

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Corporate Director of Children & Learning  
to  
Cabinet and All Members of Council  
on  
15<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Agenda  
Item No.

Report prepared by: Sue Cook  
Corporate Director Children and Learning

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**Annual Report on Safeguarding**  
**Children & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee–**  
**Executive Councillor: Councillor Roger Hadley**  
***A Part 1 Public Agenda Item***

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## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide an annual assurance assessment for the Council in respect of its responsibilities for safeguarding children in Southend. This report contributes to the requirements of statutory guidance which states that ‘the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council should make an assessment of the effectiveness of local governance and partnership arrangements for improving outcomes for children and supporting the best possible standards for safeguarding children’ (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010).

## 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the report is noted.

## 3. Background

- 3.1 The statutory definition of safeguarding and promoting children’s welfare is:
- protecting children from maltreatment;
  - preventing impairment of children’s health or development;
  - ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;
  - undertaking that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully.
- 3.2 Safeguarding includes a wide range of activities and actions taken by a vast number of people, not least by parents, covering three types of activity:
- specific action to identify and protect children at risk (suffering or likely to suffer harm), i.e. direct or serious physical, emotional and sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation;
  - activities directly designed to identify and support children who are, for one reason or another, vulnerable to poor outcomes and life circumstances;
  - activity to improve the general health and well-being of all children.
- 3.3 The way in which local councils, with their partners, serve children, young people and their families has changed enormously in recent years

The Lord Laming (2003) Victoria Climbié Inquiry Report London HMSO 1, the Children Act 2004 and the Every Child Matters: Change for Children agenda radically extended the duties placed on councils by the Children Act 1989.

- 3.4 The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is a statutory partnership (Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM Government 2006 revised 2010) charged with the responsibility to co-ordinate and evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in all agencies. The Children's Partnership is designed to ensure improvements for all children across the five Every Child Matters outcomes, including their safety. The structure of the Southend Children's Partnership is currently being reviewed in the light of the coalition government's new approach to partnership working (see paragraph 3.5.1 of appendix 1 for details).
- 3.5 All professionals and agencies have a duty to safeguard and protect the welfare of children (Section 11 Children Act 2004) in delivering of their functions.
- 3.6 The Council is specifically accountable for ensuring it discharges all its functions with due regard to the safety and well being of children, it is accountable for the effective delivery of key services to protect children and safeguard their welfare, (most significantly social care services) and it is also accountable for ensuring the effectiveness of the LSCB.
- 3.7 This report provides an annual assurance statement of the Council's effectiveness in the discharge of these responsibilities. The report contains two elements:
- A report from the independent chair of the LSCB covering the effectiveness of the LSCB, its work over the year and key issues locally in respect of safeguarding children (Appendix 1).
  - A report from the Head of Children's Specialist Services covering the quality and effectiveness of the Council's children's social care delivery (Appendix 2).

#### **4. Other Options**

None

#### **5. Reasons for Recommendations**

To keep the Council informed of the position in respect of safeguarding children in Southend.

#### **6. Corporate Implications**

##### **6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities**

The work of partners and the Council in safeguarding children directly contributes to the Council's priority of improving the life chances of vulnerable children.

##### **6.2 Financial Implications**

None

### 6.3 Legal Implications

None

### 6.4 People Implications

None

### 6.5 Property Implications

None

### 6.6 Consultation

Not required

### 6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

Feeling and being safe is fundamental to unborn children, babies, children and young people realising their potential. The Council and the LSCB has the responsibility to ensure that children within or affected by any equality strand have their safety and welfare needs addressed. Module 5 of the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Child Protection Procedures is entitled "recognition of additional vulnerability" and covers the considerations which must be taken into account when meeting the needs of particular groups. An equality impact assessment of this area of the Council's work and of the LSCB's work has been completed and actions for further development identified. Action plans have been put in place. In order to ensure that all children are safeguarded, irrespective of any "differences", in 2009/10 short-life working groups reported on equality and diversity matters in safeguarding in Southend and on safeguarding arrangements for children with disabilities.

### 6.8 Risk Assessment

Risk logs are maintained for the LSCB and within Children and Learning.

### 6.9 Value for Money

Fulfilling our responsibility to safeguard children and promote their welfare is a statutory requirement. The Council works in partnership with other organisations and local authorities to ensure we fulfil those responsibilities in the most cost effective way. LSCB members ensure that all functions are undertaken on value for money principles. This year, in recognition of reducing budgets for most agencies, the LSCB has reduced the time commitment it requires from members. The number of Board meetings has reduced from 4 to 3 a year, Executive meetings from 8 to 7 a year, and sub groups from 8 to a maximum of 7 a year. Training which was provided by the Board free to members is now charged for. All other budget lines have been scrutinised and the cost of the running of the Board to its members for next year has reduced by 25%.

This reduction in cost and time commitment from members of the LSCB should not affect the efficacy of the Board; rather, it takes account of the development work which has taken place over the past three years which has produced an effective and efficient structure.

### 6.10 Community Safety Implications

LSCB arrangements support the safety for our most vulnerable children across the localities and partnerships. The Board oversees the work on road safety as it relates to children.

## **7. Background Papers**

- The Lord Laming (2003) Victoria Climbié Inquiry Report London HMSO 1
- The Children Act 2004 Every Child Matters: Change for Children
- Children Act 1989
- The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report – Lord Laming (2009)
- Children’s Trusts Statutory Guidance on inter-agency co-operation to improve well-being of children, young people and their families (2008)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006 (revised 2010)
- The Munro Review of Child Protection : Part one : A Systems Analysis (2010)
- The Munro Review of Child Protection : Interim Report : The Child’s Journey (2011)
- Statutory Guidance on role of Lead Member and Director of Children’s Services. (July 2009)

## **8. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Report on the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board

Appendix 2 – Report on the effectiveness of safeguarding and protecting children by Southend Council’s children’s social care services

## **Report on the effectiveness of Southend's Local Safeguarding Children's Board**

prepared by Christine Doorly,  
Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB)

### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide the Council with assurance about the effectiveness of Southend's Local Safeguarding Children Board.

### **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 **That the report is noted.**

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 The Local Safeguarding Children Board has a statutory responsibility for safeguarding children. "The process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health or development, and ensuring that they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care that enables children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully" (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010).

- 3.2 All professionals have a duty to safeguard and protect the welfare of children (Section 11 Children Act 2004) and the LSCB is set up to co-ordinate and evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in all agencies.

- 3.3 The Southend LSCB is chaired by Independent Chair, Christine Doorly; the Deputy Chair is Sue Cook, Interim Corporate Director of Children & Learning; the Board membership comprises of 14 senior statutory partners and others, including schools and the voluntary sector.

- 3.4 The overarching Board is supported by the work of the Executive Group which discharges it's priorities through the business plan and the sub groups. In addition, to ensure that, wherever practical, there is consistency in policy and procedure for agencies which work across the larger area, there is a SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) grouping which develops joint policies and procedures (which go to the respective Boards for approval), and co-ordinates the quality assurance of safeguarding and child protection training.

- 3.5 Governance

- 3.5.1 Relationship between the LSCB and Children's Trust Arrangements

The LSCB has the lead responsibility for ensuring that the welfare of all children is safeguarded, and more specifically for ensuring children are actively protected from harm. The Children's Partnership Board had the primary responsibility for improving outcomes across all five 'Every Child Matters' outcome areas for the whole population of children. Arising from the Lord Laming recommendations in 2009 the relationship was further clarified resulting in the introduction of an annual reporting requirement to the Children's Partnership Board by the LSCB and a responsibility for the LSCB to

hold the Children's Partnership Board to account in their work on safeguarding children. In 2009/10 the 2 Boards reviewed their relationships and a protocol was agreed that clarifies respective accountabilities and work plans. The statutory guidance and regulations surrounding Children's Trusts was withdrawn by the coalition government in October last year. New arrangements are being put in place in Southend and the redesign will ensure that safeguarding for both children and adults are securely overseen within the new partnership arrangements.

The LSCB has changed its operational year to run from October to September in order that the learning from the LSCB annual report can be incorporated into the planning by the Partnership for the following year's children and young people's plan.

### 3.5.2 Scrutiny and Overview by Members

Elected Members role is 'to hold their organisation and its officers to account for their contribution to the effective functioning of the LSCB' (Working Together 2010). Arising from the Lord Laming recommendations 2009 the Lead Member for Children's Services is now a member of the LSCB in a participant observer role.

Last year's report informed Cabinet that In Feb 2009 Southend developed an innovative approach to the proper scrutiny of the Board's work by Council Members. A scrutiny sub - group meets prior to each Board meeting, considers key items on the agenda and their views are fed into the LSCB through the Lead Member for Children's Services. Action in respect of the issues raised is progressed and monitored through the Executive.

In its 2 years of operation, members have used this scrutiny focus to gain a high level of knowledge about safeguarding and child protection procedures. This has led to the scrutiny of the Board's efficacy becoming sharper and more informed. The knowledge and effectiveness of members was noted by the Peer Review, of safeguarding which took place in 2010.

In 2010, the membership of the Scrutiny Panel has been extended to include the non-executive Board members from other LSCB statutory partners.

### 3.5.3 Scrutiny by the public

One lay member has been identified as a Board member. This lay member is a representative of the Youth Council who will, with support, ensure that issues of concern to young people are addressed by the Board and that young people are informed about decisions of the Board. A further member of the public is currently being sought through local press advertising.

### 3.5.4 Independence of Chair of LSCB

The Chair of the LSCB should be independent. This has been the case in Southend since the inception of the LSCB. The same Chair has, since April 2010, also been the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Board. This has already facilitated the adoption of joint protocols by the two

Boards. Also, in 2010, a workshop was arranged by the Chair for members of both Boards to explore joint working and learning from each others best practice.

### 3.5.5 Scrutiny by the Lead member and the Chief Executive Officer

Annually, The Leader of the Council and Chief Executive meet with the Corporate Director of Children and Learning, the Executive Member for Children & Learning, the Head of Children's Specialist Services and the Independent Chair in order to reassure themselves that the children's safeguarding and child protection arrangements within Southend are fit for purpose. Arising from this years' meeting it is proposed to broaden the frequency and reach of this activity over the coming year.

### 3.6 Partnership Arrangements.

3.6.1 Good progress has been made against the business plan this year with the LSCB taking a proactive approach in holding members to account and in progressing plans. A high level of attendance and confident engagement by members of the Board has led to good levels of mutual challenge and support.

3.6.2 Key areas of progress to highlight for 2010/11 are;

- The establishment of an e-safety sub group
- Implementation of the anti-bullying strategy and subsequent reduction in number of children who report as having experienced bullying
- Co-ordinating the quality assurance of safeguarding and child protection training across Southend, Essex and Thurrock (very important for agencies which work across the boundaries) and obtaining accurate information from all partners on numbers of staff trained to the appropriate level.
- Implementation of the recommendations of working groups on meeting the safeguarding needs of children with disabilities and to ensure that issues of equality and diversity are incorporated into the work of member agencies.
- Launch of the Integrated Locality Working toolkit to take locality working to the next level – this is key to strengthening safeguarding practice in universal and targeted services
- 100% of member agencies submitted self-evaluations of safeguarding efficacy – this annual process is becoming very valuable, with agencies being able to incorporate learning from the presentations into their own evaluations
- Themed reports on safeguarding babies, hard to reach young people, impact of parental mental health / domestic violence and drug or alcohol use have ensured that lessons from national serious case reviews have been considered in our local context and plans for action agreed

### 3.7 Outcomes of the LSCB's monitoring activity.

3.7.1 The majority of the LSCB's work relates to monitoring the effectiveness of the arrangements to protect children within and between agencies and then taking action to address areas of concern and support good practice. The LSCB does this in the following ways:

- undertakes serious and case reviews where children are harmed, learns lessons and monitors any required changes;

- completes an annual programme of multi-agency audits;
- requires each partner agency to submit a Section 11 compliance report;
- commissions and acts on the findings of themed reports about local issues based on national learning from serious case reviews;
- monitors and performance manages Public Service Agreement 13 staying safe indicators on behalf of the Children's Partnership Board and a range of local indicators developed from issues arising from the monitoring activity

3.7.2 Arising from this monitoring and performance management activity the key strengths and areas for development for safeguarding children in Southend are detailed in the table below. The areas for development will be reflected in the revised business plan for 2011/2012.

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Areas for development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi agency audits of the child protection process found that there had been good progress and improvement in Child Protection Conferences &amp; Planning; Referrals to Specialist Services; Exit threshold/decision making and Core Group procedures</li> <li>• All Southend schools have at least one member of the staff recruitment panel with accredited safer recruitment and selection training.</li> <li>• 83.5% of schools and 78% of reporting GP practices reported that over 70% of their staff were trained to an appropriate level.</li> <li>• Children reporting that they had been bullied at least once in the previous year reduced from 49% in 2008/9 to 28.5 % in 2009/10. The latest survey in December 2010 reported that this had reduced to 26%</li> <li>• 100% of LSCB partner agencies submitted section 11 audits and safeguarding performance reports.</li> <li>• 100% of Board member agencies report single agency data to the LSCB Monitoring Sub Group quarterly</li> <li>• 100% of serious and other case review recommendations progressing appropriately</li> <li>• 36 notifications of private fostering arrangements were received April 2009 to September 2010</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case files administration and recording</li> <li>• Attendance or submissions of a report by key professionals to initial and review child protection conferences</li> <li>• Improved critical analysis of information submitted to child protection conferences to ensure plans are effective</li> <li>• In 2009/10, 29 children were killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents compared to 8 the previous year.</li> <li>• 32% of children (against statistical neighbour performance of 25%) reported feeling a bit or very unsafe when travelling on public transport</li> <li>• Embed the domestic abuse strategy</li> <li>• Embed the Family Group Conference service to prevent the need for children to be removed from their family/network</li> <li>• Reduce length of time children require child protection plans.</li> <li>• From serious case reviews</li> <li>• Engagement with fathers and other male carers in the child protection process</li> <li>• Review of the use of the common assessment framework as a child protection referral</li> <li>• Recognition, communication and response to child protection signs</li> </ul>



### 3.7.3 Peer Review of Safeguarding

A week-long peer review of safeguarding took place in April 2010 involving a multi-agency team, led by a Director of Children's Services from another local authority, scrutinising the practice of safeguarding within the Partnership. The peer review identified the following strengths and areas for development

Strengths	Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong leadership</li> <li>• High morale of workforce</li> <li>• Aspirational partnership</li> <li>• Mature use of early intervention model</li> <li>• Good understanding of the key performance indicators</li> </ul> <p>LSCB and working together strengths include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good reputation of LSCB which is seen as a strength within the partnership and beyond</li> <li>• Effective LSCB structures</li> <li>• Safeguarding is seen as everyone's responsibility</li> <li>• Quality of safeguarding training is good and has assisted effective working relationships</li> <li>• Effective elected member involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The whole story in one place</li> <li>• Address key practice gaps</li> <li>• Future-proofing the partnership</li> <li>• Effective engagement of service users</li> <li>• Cross partnership information sharing</li> </ul>

The key practice gaps have been closed and an action plan is in place to take forward the remaining areas for development identified by the peer review team

### 3.7.4 Serious Case Reviews

There have been 2 Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) since 2009. In the first, Baby Robert died age 5 weeks in May 2009. His mother was homeless at the time of his death and had experienced a troubled childhood and early adulthood. Baby Robert died after co-sleeping with his mother. The case review findings were submitted to Ofsted in November 2009. Action plans to implement the learning from the case review are monitored by the LSCB and are progressing effectively. The review was graded as "good" with some outstanding features and the executive summary was published on the LSCB web page on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

A further Serious Case Review has been completed and the resulting action plans are being monitored by the LSCB to ensure their effective implementation within appropriate timescales. The review was graded by Ofsted as "good" with

some outstanding features. This case is subject to criminal proceedings and so information cannot be disclosed until the proceedings are completed.

Both serious case reviews identified similar learning regarding the recognition, communication and response to safeguarding children. The LSCB in disseminating this learning to practitioners recognised the need to change professional behaviour. The LSCB has therefore incorporated the theme of recognition, communication and response to the safeguarding of children as a 'golden thread' in its work plan. Activity to disseminate this learning includes training, awareness campaigns, and a series of workshops developed and delivered by LSCB members to identified groups of practitioners.

Councillors who are members of the LSCB Scrutiny Panel have the opportunity to comment on the progress on the actions arising from serious case reviews as that progress is reported to the Board. In addition, all Members are invited to scrutinise serious case review executive summaries once they have been judged by Ofsted.

In 2010, the Local Strategic Partnership, Southend Together, liaised with the LSCB to commission work to be undertaken by the cross-partner internal audit working group. The purpose of this work was to identify how each agency monitors the implementation of SCR action plans, how it evidences this in its reports to the Board and to "deep dive" into each agency to report on whether the changes reported have happened and on the effectiveness in relation to the desired outcomes for children and families. The report from this work stream identified strengths and areas for development in both agencies and the Board processes. The LSCB has accepted the report and an action plan is in place to address the recommendations. The action plan relates to how the process of formulating actions and monitoring will help agencies and the audit section will support this process during any future SCR.

### 3.7.5 Child Death Review Panel

Child mortality rates in Southend have decreased since 2004, and are now lower than the average for the East of England. Southend LSCB has worked together with the LSCBs of Essex and Thurrock to successfully establish a Strategic Child Death Overview Panel (SCDOP), supported by Local Child Death Review Panels, with reporting directly to the Board. Southend partners are well represented on both the local and strategic panels.

For the Southend LSCB area, reviews were completed for 23 child deaths in the period April 2009 to September 2010. Four child deaths have been identified as 'preventable' during the same period. One death was the result of a road traffic accident. Two deaths were classified as sudden unexpected death in infancy with modifiable factors of co-sleeping and smoking noted. One death was classified as sudden unexpected death with modifiable factors of anabolic steroid use noted.

Southend LSCB is piloting a safer sleeping campaign aimed at parents and carers of young babies. An article was included in the Outlook magazine distributed to every household in Southend on safer sleeping for babies. A leaflet and poster campaign has also been developed and implemented.

The FSID baby check leaflet, which is a tool to assist parents/carers and health professionals in assessing symptoms and seeking appropriate medical attention, has also been piloted in Southend. A multi agency group has been established to reduce road traffic accidents and the LSCB is supporting the development of the road safety awareness campaign.

### 3.7.6 The Challenges of the Year Ahead

The year ahead presents fiscal challenges to all member agencies of the LSCB and major public sector reform which will fundamentally impact on how social care, education and health services are provided. Alongside these changes, there is a major review called the Munro Review of Child Protection. This review has already produced two interim reports. The first report concluded that previous reforms have resulted in professionals being constrained from keeping the focus on the child by the demands and rigidity created by inspection and regulation. The second report addresses the need for early intervention, the expertise needed by social workers, how the social care organisation can help them in acquiring and using that expertise and about the need to improve the timeliness of the court system when decisions are being made about children's permanent care arrangements. The report also addresses how LSCBs should have a strengthened role in multi agency training.

As agencies address their fiscal and reform challenges over the next year, the LSCB will have an important role in ensuring that the impact of changes in one area are not seen in isolation and in particular that their unintended consequences to other areas of provision are explored and that any consequent damage is anticipated and mitigated

### 3.7.7 Conclusion

In my role as Independent Chair of the LSCB I am independent of local agencies and am required to act objectively and to ensure that the LSCB can exercise its challenge function effectively (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010).

In order to meaningfully undertake this task, in the last year I have chaired the Board, observed the working of the Executive group on a number of occasions, sat on the Children's Partnership Board, met regularly with the Director and Head of Specialist Services in the Department of Children and Learning, met regularly with the LSCB Business Manager and the chair of the Executive group, and participated in the Peer Review of Safeguarding.

I work regularly in other LSCB areas in both development roles and review roles and I regularly meet with other independent LSCB chairs. I also chair the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Board for Southend.

All of these additional activities inform my judgement of the direction of travel of the LSCB.

My view of the current state of safeguarding in Southend is that there is good quality information so that the Board knows strengths and areas for

development; there is good ongoing scrutiny of processes and outcomes and the innovative audit of the implementation of SCR action plans adds to that knowledge; there is meaningful engagement of partners in supporting and holding each other to account.

This gives the LSCB a good foundation to face a challenging year ahead.

**Report on the effectiveness of safeguarding and protecting children thoroughly  
Southend Council’s children’s social care services**

Prepared by: Sue Cook, Head of Children’s Specialist Services

**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 To provide the Council with an annual assurance about the functioning of children’s social care services.

**2. Recommendation**

**2.1 That the report is noted.**

**3. Background**

3.1 Children’s social care is responsible for discharging the Council’s duties to protect children at risk who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, or neglect.

3.2 The service acts upon referrals from partner agencies or the general public where concern about a child’s safety or well being is identified, then assesses and investigates, jointly with the police as required, and implements plans with partners and parents to protect children.

3.3.1 Effectiveness relies upon consistency and strength in a range of areas: leadership accountability and culture, capable workforce, effective operating systems and strong partnership working. This report provides an assessment of strengths and areas for development against each of these areas. It relies on evidence from the annual Ofsted assessment of Children’s Services and the annual Ofsted unannounced inspection of referrals, assessments and contact, the quality assurance systems in place within social care (including internal management audits and the evidence produced from the independent reviewing service), the LSCB audit programme (including the service’s section 11 audit), performance information and information from the systems in place to receive feedback from staff, children and parents.

Additional care is taken to elicit the views of looked after children (questionnaires, individual questioning, feedback from reviews) and this shows a high level of satisfaction with services. Care is also taken to elicit the views of stakeholders who find difficulty in providing feedback and a regular meeting is held for the parents of looked after children to ensure that their voice is heard.

3.3.2 Leadership, accountability and culture.

Strengths	Areas for further development / Risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Relative Stability and strength of leadership at all levels</li> <li>○ Involvement and scrutiny by Members</li> <li>○ Strong performance culture with focus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Succession planning</li> <li>○ Changes at senior leadership and group manager level</li> </ul>

<p>on impact and values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Culture that supports and challenges and shares risk at all levels of management</li> <li>○ Positive staff /foster care/social worker survey feedback</li> <li>○ Positive looked after child survey feedback</li> <li>○ Acting on feedback: 48 changes to practice were made over an 18 month period as a result of consultation in previous years. A new action plan is in place for 2011 from consultation with children, young people, their parents, foster carers and social workers during 2010. The implementation of this will be monitored throughout the year</li> </ul>	
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### 3.3.2 Workforce

Strengths	Areas for further development / Risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Investment in front line capacity over 3 years and protection from budget reductions for 2011-12</li> <li>○ Long term trend of reduced turnover and lower vacancy rates than comparator and neighbouring authorities</li> <li>○ Effective workload management systems</li> <li>○ Continued trend in reducing size of caseloads</li> <li>○ Mandatory training</li> <li>○ Post qualifying training</li> <li>○ Newly qualified social worker schemes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Threat to recruitment and retention by increase in salaries in neighbouring authorities.</li> <li>○ Capacity to manage fluctuations</li> <li>○ Caseload size</li> </ul>

Children’s specialist services are constantly challenged by competing with higher salaries in neighbouring Authorities. Currently, the service is supplementing their recruitment and retention initiatives by “growing our own”. People who live locally and have a commitment to the Borough tend to stay in local jobs. We have introduced a sponsorship scheme through which 6 of our staff are undertaking pre-qualifying training. We also supplement our recruitment with

- a high number of student placements (around 18 per year). This involves around 25% of our qualified staff in training the next generation of social workers and allows us to identify those with the qualities we want to encourage in Southend.

- Involvement in the government “step up to social work” pilot – a fast-track employment based MA scheme. Southend has 3 candidates whose qualifying date is March 2012. None of the 3 were SBC staff.

As well as encouraging new staff, we have to retain both them and those who have maintained a commitment to working in Southend over a period of time. We supplement our retention package with:

- Post Qualifying (PQ) awards – currently around 65% of qualified staff hold or are enrolled on a PQ
- Giving good access to books, up-to-date research, mandatory and elective training, mandatory supervision and appraisal, undertaking an annual survey on what needs to change for them to better undertake their task
- Career progression routes – e.g. access to practice educator training and support to fulfil the practice educator role; access to leadership and management training

### 3.3.3 Operating systems and effective service delivery

Strengths	Areas for further development /Risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Strong and consistent positive feedback from service users</li> <li>○ Performance on national indicators relating to ‘staying safe’ is: 30.8% top quartile, 38.5% upper middle quartile, 15.4% lower middle quartile, 15.4% bottom quartile. From the previous year 55% improved, 33% went down and 8% remained the same</li> <li>○ Quality of risk assessment</li> <li>○ New child protection, children in need and looked after children procedures produced in 2010/11</li> <li>○ Legal advice</li> <li>○ Supervision and management oversight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mobile working</li> <li>○ Implementation of new IT recording system to support the professional task</li> <li>○ Consistency in recording practice</li> <li>○ Changes in legal team</li> <li>○ Consistency in the quality of the depth of analysis in Assessments</li> </ul>

### 3.3.4 Partnership Working

Strengths	Areas for further development / Risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ LSCB quality assurance framework and audit programme</li> <li>○ Integrated locality working and staged intervention model</li> <li>○ Risk Management framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consistency of information sharing</li> <li>○ Recognition, communication and response in relation to child protection signs and symptoms.</li> <li>○ Quality of referrals to First Contact from other agencies</li> </ul>

- 3.4 Last year's report informed Cabinet that following the national reporting of the sad death of Baby Peter, and until June 2009, the front line First Contact Teams experienced an increase in referral rates and difficulties in recruiting and retaining good quality agency staff. This, combined with the challenges posed by the continued implementation of a new IT recording system, led to a period of less stable and less consistent practice. The two serious case reviews referred to in appendix one relates to this period. All cases referred at that time were subsequently successfully reviewed and audited. The First Contact teams currently have no social work posts unfilled (last year 1) and have 2 stable and experienced managers (same as last year). 30% are agency staff (last year 60%). Since April 2010, 5 staff have transferred from being agency to becoming permanent.
- 3.5 Since June 2010, the integrated children's recording systems have been overhauled in order that they are an aid to social workers and follow workflow patterns rather than them following ICT systems as directed by central government. This work has involved staff at all levels and the new system is due to go live in the period February to June 2011. This will give a good base for the service to take on the Council's EDRMS (electronic filing of all records, including the scanning of mail) and, depending on the timetable from the EDRMS Board, to go fully electronic in the next year.
- 3.6 Children's Specialist Services (which includes social care) completed the Section 11 (Children Act 2004) audit for the LSCB. There was clear evidence of compliance with all the requirements.
- 3.7 In 2010 the child protection process was subject to peer review and to an Ofsted unannounced inspection. The inspection sampled the quality and effectiveness of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in social care and their impact on minimising any child abuse and neglect. Inspectors considered a range of evidence, including: electronic case records; supervision files and notes; observation of social workers and senior practitioners undertaking referral and assessment duties; and other information provided by staff and managers. Inspectors also spoke to a range of staff including managers, social workers, other practitioners and administrative staff. The inspection found four areas of strength, ten areas of satisfactory practice, and four areas for development. There were no areas for immediate action
- 3.8 Conclusion

The past year has presented a number of challenges to the children's social care services, both nationally and locally. This report identifies that we have good quality information on which to make judgements, and that services remain on a continuous improvement trend. A key plank in our improvement cycle is to attract and keep good quality staff. This is always a priority for children and families when we ask them.

Most importantly, objective measures show that child protection services are effective and that services for looked after children are good.



The service has built good foundations in recent years and is in a good place to be able to address the challenges of the next year. In particular we are aware of the potential effect of a possible decrease in services at earlier stages of intervention which may lead to more referrals to specialist services. The management of risk throughout the stages of intervention will be addressed with partners in the next year as the services at all stages adjust to the new financial context.