

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 14 September 2017

Report of the Independent Chair of the Lancashire Safeguarding Boards

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:
All

Lancashire Safeguarding Boards - Annual Report 2016/17

(Appendix 'A' refers)

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Executive Summary

This report is being presented to the Cabinet prior to publication of the LSCB/LSAB Annual Report to allow for comment on the draft report before it is finalised. The draft Annual Report is attached at Appendix 'A'.

Statute requires that in every local authority administrative area there must be both a Children Safeguarding Board and an Adult Safeguarding Board. Key local agencies are represented on the boards at a senior level, but the Boards have an Independent Chair. At present in Lancashire both Boards have the same Chair.

Both Boards are required to produce and publish an annual report which reflects on safeguarding practice and issues in the area. The attached report at Appendix 'A' covers the period from April 2016 to end of March 2017.

The report begins with contextual information drawn from Public Health data. Generally, the data reflects more Red/Amber ratings than Green ratings. The data also highlights the complexity of the population in Lancashire, with poorer performance being seen in the areas of highest deprivation. The report then seeks to set out what we know about the vulnerability of the people in terms of safeguarding and what we know about the quality and safeguarding activity in local services.

Recommendation

The Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) note the contents of the report.
- (ii) comment on any key issues and consider the implications for the conduct of council business.

Background and Advice

In Lancashire a single business unit supports both Boards and every attempt is made to maximise the potential benefits this brings. Common approaches have been developed for the conduct of business and, as far as possible we strive to do things once. For the first time, this year we are publishing the Annual Report as a single report covering both Boards. If required, for example by Ofsted, it can be split into a Children's or Adults report.

Key issues detailed in the report which may be of particular interest to Cabinet include the following:

Adults:

Adults - Good practice and improved performance

- More resources have been committed to understanding and addressing issues related to delays in hospital discharges.
- Policies, procedures and guidance around Mental Capacity Act (MCA) implementation have been commended nationally as an example of best practice.
- A significant majority of residential and nursing homes are rated by the regulator, CQC, as good or outstanding.
- High levels of service users report that they feel safe and that the service they received has made them feel safer.

Adults – pressures and concerns

- Applications in respect of DoLS far outstrip capacity to deal with them and there are significant backlogs.
- A significant backlog of safeguarding referrals was reported in the previous Annual Report. This has continued to be a concern throughout 2016-17. (Recently additional resources have been identified to deal with this and the outcome will be reported in the 2017-18 report).
- There has been an increase of 30% in cases identified as vulnerable adults by the police – the largest number are as a result of domestic abuse.
- Although the total number of cases is small, there has been a significant increase in cases of so-called honour based violence.
- Thresholds for referral to Adult Social Care are not sufficiently well understood across partner agencies resulting in too high a level of referrals.

Adults – challenges

- Clearing backlogs both in DoLS applications and safeguarding referrals
- Increasing understanding of thresholds so vulnerable adults get the right service at the right time, including early help.
- “Making Safeguarding Personal” (MSP) should underpin all adult safeguarding work. While this has been embedded in adult social care we need to see more evidence of this approach being adopted in all settings.

Children

Children – good practice and performance

- There has been a significant increase in the number of families being supported with early help.
- Social worker caseloads have stabilised at an appropriate level.
- The number of Missing from Home incidents has reduced by 24%
- The number of children needing to be subject of a child protection plan for more than two years is lower than both the National and regional averages.
- The Children Board's on-line resources are recognised as of good quality and the Web-pages are well-used, particularly by schools.

Children – pressures and concerns

- The level of resources committed to Child and Adolescent mental health is insufficient resulting in waiting lists and inequitable access to services across the county.
- The level of complexity combined with inefficient working practices for management of incoming work have had an adverse impact on the volume of referrals. This has however been an area of attention, additional resource and more recent improvement.
- The numbers of children needing a child protection plan, though marginally lower than last year, remains higher than the National average.
- The numbers of children looked after by the local authority continues to rise and is higher than both the National and North West average.
- Although improving, completion of assessments by Children's Social Care is still not meeting the required timescales.
- Around 1,000 children who are looked after by other local authorities are placed with private/independent sector providers in Lancashire.
- Rates of hospital admission for reasons of mental health or self-harm continue to rise and are above both National and North West averages.
- Asian children are over-represented in overall child death figures.
- Referrals to the MASH include too many children whose interests would be best met by early help.

Children - challenges

- Embedding access to early help as the first response.
- Ensuring the redesign of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service results in a more accessible and equitable service.
- Ensuring the improvements made in Children's Social Care are sustained.
- Piloting new approaches to the MASH and developing a locality based service.
- Embedding the lessons from audit and Serious Case Reviews into practice.

The Board completes a range of quality assurance activities which are reflected in the Annual report. Serious Case Reviews concerning children and Safeguarding Adult reviews are published (where there are no legal constraints) and always publishes learning briefings. A programme of audits is completed each year on subjects linked to the Boards' priorities. Partner agencies who provide services for children and families complete an annual self-assessment against an LSCB template and a proportion are subject of detailed challenge.

The governance arrangements for the Boards is set out in the annual report, as is the work of the sub-groups. Lessons from case reviews and audits are outlined. Partner agencies have also provided a summary of their work in respect of safeguarding and these are embedded in the report.

Revised governmental guidance around the arrangements for safeguarding children is expected to be published in the Autumn. This will require three key agencies, the local authority, the police and the CCGs to determine future arrangements and the statutory requirements for there to be a Local Safeguarding Children Board will cease. It is anticipated that new arrangements will need to be in place by end of March 2019.

Consultations

All Board partner agencies have been consulted during the preparation of the Annual Report. The report reflects comments made and includes information directly provided by the agencies. A group of young people will be producing a Young Person's version of the report in due course.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

While there is evidence of good practice, significant challenges remain in ensuring services that provide safeguards for vulnerable children and adults are sufficiently resourced to meet demand on a timely basis.

Risk management

As set out in the report.

Legal

Failure to meet the statutory requirements in the provision of services could increase the risk of harm. It would also impact on the reputation of the council and partner agencies.

Equality and Cohesion

Any deficits in service are likely to impact more significantly on those living in areas of high deprivation.

Financial

The Boards Business unit and activity is financed from multi-agency contributions. This is not currently sufficient to meet the full costs and the Board has used its reserves to supplement the annual budget.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
Working Together to Safeguard Children The Care Act 2014 – revised 2016 Board minutes and reports	2015	Victoria Gibson

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A