



Health and Wellbeing Board

7 October 2015

Report title	Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report and Executive Summary 2014-15
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Sandra Samuels Health and Wellbeing
Wards affected	All
Accountable director	Linda Sanders, Community
Originating service	Children's Safeguarding
Report to be/has been considered by	Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children's Board 16 September 2015

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

- It is recommended that Health and Well-Being Board (HWBB) receives this report in order to ensure a clear understanding in relation to the work of WSCB over the last year.
- HWBB note the range of work that is taking place to safeguard children in Wolverhampton, and the continued challenges, developments and achievements in this critical area of work.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the HWBB with a copy of the WSCB's Annual Report and Executive Summary, to inform the Board of safeguarding activity during 2014/2015 and to present the Board with progress made against the priorities for 2013-16.
- 1.2 The Annual Report is agreed by the WSCB and provides an overview of how partners have discharged their safeguarding responsibilities over the preceding year.
- 1.3 The annual report offers assurance to the HWBB that the activities of WSCB are in compliance with its statutory functions as required by legislation (Children Act 2004), and

provides a formal opportunity to ensure that practice operates accordingly. From the perspective of the Children's Safeguarding Board, it provides an arena for challenge and an opportunity to seek assurances from members of the HWBB that their constituent organisations discuss and review safeguarding at their respective Boards and, where relevant, scrutiny committees.

2.0 Background

2.1 Safeguarding Children's Boards are statutorily required to publish an annual report on the effectiveness of children's safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the local area. The Board is a broad partnership of key agencies with collective responsibilities for safeguarding children and providing mutual assurance that the practice of safeguarding reflects jointly agreed policies and protocols. The Board meets four times a year with much of its business conducted through a range of committees that report into the Board. In compliance with the Statutory guidance; Working Together to Safeguard Children (March 2015), which states;

"The Chair must publish an annual report on the effectiveness of child safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the local area. The annual report should be published in relation to the preceding financial year and should fit with local agencies' planning, commissioning and budget cycles. The report should be submitted to the Chief Executive (Managing Director), Leader of the Council, the local police and crime commissioner and the Chair of the health and well-being board".

2.2 The annual report describes the combined activities made in respect of children safeguarded at a local level and relates to the year 2014-15. It was presented at the September Children's Board and signed off early October. As predicted in my report to this Board in January the timing of Annual report has been improved significantly and met the proposed deadline of going to the September 15 Safeguarding Children Board.

2.3 There is an executive summary which provides the key activities and highlights key achievements for the reporting year.

3.0 Progress since last report

3.1 Last year we reported on the revised priorities and Board membership, the establishment of an Executive group with each member having a lead role for each of the Board's priorities have been formalised and is now embedded within the 'Business and functions of activities.

3.2 Against each priority there is a list of achievements in the past year and priorities for the future. In particular I wish to draw your attention to the following ones:

3.2.1 Last year I drew attention to the relative paucity of information that we possessed about safeguarding of children in schools. From a point where only 10% of schools reported on safeguarding by the end of 2014-15 the figure had increased to 100%. Our challenge now is to support schools who have reported both their strengths and areas for development in ensuring they can better learn from one another in regard to best practice

and effective training. This is being supported by a Safeguarding and Schools Conference we are arranging for November.

- 3.2.2 We now have more effective links with young people and are better able to listen to and respond to their issues and concerns around safeguarding. This is leading to a focussed campaign this year on bullying something which is clearly something of significance for too many of our young people.
- 3.2.3 Wolverhampton Board has contributed to and designed up to a new West Midlands protocol relating to improved prevention and intervention in instances. Quite rightly this reflects both an increased national and regional focus on child sexual exploitation.
- 3.2.4 Led by West Midlands Police we have improved our partnership information gathering and sharing about children who are missing and possibly being Sexually Exploited and Trafficked. Like many other partnerships we now have a designated officer appointed to coordinate our efforts and to challenge us all to do more. But we also know there is much more to find out which is inevitably the case when so much effort is applied by perpetrators to avoid detection and prosecution. Although we do not believe Wolverhampton has repeatedly missed warnings or ignored signs of organised abuse that does not mean we are content we are doing enough to protect young people or improve our chances of prosecution.
- 3.2.5 The Council through their licensing responsibilities have improved their practice in terms of identify and acting on concerns about children that seem to be at risk in regulated services such as pubs, hotels, taxis and take away restaurants at licensed premises. Where there is evidence to suggest that children are in danger or at risk programme licences have been revoked.
- 3.2.6 In last year's report I raised concerns about the Board's funding. We have secured some additional funding for the Board in order to ensure in the short to medium term we can meet the priorities we have set ourselves. This is a continuing issue but our funding is relatively more secure than in the previous year.

4.0 Future priorities and challenges

- 4.1 Safeguarding children is heavily dependent on effective partnerships both in day to day operations and strategically. All agencies continue to experience frequent internal pressure on their resources which has an effect on establishing and maintaining multi-agency practice. During 2014-15 there were significant changes in the Probation Service affecting what they did and how they did it. West Midlands Police experience frequent change in the roles and responsibilities of their Officers. It is not uncommon for me to brief each year two to three new officers participating in the Boards and Committees of the Children's' and Adult Boards. It does little for consistency. The loss of Bob Jones as Police and Crime Commissioner was a significant loss for Boards across the region as he ran and supported regular conversations with Board Chairs - something which I need to encourage the new Commissioner to continue.

- 4.2 Issues of staff turnover also affect day to day safeguarding practice. A constant message from my meetings with front-line staff are that they all too often find that direct work with families lacks the necessary continuity due to staff shortages and relatively heavy use of agency staff. This applies in particular to social work. It is not ignored but highlights the problems that there are nationally in recruiting and retaining staff to a profession that all-too-often is identified and criticised in individual cases of child abuse or neglect.
- 4.3 I referred to the need to better engage GPs in the safeguarding of children. We now know that most GPs do not contribute to planning discussions either in person or in writing. We are taking steps through Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group to support Doctors in making that vital contribution as well as improving their training. There is a written action plan that I am confident will lead to improved participation rates next year.
- 4.4 Our work on engaging Faith Groups in safeguarding has proven to be more difficult than first envisaged. We established a database of over 160 faith groups in Wolverhampton. This reflects in part the greater diversity of our local population in particular migration from Eastern Europe.
- 4.5 Our priorities for the year 2015-16 are outlined in the report. Above those covered in this report I would draw attention to the continued development of a new adults and children's website which, on completion, will provide substantially more accessible information not just for professionals but also the public. Of particular significance will be the section of the site designed by and for young people.

5.0 Financial implications

- 5.1 I have referred in 3.2.6 to the increased, but not total financial security in relation to the Children's Safeguarding Board. I am confident that for the next 12 months we shall have the necessary resources to carry out our key responsibilities.

6.0 Legal implications

- 6.1 Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWBB) were established by the Health and Social Care Act 2012. They are intended to be a forum where key leaders from the health and care system work together to improve the health and Wellbeing of their local population and reduce health inequalities.
- 6.2 The Children Act 2004 required each local authority to establish a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). It is the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how the relevant organisations in each local area will co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to ensure that these agencies are effective. It operates under guidelines known as 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'; the latest version came into effect from March of this year (2015).

- 6.3 As stipulated in the related guidance, the annual report will be submitted to the Managing Director, Leader of the Council, the local police and crime commissioner and is presented here for the attention of members of this Board.
- 6.4 In support of the protocol agreement put forward in January between Wolverhampton's Children's Safeguarding Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board I have supported this concept to include reciprocal relationships between the Adults' Board which I also chair. It is also intended that the report should be tabled at the Children Trust Board and Safer Wolverhampton Partnership. This extended circulation is deemed necessary in particular reference to the high correlation between domestic violence and child abuse requires us to always 'think family' in both strategy and practice I hope this will mean that excellent informal relationships will be consolidated more formally.

7.0 Equalities implications

- 7.1 Within this report covering the period 2014 -15, there are no specific equality implications.

8.0 Environmental implications

- 8.1 There are no specific environmental implications.

9.0 Schedule of background papers

- 9.1 Annual Report and Executive Summary of the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children Board 2014-15

Alan Coe
Independent Chair
Wolverhampton Children's Safeguarding Board