

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda  
Item No.

Report of Corporate Director for  
People

to

Cabinet

on

5<sup>th</sup> January 2016

Report prepared by: John O'Loughlin, Head of Children's  
Services

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## Children's Services Peer Review

People Scrutiny Committee  
Executive Councillor: Councillor Anne Jones  
A Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

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### 1. Purpose of Report

To inform Cabinet of the outcome of the Children's Services Peer Review.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the Regional Peer Review Outcome letter dated 29<sup>th</sup> September 2015 (Appendix A)
- 2.2 That Cabinet notes and agrees the Children's Services Action Plan, dated September 2015 (Appendix B)

### 3. Background

The Department for People commissioned the Eastern Region to conduct a peer review of children's services with a particular focus on safeguarding. The intention of the review was to assist officers with planning for an Ofsted Inspection and to obtain an independent view on service provision.

The review took place between 16-19<sup>th</sup> September and the review team consisted of four very experienced managers. Appendix A sets out the review team's findings, all of which have been accepted by Children's Services.

It is noteworthy that the team were very impressed with the commitment of staff at all levels and noted a very strong emphasis on ensuring children are safeguarded. In particular they were impressed with early help and the ability of our staff to respond to safeguarding referrals in a timely manner. They saw evidence of direct work with children and good multi-agency panels.

They were impressed with the resources the authority is putting into child sexual exploitation (CSE) and the developing practice knowledge that is being gained.

As Southend is a relatively small local authority, they were concerned in some of our operational teams there was a risk of over dependence on key individuals. The team observed a child protection conference and a multi-agency early help panel and felt these were well chaired.

The report identified areas for improvement, all of which we are working on. It is important that CMT note that some of these areas (particularly Domestic Abuse) are not solely dependent on the Local Authority, but partner agencies such as the Police. An action plan (Appendix B) has been developed and agreed by Children's Services Management Team, to respond to all areas of concern identified.

It is important to note that the Peer Review outcome letter will be fully disclosable to Ofsted when we are inspected.

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

N/A

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

Cabinet will be reassured of an independent assessment of Southend's performance in relation to safeguarding and ownership of the Peer Review Outcome letter and the action plan will be further evidence when we are inspected of the commitment this authority has to safeguarding children.

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

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

Children's Safeguarding crosses all of the Council's vision and priorities and will have a positive impact on our most vulnerable residents.

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

To fully address the small number of issues raised by the peer review and prepare for Ofsted inspection, we will require an experienced Manager to work alongside the CSMT (Children Services Management Team) (£40,000) and £75,000 to continue the CSE Project Managers Post for 2016/17. This has been agreed to be funded from contingency.

##### **6.3 Legal Implications**

No additional legal implications

##### **6.4 People Implications**

N/A

## 6.5 Property Implications

N/A

## 6.6 Consultation

The outcome of the Peer Review has been shared with all key local authority staff and members of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB).

## 6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

No specific recommendations

## 6.8 Risk Assessment

The seeking of external validation of performance in safeguarding is the sign of a self-aware authority and reduces risk.

## 6.9 Value for Money

N/A

## 6.10 Community Safety Implications

The local authority has a statutory duty to ensure that all children and young people in its area are safeguarded.

## 6.11 Environmental Impact

N/A

## 7. Background Papers

None

## 8. Appendices

Appendix A – Peer Review outcome letter

Appendix B – Children's Services Action Plan