

PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**14 JULY 2016**

REPORT TITLE:	Safeguarding Children Scrutiny Review - Update
REPORT OF:	Director of Children's Services

REPORT SUMMARY

In response to the high profile of safeguarding issues at a national level, Members of the Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee were seeking reassurance that appropriate policies and practices were in place in Wirral. Members of the Committee agreed to undertake an in-depth scrutiny review to investigate the suitability of safeguarding procedures for children in Wirral. As a result, a scrutiny panel involving five Members held a range of meetings in order to obtain appropriate evidence.

It had been agreed that the scrutiny review would give 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 recommend 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 safeguarding services.

This report 'Safeguarding Children in Wirral' was last presented to Cabinet on the 21st March 2016. The decision at Cabinet was:

That

- (1) the contents and recommendations of the Scrutiny Report, "Safeguarding Children in Wirral" be accepted; and
- (2) an update report regarding the impact of the recommendations be presented to the Families and Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee, and subsequently Cabinet at its July 2016 meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) Members are requested to consider and approve the actions set out in response to the recommendations of the scrutiny report, "Safeguarding Children in Wirral."

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 Members to receive an update on how recommendations are being implemented.

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.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The report was written against a background of national focus on safeguarding and the need for continuous learning to improve the services which safeguard children. There is a continuous need to ask ourselves if it is safe to be a child in Wirral.

- 3.2 It is helpful to clarify that the description of 'Targeted Services' can include 'Early Help and Prevention Services' and the description of 'Specialist Services' can include 'Children's Social Care'. This is in line with developments nationally.

3.3 Summary of key issues and themes

The key issues for the Review were:

- Agencies working with children need to understand and be effective in their contribution to protection plans.
- The child's voice should be at the heart of every plan they may be subject to.
- It is difficult for children and families to understand services and their relevance at each stage of involvement.
- There is a key role to be played by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), having the ability to address these issues and it needs to be effective in doing so.

The Review concluded with twenty recommendations, grouped under five headings:

- Organisational structure
- Procedures and Processes
- Partnership working
- Staffing issues
- Governance arrangements

In their Overview the Panel 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 to ensure they are applied consistently.

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, a number of the recommendations have already been implemented.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are significant financial pressures within Children's Social Care Budgets. At this time there are no financial implications arising directly from this report or review.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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: ICT, STAFFING 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.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

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

9.1 An equality impact assessment has been completed.

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APPENDICES

Safeguarding Scrutiny Review, Response to Report Recommendations

REFERENCE MATERIAL

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Families and Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee	19.01.2016
Cabinet	21.03.2016