

Safeguarding Scrutiny Review

Response to Report Recommendations

22/06/2016

RECOMMENDATIONS

Organisational structure *(Reference Section 7.1)*

Recommendation 1 – Development of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Progress made towards the establishment of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is welcomed. In order to further improve the communication and sharing of information between partners, the Director of Children Services is requested to continue to develop the MASH concept and explore opportunities to include additional partner organisations in the model.

The MASH concept has continued to be developed and opportunities explored to include additional partner organisations in the model by:

1. Partners co-located in the MASH include Children's Social Care, Early Help & Prevention, Adults Social Care, Police, Health, Family Safety Unit and Catch 22. MASH provides a consistent approach to triaging all new requests for help from children, families and professionals.
2. The MASH Board and the MASH Operational Group includes additional partners such as Probation (Community Rehabilitation Company) and housing representatives.
3. 8 workshops were held across the Children's partnership during March and April 2016 to clarify the role of the MASH and to confirm thresholds for accessing services. Approximately 500 people attended.
4. The role and function of the MASH is under constant review to ensure it is working as effectively as possible.

Organisational structure *(Reference Section 7.1)*

Recommendation 2 – The front-door to social care

The Director of Children Services (DCS) is requested to consider alternative operating models for the front door to Specialist and Targeted Services including those offering further integration, such as a combined Gateway and CADT (Central Advice and Duty Team).

Alternative operating models for the front door to Specialist (Children's Social Care) and Targeted Services (Early Help and Prevention), including those offering further integration have been considered through:

- Staff from the Early Help & Prevention (Gateway) and Children's Social Care (CADT) co-located within the MASH.
- A review of the operation of the 'Gateway' and CADT was completed to develop a revised model of a single front door for Children's Services. A meeting of the MASH Board on the 2nd March confirmed the proposed arrangements, which were implemented on the 9th May 2016.
- The DCS commissioned a MASH Diagnostic which undertook a detailed review of the performance of the MASH. The specification for this work was presented and approved at the MASH board on 3rd March 2016 and was completed on the 13th April 2016. This provided an assessment of current performance and areas for development.
- A multi-agency development day is planned for September 2016. This will build on and develop the current model of early help, working with schools, early years settings and partners to effectively and safely contribute to managing the demand for children's social care services by intervening earlier when issues arise.. The role of the MASH will be embedded in this cross-partnership work, and it is likely to lead to further development of the model.

Organisational structure (Reference Section 7.1)

Recommendation 3 – Monitoring performance data

The Director of Children Services is requested to establish an effective mechanism to monitor the progress of children across different service provision and to provide regular performance data to monitor outcomes for young people and families who receive specialist or targeted services.

An effective mechanism to monitor the progress of children across different service provision is being established through:

A new “dashboard” of information was put in place in September 2015 which provides contemporary data on contacts, referrals, assessments and social worker caseloads.

.

- An effective performance data reporting function will be developed to provide accurate, timely reports.

Recommendation 4 – Contact with individual family members

The Director of Children Services is requested to ensure that opportunities are provided for individual family members, including the child, to provide information before and after a child protection conference.

To ensure that opportunities are provided for individual family members, including the child to provide information before and after a child protection conference the following steps are being taken:

- In response to what families have told us, case conferences are now held at a single venue that has been developed with good facilities to support families in being able to fully participate in the meeting. The Independent Reviewing Officers always meet with the family and the young person, if attending, to explain their role and what is going to happen in the conference, and there is a suitable private space available for them to do this.
- A Young Person’s Engagement Officer has been recruited to develop creative ways to secure the views of children and young people.
- The Wirral Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) has resolved to introduce a new model of child protection later this year, based on the Strengthening Families and Signs of Safety models.
- Child Protection Standards have been developed and implemented this year, in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015.

Procedures and processes *(Reference Section 7.2)*

Recommendation 5 – Formal notification to family members

The Director of Children Services is requested to ensure that the outcome of a child protection conference is reported to family members in a written format stating clearly the next steps which will follow and consider making available the opportunity for individual family members to discuss the outcome with a neutral contact.

- Families and professionals are now sent the outline child protection plan within 24 hours of the meeting. This plan sets out a family's strengths, areas for development and clear expectations in relation to ensuring the safety of children. The requirement to do this is included in the child protection standards.
- The model being developed for child protection will consider how individual family members are given the opportunity to discuss the outcome of conferences with a neutral contact. Parents who have had experience of child protection conferences and plans will inform this work, as they are part of the group developing the model.

Procedures and processes (*Reference Section 7.2*)

Recommendation 6 – Feedback from service users

The Director of Children Services is requested to investigate the possibility of providing a mechanism for individuals to feedback experiences of the child protection conference process on a confidential basis, for example, by the use of a confidential phone number.

The provision of a mechanism for individuals to feedback experiences of the child protection conference process on a confidential basis is being progressed by:

- Families now being able to access improved information through the Wirral Children’s Safeguarding Board Website, launched in April 2016. This enables families to access information and advice about local Child Protection arrangements and will also provide opportunities for feedback on the individual experiences of children, young people and their families
- The experiences of parents and young people informing development of the Wirral Signs of Safety and Strengthening Families based model for child protection services. The conference chair does invite feedback from the parents about their experience but a variety of ways to allow families to feedback their experiences are being built into the model.

Procedures and processes (*Reference Section 7.2*)

Recommendation 7 – ‘Closing the loop’

The Director of Children Services is requested to consider the options for ensuring that the originator of a safeguarding concern is informed of the outcome.

- It is the role of the MASH manager to ensure feedback is provided to each person making a safeguarding referral. This is a requirement of national safeguarding standards and was reinforced by Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015. This requirement was tested through the MASH diagnostic.
- A management instruction is in place to ensure feedback in every case takes place and practice will be audited on a continuous basis.

Procedures and processes (*Reference Section 7.2*)

Recommendation 8 – Definition of assessment threshold levels

In order to address concerns relating to the understanding of thresholds among agencies and partners, the Director of Children Services (or LSCB) is requested to develop a training plan aimed at reinforcing the interpretation and application of the definition of the threshold levels for intervention. The training will equip responsible persons with the skills to identify levels of risk and take appropriate action.

Eight workshops were held during March and April 2016 to ensure partners clearly understood thresholds to access services. Over 485 professionals attended.

To support a better understanding and to ensure thresholds were consistently applied:

- The Integrated Working Guide was reissued in November 2015
- A Training Officer for the Safeguarding Board was appointed in May and will oversee and report attendance of professionals at the relevant multi agency training relating to the Guide.

A review of the 'Threshold of Need' is currently underway and is included in the WSCB Business Plan for 2016.

Recommendation 9 – Special Guardianship Orders

The Director of Children Services is requested to ensure that the processes in place to find Special Guardians are as robust as those for Foster Carers and Adopters so that all children placed under Special Guardianship Orders remain safe and are supported within that placement.

The safety of children placed with Special Guardians has been given greater prominence in the recently published Special Guardianship (amendment) Regulations 2016. In response to these changes and to ensure children are safe we have:

- Updated our procedure for Special Guardianship with associated practice guidance for Social Workers, which will be complete in September 2016. A report went to the Children’s Sub Committee on 30th March 2016.
- Held focus Groups in May 2016 with Special Guardians to consider the breadth of support needs required so that children remain safe and are supported. A number of developments are being taken forward as a consequence of these focus groups.
- Provided support through a dedicated Adoption and Special Guardianship Team. Whilst the majority of Special Guardians receive a level of financial support for the care of the child, we are working with them to look at what services and support they require to ensure they fully meet the needs of the children in their care.

Partnership Working (*Reference Section 7.3*)

Recommendation 10 – Involving all partners in social work assessments

The Director of Children Services is requested to ensure that all organisations involved with the child, including third sector organisations, are given the opportunity to provide information when social work assessments are being prepared.

All identified organisations working with children and families will be asked to contribute to the Social Work Assessment of Need being produced. Arrangements to support this include MASH, information sharing agreements and the new child protection model. A member of a third sector organisation has been co-opted on to the development group to ensure steps are taken for this recommendation is followed in order that partner agencies will be fully engaged in the assessment process

Partnership Working (Reference Section 7.3)

Recommendation 11 – GPs and safeguarding

The Director of Children Services is requested to work in conjunction with Wirral Clinical Commissioning Group to develop a mechanism to encourage GPs to provide relevant information to safeguarding investigations and formal meetings. This mechanism could include a training programme for GPs to enable a better understanding of thresholds for intervention.

GP's are required to share information on families subject to an initial child protection conference, in the form of a written report or attendance at the conference in person. To support GP's to understand the importance of this, the following has been put in place:

- A Safeguarding training programme for GPs is in place to enable them to have an understanding of the 'Thresholds of Need' and intervention.
- The Designated Safeguarding Nurse will ensure that training continues to be provided to GP's. The training will ensure that GP's continue to improve their understanding of the 'Threshold of Need' and the evidence required to support a referral.

Partnership Working (Reference Section 7.3)

Recommendation 12 – Relationship between schools and MASH

In order to make it easier for schools to engage with safeguarding processes, the Director of Children Services is requested to consider the provision of a reference point for schools within the MASH.

- There is currently no single dedicated person in this role within the MASH. Consideration will be given to how the engagement of schools in safeguarding children is made easier.
- MASH briefings have been held this year with Schools presenting case studies to help their understanding of thresholds and encourage early consultation with Children's Services staff.
- A schedule of Safeguarding training is provided across the partnership, supported by the WSCB. Training includes Common Assessment Framework (CAF) & Team Around the Family (TAF) training courses and the Working Together Training Course to order to ensure professionals have the skills to identify levels of risk and take appropriate action. These courses are highly valued and well attended by professionals.

Partnership Working (Reference Section 7.3)

Recommendation 13 – Relationship between social care and schools

The Director of Children Services is requested to consider ways in which stronger relationships can be developed between social workers and schools, in order to encourage all schools to become more integrated in the safeguarding process.

Stronger relationships are being developed between social workers and schools by:

- Having smaller social work teams since June 2015, to work with children in need of protection. It is recognised that relationships between Social Workers and schools needs to be strengthened. There are dedicated children looked after teams in each locality. This is intended to strengthen work with all partners in each locality including schools. Social Workers involved in Early Help and Prevention Services also work with schools, in respect of individual children about whom there may be concerns.
- Social Workers being based within the MASH to provide a consultation service for professionals who have concerns for a child or young person where they are unsure of the level of need.
- Providing Safeguarding Updates on a regular basis to the Heads of all schools including the independent sector. Schools have representation on the WSCB and its sub committees. The updates include briefings that are specific to safeguarding issues in schools.
- Termly meetings with the Primary Cluster Groups and Secondary Heads to discuss specific safeguarding concerns and updates are provided.
- Establishing a Head Teachers Reference Group to consider potential models for Safeguarding Supervision and a framework will be published in July 2016.

Partnership Working (Reference Section 7.3)

Recommendation 14 – Access to safeguarding training

The Director of Children Services is requested to develop a process to ensure that safeguarding training becomes more accessible especially to small organisations in the third sector.

Specific training for small organisations in the third sector is delivered in a number of ways:

- Specific Safeguarding training has been provided to voluntary organisations in 2015 which was well attended by 95 representatives. This training will be offered again in 2016; participants are being requested to register with VCAW in order that they receive Safeguarding briefings and updates as they are produced.
- The WSCB has delivered a safeguarding briefing to the network of voluntary community and faith sector organisations. It has promoted the programme of multi-agency training with them, and now supports ‘out of hours’ training sessions.
- The WSCB Website provides access to training courses for all agencies.
- Access to training has been improved by the introduction of a package of 50 e-learning safeguarding courses from April 2016. These courses are accessible to the network of voluntary community and faith sector organisations. This will be further supported by the use of Social Media such as Facebook and Twitter in order to make information more accessible to interested parties. In the past 12 months over 1,200 safeguarding ‘Tweets’ have been issued.
- The WSCB has representation from and strong links to the voluntary, community and faith sector through the Linked-Up network.

Partnership Working (*Reference Section 7.3*)

Recommendation 15 – Child sexual exploitation training for front-line staff

The Director of Children Services is requested to continue to encourage the uptake of additional training opportunities for front-line staff, including the police, regarding child sexual exploitation.

Additional Child Sexual Exploitation training opportunities for front line staff have been put in place in a number of different ways, as follows:

- 20 multi-agency and single agency awareness raising briefings were delivered during the year including social workers, taxi drivers, health staff (including dental practitioners), housing providers, Chairs of Governors of schools, and elected members.
- 700+ multi-agency professionals including elected members watched Chelsea's Choice along with 2,200 children and young people.
- 40 professional across the partnership attended two multi-agency sessions called CSE: Next Steps Training
- 40 front line professionals attended two multi-agency sessions on working with and supporting parents and cares affected by CSE. These sessions were delivered by PACE (Parent's Against Child Sexual Exploitation).
- 10 multi-agency CSE training sessions are being provided from April 16 to March 17. This provision will be supplemented by an e-learning CSE package due to be available in April 2016 to all partners across the children's workforce and adult safeguarding.
- "On One Condition" is an excellent new drama production developed with a local youth theatre which really captures the issues facing some young people. It gets to the heart and complexity of the problem and crosses all boundaries.
- Training undertaken to date has been evaluated and feedback received has informed the future delivery of training.

Recommendation 16 – Social Care re-organisation: Follow-up investigation by members

The Strategic Director of Transformation and Resources is requested to enable scrutiny members to arrange a follow-up session / workshop to evaluate the effectiveness of the re-organisation once the new Specialist Services social care teams are embedded. The review, which will include front-line staff and possibly parents and families, will also monitor the success of the plans to achieve improved retention of staff.

- Children’s Social Care was redesigned in order to better meet the needs of children, young people and families; this was implemented in June 2015. The teams have a specific focus on either Children in Need and Child Protection or Children in Care and Care Leavers. This has also been broadly welcomed as a way to reduce changes in social worker for children and their families. The move to smaller teams, with opportunities for increased management support and oversight has been welcomed by staff. A review of the redesign is underway to ensure it is meeting its intended aims.
- Wirral implemented an improved pay and grading structure for Social Workers, in January 2015, including clear progression routes based upon the Professional Capabilities Framework.
- In common with most North West authorities recruiting and retaining experienced Social Workers is a challenge, although recruitment of newly qualified Social workers is effective.
- A review of Social Worker pay, progression and retention is currently underway led by Human Resources.

Recommendation 17 – Social worker caseloads

The Director of Children Services is requested to develop a mechanism to monitor the caseloads of social workers with the aim of reducing the caseload to, at most, the national average.

Measures are in place to monitor caseloads of social workers:

- A caseload weighting system was implemented in September 2015 for Children’s Social Care. Protected caseloads are in place for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) who are completing their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) and this is included within the caseload weighting system.
- Caseloads both amongst teams and for individuals are monitored regularly and are included in discussions as part of the Director of Children’s Services Safeguarding meeting with Social Care Group Managers..
- Supervision is monitored both in terms of completion and quality via supervision audits. Supervision is valued by staff and managers and is undertaken regularly

There are a number of measures in place to reduce the overall caseloads in line with the national average:

- Children’s Social Care currently uses temporary agency Social Workers to provide cover for sickness absence, maternity and vacant Social Work posts. In this way Children’s Social Care seeks to maintain reasonable caseloads amongst staff.
- Monthly recruitment rounds for social workers are scheduled for the coming year
- A Social Work Induction Programme is being developed to ensure that all new staff have a consistent introduction to working in Wirral.

Staffing Issues (Reference Section 7.4)

Recommendation 18 – Social worker support

The Director of Children Services is requested to consider the options for increasing the availability of laptops for staff, such as social workers, who are regularly working off-site.

The Windows 7 equipment replacement project commenced in the Autumn of 2014 and for Children’s Service was completed in the Summer of 2015.

The Windows 7 project provided all Social Workers with new upgraded laptops.

Governance Arrangements (Reference Section 7.5)

Recommendation 19 – Governance arrangements

The Strategic Director for Families and Wellbeing is requested to undertake a review of the governance arrangements relating to safeguarding to ensure that remits of bodies, such as Children’s Trust Board, Corporate Parenting Group, Health & Wellbeing Board, Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), Safeguarding Reference Group and scrutiny, are clearly understood, the appropriate reporting lines are in place and that duplication of activity is avoided.

- A review of arrangements commenced in April 2016 and will be completed by September. The review has been asked to consider governance arrangements relating to safeguarding to ensure that the remit of the Children’s Trust, Corporate Parenting Group, Health & Wellbeing Board, Wirral Children’s Safeguarding Board, Safeguarding Reference Group and scrutiny is understood and that appropriate reporting lines are in place which avoid duplication.
- Internal Audit has been requested to perform a review of the inter-connectivity between these groups, the clarity of the different roles and the overall effectiveness of the working arrangements regarding safeguarding children. This work will be reported in June to the Strategic Director.

Governance Arrangements *(Reference Section 7.5)*

Recommendation 20 – The role for scrutiny in safeguarding

The Strategic Director of Transformation and Resources is requested to further examine the role of scrutiny in the safeguarding process by establishing a protocol of understanding with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

- As part of the review being undertaken in relation to recommendation 19, the role of scrutiny will be examined by establishing a protocol of understanding with the Wirral Children's Safeguarding Board.
- A protocol was established in October 2014 between the Wirral Children's Safeguarding Board, Health & Well Being Board and the Children's Trust, which will be reviewed as part of this work.