

Local Members' Interest
N/A

Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee – 15th January 2018

Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2016 - 2017

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to receive the report to understand the role and function of Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board (hereafter referred to as the SSCB). Members are asked to consider or comment on the progress that the Board has made since the last annual report was presented to the committee on 6 March 2017. This SSCB Annual Report sets out the progress made by the partnership during 1st April 2016 and 31st March 2017.

Report of Cllr Mark Sutton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Summary

What is the Select Committee being asked to do and why?

2. The SSCB should report annually on the progress made by the Board to the Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee to enable robust Member scrutiny of its statutory functions. SSCB Annual Reports provide a transparent, public account of the work of the partnership during 2016-2017 and includes key messages for local commissioners to consider how to help strengthen local safeguarding children arrangements.

Report

Background:

3. The SSCB is the key statutory mechanism that brings together representatives of each of the main agencies and professionals responsible for promoting the welfare and safety of children and young people. It is an inter-agency forum for agreeing how the different services and professional groups should cooperate to safeguard children throughout Staffordshire (except Stoke-on-Trent which has its own Local Safeguarding Children Board) and for making sure that arrangements work effectively to help to promote better outcomes for children.
4. The SSCB works together in partnership to safeguard and promote the welfare of children across three broad areas of activity all of which take into account the need to promote equality of opportunity and to meet the diverse needs of all children living in our communities. Specifically:

- a. Engage partner agencies to set the strategic direction for safeguarding all children;
 - b. Identify and prevent harm and impairment of health or development and help ensure that all children are provided with safe and effective care as they are growing up;
 - c. Lead and coordinate on proactive work to target vulnerable groups;
 - d. Lead and coordinate on responsive work to protect children suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm; and
 - e. Lead and coordinate the development and delivery of multi-agency safeguarding training.
5. The objectives of the Board are pursued through core statutory functions which are set out within the Children Act 2004 and the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015. These core functions are achieved through the work of the Board's subgroups which are chaired by a Board member or representative of one of the partner agencies. Each subgroup is responsible for measuring its performance against an annual work plan, which is derived from the SSCB Business Plan. Members of the Executive Group and the Board monitor the effectiveness of the work completed.

Membership

6. Membership of the SSCB is set out in section 13(3) of the Children Act 2004 and has been updated in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 (page 68/69). Organisations that include local authority, police and health are required to cooperate with the local authority in the establishment and operation of the Board and have shared responsibility for the effective discharge of its functions. The Staffordshire County Council Cabinet Member for Children and Young People also attends the Board as a participating observer.
7. The SSCB Independent Chair is continuing to steer the strategic direction of the Board and provides an opportunity to promote improved synergy within safeguarding children arrangements across the whole of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Budget

8. The SSCB is reliant on the contributions it receives from statutory member agencies and the SSCB is funded through a multi-agency budget. The agreed budget allocation for 2016-2017 was £283,065.

Governance

9. The governance arrangements of the SSCB have been the subject of significant review since 2014 and are in line with the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015'. The Board is confident that it is fully compliant with the statutory function requirements for local safeguarding children boards.

SSCB Activity and challenges

10. Since the last report to the Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee the SSCB has made considerable progress on a wide range of objectives through effective local partnership working, despite the challenges presented by the current economic climate and agency restructures. This includes engaging in activity which is targeted at groups of children and young people who have been identified as being vulnerable due to sexual abuse and exploitation, or neglect as a result of parental alcohol use, substance misuse, parental mental health and / or domestic abuse (known as the 'toxic trio'). The information provided in the annual report highlights some of the most noticeable achievements.
11. However, in light of the current challenges to both services and families in Staffordshire below are the key priorities and actions that will drive the Board activity in the coming twelve months:

Early Help

- a. Review the Early Help Strategy for formal approval of the Family Strategic Partnership Board.
- b. Develop, implement and embed a solution focused methodology for all Early Help Professionals.
- c. Develop specific forums for children and young people and parents and carers to seek feedback on their experiences and effectiveness of the services and support they have received.
- d. Improve the analysis of data to measure the effectiveness of Early Help on statutory services particularly referrals to the Safeguarding Referral Team, Children in Need plans and Child Protection Plans.

Neglect

- a. To refresh the SSCB Neglect strategy to ensure that smart outcomes are clear and that partner agencies can continue to maintain the focus on delivering assurances to the Board. It has been identified that the above assurances should be sought in relation to Third Sector parental mental health provision. The extent to which this already takes place is not known and needs to be examined.
- b. To ensure that that the current activity by Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the Staffordshire Police and Crime Commissioner who are jointly commissioning domestic abuse services across the City Council and County Council areas under joint contracts are designed to provide a consistently high quality service that will:-
 - i. be more responsive to the needs of victims and their children
 - ii. promote early identification and referral
 - iii. have a greater focus on prevention
 - iv. address perpetrator behaviours

Child Sexual Abuse

- a. To continue with the rigour and focus on this priority to maintain its significant importance with partner agencies whilst being cognisant that this is the second year of a three year strategic plan and encourage the further embedding of activity which demonstrates evidence of improved outcomes.
 - b. The continued focus for the strategic alignment with other related activity discussions have taken place and continue with the Safer Staffordshire Strategic Board where there is overlapping activity.
 - c. Strategic partnerships without clear co-ordination can cause governance and leadership confusion in respect of local priorities. Therefore it is paramount that all partner agencies are fully sighted on individual areas of strength and areas for development relating to those key strategic priorities in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families.
12. To fully utilize the enhanced Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for safeguarding children with key partner agencies who work with children and their families. This would create the potential for a shared vision about working together to help keep children safer, smarter multi-agency prioritisation and cohesive strategically aligned planning and delivery that could be more innovative. This multi-agency approach would complement the national drive towards integrated inspection, joint accountability frameworks, stronger local multi-agency governance and scrutiny arrangements.
13. The national consultation of the formal Working Together legislation and arrangements concludes in December 2017 with an amended framework proposed for April 2018. The proposed vision is for a framework where there would be the local freedom to recognise geographical and political differences. This provides an opportunity to reduce system bureaucracy, to work more efficiently as an inter-agency partnership and refocus partner agency resources back onto the coordination and effectiveness of child protection arrangements.
14. All children and young people should have equal access to information about how to keep themselves safer regardless of where they live in the county and what education provision they are accessing. Parents and carers should also receive consistent messages about how to help keep their children safe and education staff should know about local multi-agency arrangements or learning that helps them to fulfil their critical safeguarding role. Whilst some good work has been undertaken, further action is required to help to build on this to ensure that there is a consistent approach across the county; this is particularly pertinent given the change in local authority roles and responsibilities. This includes communication to all early years providers, schools, colleges and alternative education provision.

Link to Strategic Plan:

15. The work of the SSCB contributes to and supports the values and principles detailed in the Staffordshire County Council's Strategic plan for 2014-2018, particularly in relation to the priority outcome for the people of Staffordshire to, *'Feel safer, happier and more supported in and by their community'*.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity:

16. The work of the SSCB links to Committee's overview of the local authority's Children's Social Care arrangements, domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation.

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Appendices/Background papers:

Appendix A - Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report: 2016-2017.