has responsibility to set thresholds for inter-agency child protection work and monitor agencies application and effectiveness of this. There are a number of ways this is undertaken such as through action plans for SCR, auditing of assessments and child protection plans, critical incident audits and generally section 11 self assessments. In addition core performance data informs child protection activity. Performance data will be provided at the meeting.

4. Key Challenges Recommendations

- Duty to co-operate responsibilities –agencies are clearly charged, through the Children Act regulation, to discharge safeguarding duties and as this is a relatively new requirement the CTB should have a mechanism for measuring this. The LSCB undertook an exercise of self-assessment in 2007 on this area of work and it should be repeated with CTB members to inform the extent to which agencies have implemented this.
- The issues raised about Information Sharing protocols and their application has been raised in local Serious Case Reviews and national enquiries (Baby Peter). The CTB needs to have a mechanism for auditing understanding and use of the national IS protocol. This audit would need to include adult based services such as Mental Health and General Practitioners and third sector organisations who may not be directly represented on the CTB or the LSCB. The Section 11 self assessment completed for the LSCB included a standard on IS and this could be updated and used across the CTB for this purpose. The results of these audits should be shared across the Children's Trust.
- The LSCB budget - the DCSF have not set a formula for the LSCB budget and the draft Working Together have re-stated that it should be left to local need. This is an area of challenge for the LSCB as a number of posts have been created to support the Board's functions and is not stable due to agencies competing priorities and reduction in budgets overall. The LSCB budget is not ring-fenced and further work is required to secure agencies overall commitment beyond annual funding cycles.

5. Recommendations:

1. The Children's Trust Board note the points raised in this report and facilitate any necessary developments required to ensure standards and requirements are met.

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