

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee
Meeting to be held on 7 September 2016

Report of the Independent Chair of the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board

Electoral Divisions affected: All

Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Annual Report 2015-16
(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

Jane Booth 07795061538, Independent Chair

Jane.booth@lancashire.gov.uk

Victoria Gibson (01772) 538352, LSCB/LSAB Business Manager,

victoria.gibson@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

Lancashire County Council is a significant member agency of Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The report is attached as Appendix A.

The production of this report fulfils a statutory requirement and its contents are, to a large extent, determined by the legal framework and this results in a document of some size. A group of young people have been working on an alternative version with a target audience of children and young people themselves, which will be published in late September.

The report reflects on a challenging year. In the Autumn of 2015, Ofsted inspected services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. The inspectors judged services overall as inadequate. While the inspection focussed largely on Children's Social Care the judgement reflects on all agencies as safeguarding requires agencies to work together to be effective.

This Annual Report provides information about services and their effectiveness. The LSCB shares the concerns set out in the Ofsted report. The LSCB is working as part of the Improvement Board set up to ensure an effective response and has seen evidence of plans to restructure services, reduce caseloads of social workers and improve quality assurance. These things will take time to show an impact and at the end of 2015-16 it was not possible to identify significant improvement in practice. In addition the LSCB is particularly concerned about the quality and availability of appropriate Child and Adolescent Mental Health where the resource allocation is too low and progress towards improved services too slow.

The report sets out the priorities of the LSCB and the areas identified for future work.

Recommendation

The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the content of the Annual Report and identify any areas they may wish to comment on and any action they may wish to take.

Background and Advice

The LSCB has a statutory responsibility to ensure the effectiveness of work undertaken by agencies to safeguard children in Lancashire. This Annual Report reflects on the work undertaken in this regard in Lancashire for the 2015-16 financial year. The report is attached at Appendix A for information. The Board is required to have an Independent Chair and has the responsibility to promote and protect the welfare and interest of children, young people and their families. The Chair of the Board is accountable to the Council's Chief Executive who is, in turn, responsible for ensuring its effectiveness.

Protocols are in place which establish the relationship between the LSCB, the Children and Young People's Trust Board and the Health and Well-being Board and to strengthen this link the Independent Chair of the LSCB has recently joined the Health and Well-being Board.

The Director of Children's Services is a statutory member of the LSCB along with the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools who is a 'participating observer' on the Board. It is clear that a great deal of work to safeguard children has taken place during the last twelve months. However, there are several areas that the LSCB remains concerned about:

- Ensuring services reach an appropriately high standard on a timely basis;
- Ensuring equality of services given the complexity and diversity of the administrative area especially in relation to deprivation rates;
- Poor health outcomes, especially infant and child death rates, alcohol and substance use and self-harm;
- Increasing numbers of Children Looked After from other local authorities (around 1000) and issues around levels of need and incidents of missing from home;
- Significant increases in children subject to Child Protection Plans;
- Increasing number of Child Sexual Exploitation referrals but no increase in recorded crime;
- Continuing development of effective early intervention and preventative.

The level of concern regarding services for children experiencing emotional and mental health issues resulted in the LSCB reporting its concerns to the Health and Well-being Board who responded by requiring a comprehensive review with the intention re-commissioning services from April 2016. While some additional services have been commissioned the outcome of the review in terms of service re-design is yet to be completed and has now been rolled into a broader transformation agenda with timescales running up to the end of 2020. The LSCB has expressed its serious concerns and is now receiving regular update report at its meetings.

The LSCB will continue to work with partner agencies to address all relevant concerns identified in the Annual Report and Lancashire County Council is a key organisation in all this work.

Priorities identified in the current Business Plan are set out in detail in the report.

Scrutiny Committee will also note that the business functions of both the adult and children safeguarding boards have been aligned to achieve greater efficiency and improved synergy with shared functions and responsibility.

Consultations

The LSCB has consulted with all partner organisations in the preparation for the Annual Report and with young people in the development of an alternative version.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

There are no additional direct implications for finance or human resource management further to those already provided by LCC and partner agencies for LSCB purposes.

Risk management

All partner agencies need to be fully engaged with services and support to safeguard children and young people in order that children in Lancashire grow up happy, healthy and safe from harm.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2015-16	September 2016	Victoria Gibson 01772 538352

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A