



COUNCILLOR TONY SMITH

CABINET
21 March 2016

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN SCRUTINY
REVIEW

Councillor Tony Smith Cabinet Member - Children and Families, said:

“Making sure our children and young people are safe is perhaps our most enduring and important duty. It is a key pledge within our Wirral Plan and an area of our business which is always right at the top of our agenda.

“This Scrutiny Review is extremely helpful in highlighting where we should focus our attention to strengthen our processes and put the systems in place to identify, as early as possible, where a child is at risk of harm.”

REPORT SUMMARY

Members of the Families & Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee undertook an in-depth review of safeguarding procedures for children in Wirral, over the course of two years from January 2014.

The review was reported to Families and Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee on 19 January 2016. Many of the recommendations emanating from the review have already been actioned and used to improve procedures and practice.

The scrutiny review gave members the opportunity to assure themselves that the Council and partners have adequate safeguarding mechanisms in place and that those processes work in practice. Scrutiny would also help the partnership to understand the experiences of families and what may need to change to improve outcomes in safeguarding.

The Members of the Scrutiny Panel met a range of witnesses throughout the course of the review, including Council officers, representatives of partner organisations as well as a small number of families who had experience of the social care system. The Report, 'Safeguarding Children in Wirral' is attached for consideration by the Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- (1) Cabinet is requested to note the contents and recommendations of the Scrutiny Report, "Safeguarding Children in Wirral".
- (2) Cabinet is requested to support the recommendation that an update report regarding the impact of the recommendations will be presented to the Families and Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee in by July 2016.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The Safeguarding Children in Wirral Scrutiny Review provides an in depth look at safeguarding in Wirral through elected member discussions with a range of different family members and professionals, and consideration of the effective implementation of policies and procedures to satisfy themselves, as far as reasonably possible that vulnerable children and young people in Wirral are safe. The recommendations within the report are borne out of this evidence, and are intended to improve children and young people's safety.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Elected members in Wirral have a successful history of undertaking scrutiny reviews, into specific topics which lead to a number of evidence based recommendations to improve outcomes for children and young people. It was on this basis that this was decided to be an appropriate method of undertaking this Review.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Members of the Families and Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee began their review in January 2014. As well as interviews, Members reviewed Committee reports, Government documents and reports prepared for the Review team by officers. The final Review is illustrated through direct reporting of comments made by people interviewed to illuminate key themes.
- 3.2 The Review concluded that they gained great insight into the experience of receiving services from speaking to a small number of family members; and through this information and other evidence, members concluded that, although there is confidence that policies and procedures are in place, the practical application requires all practitioners and managers to be on constant guard.
- 3.3 The recommendations from this Review will be closely tracked and monitored until fully implemented by the Children's Services Strategic Leadership Team. Since this Review has taken place over a considerable period of time, many of the recommendations have already been implemented.
- 3.4 An update report on the impact of the recommendations will be presented to the Families and Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee by July 2016.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

5.0 LEGAL

- 5.1 The requirement to safeguard children effectively is enshrined in legislation, especially the Children Act 1989; the Children Act 2004 and the Children and Families Act 2014. There is much regulation and guidance, but the most significant regulatory document informing safeguarding practice is Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 Implementing the Review's recommendations may have some resource implications for example in respect of staffing issues, resulting from carefully monitoring the size and complexity of social workers caseloads and considering making lap top computers available.

7.0 RELEVANT

7.1 This Review considers the challenging and complex nature of work to safeguard children and young people at risk of significant harm in Wirral. The recommendations under the five separate headings in this Review are designed to mitigate the impact of the risks identified.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION

8.1 This Review was undertaken through a process of engagement and consultation with people involved in delivering, managing or receiving services to safeguard children and young people.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact has been done.

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APPENDICES

Report – Safeguarding Children in Wirral Scrutiny Review

REFERENCE MATERIAL

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date