

REPORT TO:	CABINET 15 September 2014
AGENDA ITEM:	11
SUBJECT:	<i>Local Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report 2013-2014</i>
LEAD OFFICER:	Paul Greenhalgh, Executive Director, CFL
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Alison Flemming Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Learning
WARDS:	

CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT:

The Children's Safeguarding Board is a statutorily required body in each local authority. It is independently chaired. Its key role is to enable agencies to hold each other to account to secure effective safeguarding arrangements for children in the local authority area. It is a Regulatory requirement that the chair of the Board reports annually to the Council regarding issues of safeguarding children.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

N/A

KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.: This is not a key decision

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Cabinet notes the effectiveness of the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board in ensuring the safeguarding of children and young people in Croydon.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 The purpose of the report is to detail the activity and effectiveness of the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB) between April 2013 and March 2014. The report is submitted by the independent chair of the Safeguarding Board, which ensures that the Council and other agencies are given objective feedback on the effectiveness of local arrangements for safeguarding children. The report has been prepared by Paul Fallon, who was chair of the Board up to 31st July 2014. A new chair, Catherine Doran, has been appointed and has now taken up the role. The report identifies how relevant organisations involved in safeguarding children have discharged their responsibilities both individually and as a group, how the CSCB functions in holding agencies to account for safeguarding children in Croydon. The report also includes the CSCB Business Plan for 2014 /15. This report sets out the key priorities for the Board for the current year. The report is provided as an e-copy please use this link to access the report from the Council's website.

3. DETAIL

3.1 The CSCB was created in order to be compliant with the requirements of the Children Act 2004, which established Local Safeguarding Children's Boards. These Boards have the statutory functions of co-ordinating the work of local agencies in relation to safeguarding, promoting the welfare of children in the area and ensuring the effectiveness of agencies in this respect. Further guidance on the responsibilities of Safeguarding Boards is set out in '*Working Together 2013*', which is the key Government Guidance on multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding children. Croydon's Local Safeguarding Board is independently chaired, and the independent chair is accountable to the Council Chief Executive. These arrangements are set out in *Working Together*. The Council hosts the support functions of the board.

3.2 In November 2013, Local Safeguarding Children's Boards became subject to inspection by Ofsted as part of their single Inspection of Children in Need of Protection and Looked After Children. Inspections take place on a three year cycle.

3.3 The CSCB must ensure that all agencies continue to offer and develop services to safeguard children. It does so through a number of sub-groups which in turn report to the main Board.

3.4 Developments

There were a number of significant developments in services to safeguard children during 2013-14:

- The board's structure was completely realigned and refocused to maximise efficiency and achieve a concentration on the key issues.
- The 'Strengthening Families' approach to Child Protection case conferences was fully embedded to positive effect, as identified through external review.
- Good progress has been achieved in relation to the quantity and quality of performance information available to the board.

- The quality of data has improved following the implementation of a new Children's Recording System (CRS) in October 2013 in Children's Social Care and Family Support.
- We continued to develop practice in tracing and protecting missing children and children who are sexually exploited by working closely with colleagues from Police, Health, Education and Voluntary agencies.
- We have clarified the relationships between the various governance structures and Boards that cover this area of work. Relationships between the Children and Adults Safeguarding Boards, the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Safer Croydon Partnership and Community Safety have been strengthened.
- The last year has seen a very extensive training programme designed to ensure that the relevant practice lessons from Serious Case Reviews are learned.
- The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was established, to provide a single point of assessment and pathway into early help or statutory services.
- We continued to focus on domestic violence in the borough and relevant training has been delivered to staff across agencies.
- The CSCB website is now live, which is improving our ability to communicate the board's key messages across the partnership and with the public.

3.5 **Level of Assurance**

It is the view of the statutory Director of Children's Services that this LSCB Annual Report provides a reasonable level of assurance to the partnership. The most significant areas of risk are as follows:

- Quality assurance and performance information: quality assurance within the LSCB has improved over the past year and these improvements need further embedding within LSCB procedures.
- Increasing levels of demand on services from both the significant growth in numbers of children and in the levels of deprivation in the population.
- Training, learning and development: whilst individual agencies have responded well to their training responsibilities in safeguarding, a more strategic multi-agency approach was hampered by staffing difficulties in the previous year, which have now been resolved. The LSCB has agreed a new strategy and plan: the delivery of this is yet to be tested.

The key areas of development in the LSCB business plan (summarised below and in the attached report) address these areas of risk. The delivery of this plan will enable the LSCB to provide a good level of assurance in future.

3.6 **Areas for Development**

The CSCB also has to look forward and plan for future developments. The Business Plan for 2014-15 is attached to the Annual Report for 2013-14. The areas for future developments are:

- Embed the growing strengths in quality assurance and ensure it drives further improvements in safeguarding practice.
- In the light of the summer 2014 needs assessment, to keep under review agencies' responses to a growing, and more deprived, population and

greater demand, in the context of public finance restraint, and to ensure any required mitigating actions are in place.

- Embed growing strengths in learning, training and development, and lessons from Serious Case Reviews.
- Further strengthen partnerships and a whole system approach in early help.
- Further embed improvements in missing children and children who have been sexually exploited.
- Review the partnership's approach to safeguarding children under the age of one.
- Develop a strategy for addressing female genital mutilation.
- Further strengthen 'think family' approaches, particularly in relation to children who have mental health problems, domestic violence and substance misuse issues.
- Strengthen the engagement with local communities and develop the use of feedback from children and parents.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 All relevant local agencies contributed to the annual report.

5 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Revenue and Capital consequences of report recommendations

There are no financial implications to the recommendations of this report.

(Approved by: Lisa Taylor – Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer)

6. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

- 6.1 The Solicitor to the Council comments that there are no legal issues arising from the content of this report.

(Approved by: Jacqueline Harris Baker, head of social care and education law on behalf of the Director of Democratic and Legal Services)

7. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 7.1 The Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and vulnerable adults, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

(Approved by: Deborah Calliste, HR Business Partner (CFL) on behalf of the Director of Human Resources)

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1 Quality assurance data provided in the annual review report is designed as a summary set of information and is provided at a high level, without detailed breakdown of groups with various protected characteristics. However, needs

assessment, quality assurance and performance information provided to the LSCB on an ongoing basis does report upon some equalities characteristics for vulnerable children. Gender and age data is routinely considered and it is acknowledged that practice in relation to the full range of equalities characteristics needs to be further strengthened in the period ahead.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

9.1 None.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

10.1 None.

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION

11.1 That the Council notes the effectiveness of the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board in ensuring the safeguarding of children and young people in Croydon.

12. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

12.1 None.

CONTACT OFFICER: Gavin Swann, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance.

BACKGROUND PAPERS - LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None

E-Copy Appendix: Croydon Safeguarding Children Board – Annual Report 2013/14
<http://www.croydon.gov.uk/democracy/dande/minutes/committees>