

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Corporate Director for People
to
Cabinet and All Members of Council

on

7th January 2014

Agenda
Item No.

Report prepared by: Sue Hadley, Head of Children's Services

Annual Report on Safeguarding Children
People Scrutiny Committee
Executive Councillor: Councillor James Courtenay
A Part 1 Public Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

To provide an annual assurance assessment for the Chief Executive and Members in respect of the Council's responsibilities for safeguarding children in Southend. This report contributes to the requirements of statutory guidance (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013).

2. Recommendation

2.1 That the report and the priority areas for 2014/15 are noted.

3. Background

3.1 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes. (Working Together 2013)

3.2 The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is a statutory partnership responsible for co-ordinating and monitoring the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in all agencies. The LSCB works alongside the Success for All Children Group, which is responsible for leading and coordinating improvements in services for all outcomes for children, including their safety. Both the LSCB and the Success For All Children Group work with the Health

and Wellbeing Board which provides strategic leadership across all adult and children's services.

3.3 Effective safeguarding systems are those where:

- the child's needs are paramount, and the needs and wishes of each child, be they a baby or infant, or an older child, should be put first, so that every child receives the support they need before a problem escalates;
- all professionals who come into contact with children and families are alert to their needs and any risks of harm that individual abusers, or potential abusers, may pose to children;
- all professionals share appropriate information in a timely way and can discuss any concerns about an individual child with colleagues and local authority children's social care;
- high quality professionals are able to use their expert judgement to put the child's needs at the heart of the safeguarding system so that the right solution can be found for each individual child;
- all professionals contribute to whatever actions are needed to safeguard and promote a child's welfare and take part in regularly reviewing the outcomes for the child against specific plans and outcomes;
- LSCBs coordinate the work to safeguard children locally and monitor and challenge the effectiveness of local arrangements;
- when things go wrong Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) are published and transparent about any mistakes which were made so that lessons can be learnt; and
- local areas innovate and changes are informed by evidence and examination of the data.

3.4 This report provides an annual assurance statement of the Council's effectiveness in the discharge of these responsibilities. The report contains two elements:

- The annual report from the independent chair of the LSCB covering the effectiveness of safeguarding of children, and identifying key priorities locally to improve that effectiveness. (Appendix 1).
- A report from the Head of Children's Services covering the quality and effectiveness of the Council's safeguarding service (Appendix 2).

3.5 Working Together 2013 states that the LSCB 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, Leader of the Council, the local Police and Crime commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing board.

The report should provide a rigorous and transparent assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services. It should identify areas of weakness, the causes of those weaknesses and the action being taken to address them as well as other proposals for action.

3.6 The Corporate Director for People, as the statutory Director of Children's Services has responsibility for improving outcomes for all children and young people in Southend and to ensure that all appropriate local authority services engage effectively with the LSCB. The Lead Member and Corporate Director met with the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council on 26th November 2013 with this report in order that they can satisfy themselves that these responsibilities are being met.

At that meeting the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council noted the current strengths in services and agreed the priority areas for improvement outlined in the two appendices.

4. Other Options

None.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

To keep the Council informed of the position in respect of safeguarding children in Southend and agree areas for further development .

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

The priority work areas identified for the LSCB and Children's Services can be delivered within the resources of the Council and its partners.

6.3 Legal Implications

This report supports the Council, The Leader, the Chief Executive, Corporate Director and Lead Member to discharge their statutory duties under the Children Act 2004 and Working Together 2013

6.4 People Implications

None

6.5 Property Implications

None

6.6 Consultation

The LSCB is an inclusive organisation which involves statutory and voluntary agencies. The LSCB community lay member and a youth lay member, represent the interests of the community on the Board and its sub groups, in line with revised statutory guidance. Consultation with children and families, which influences the way in which services are delivered, is a key strategic priority for the LSCB.

The report from the Head of Children's Services includes a section on how children and young people are consulted.

- 6.7 **Equalities and Diversity Implications**
The Council and the LSCB have the responsibility to ensure that all children have their safety and welfare needs addressed. The Southend, Essex and Thurrock Child Protection Procedures address the “recognition of additional vulnerability” and cover the considerations which must be taken into account when meeting the needs of particular groups. All the LSCB sub groups address equality matters, with a standing item on all agendas.
- 6.8 **Risk Assessment**
Risk logs are maintained for the LSCB and within Children’s Services. There is a standing item on the LSCB Executive agenda identifying risks to the efficacy of safeguarding services identified by partners, and agreeing mitigating actions to address these. Appendix 2 page 7 identifies some of the current challenges and mitigating action.
- 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. From July 2013 the business management resource of the LSCB has been shared with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Board, with some additional administration resource shared between both Boards. There has been a saving to the LSCB in staffing costs which the Board agreed to reinvest into its safeguarding children priorities.
- 6.10 **Community Safety Implications**
LSCB arrangements support the safety for our most vulnerable children across the localities and partnerships. The Board oversees work on road safety as it relates to children, and monitors the effectiveness of the implementation of the domestic abuse strategy to safeguard children

7. Background Papers

None

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – LSCB Annual Report on the Effectiveness of Safeguarding Children in Southend 2012/13

Appendix 2 – Report on the effectiveness of safeguarding and protecting children by Southend Council’s Children’s Social Care Services