

Health and Wellbeing Board  
7 September 2017

**Surrey Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2016/17**

**Purpose of the report:**

Local safeguarding children Boards are required to publish an annual report detailing the effectiveness of partner agencies in working together to deliver, safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area. This report provides a rigorous and transparent assessment of the performance and effectiveness of partners working with children in Surrey. It identifies areas of weakness as well as good practice. This report is presented to Surrey Health and Wellbeing Board for information and action where required.

During the period of this report the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) has continued to carry out its statutory functions under Regulation 5 of the Local Safeguarding Children Board to enable it to achieve its objectives under section 14 of the Children Act 2004 to:

- a) **coordinate** what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area; and
- b) **ensure the effectiveness** of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Health and Wellbeing Board:

1. ensure that members are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and can access Surrey Safeguarding Children Board safeguarding training and learning events;
2. recognise that the delivery of services in partnership is a challenge. A priority for 2017 -18 must be the ability of partner agencies to work together and share information appropriately;
3. work together to re-balance capacity to best match demands;
4. recognise that the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board needs to be informed about changes to organisational structure in order to understand the impact on the capacity to safeguard children in Surrey; and

- 12
5. recognise that all partners must all ensure a culture of listening to children and their families.

### **Introduction:**

Surrey Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) and partners are committed to ensuring that the most vulnerable or marginalised children and their families are supported. The engagement and quality of work across the partnership has developed positively, benefiting the improvement journey being undertaken in Surrey. As with all change, the impact of these improvements will take time to establish, however, there are three areas of work where partners must be congratulated on bringing about positive improvements and changes for children in Surrey.

- i. Child sexual exploitation is now nationally recognised as a significant risk to the safety of children. Surrey partners have demonstrated an impressive willingness to work together and have developed robust services to better manage this ongoing issue.
- ii. Surrey partners are all in agreement that Early Help is essential in protecting and safeguarding children. Much of this work is driven through Children and Young People's Partnership and the development of a joint commissioning strategy (to take effect from April 2017)
- iii. During this period the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for Surrey was launched in October 2016 and was overseen by the Assistant Director for Commissioning & Prevention
- iv. Supporting all of this is the Multi Agency Levels of Need document (threshold document) which was developed by SSCB to provide a framework for professionals who are working with children and their families. This document was revised and ready for the launch of the MASH in October 2016.
- v. This year's annual report is in three parts detailing:
  - a. Insights into the journey of the child through the safeguarding system
  - b. A themed analysis against Business Plan priorities
  - c. SSCB information and development

### **The journey of the child through the safeguarding system in Surrey**

Following on from the 2014 Ofsted inspection report that judged Surrey's children's services inadequate, and the 2015 Ofsted inspection report that judged the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) as requires improvement, key partners have collaborated on a demanding improvement journey. Overseen by the Surrey Improvement Board, key partners have developed an extremely robust partnership that has driven a number of fundamental and positive changes to service delivery. Surrey children's services have worked to develop a whole-system vision that drives strengths-based practice across the Children, Schools and Families (CSF) directorate. Safer Surrey has been endorsed by partners who share the belief that children and families have the strengths, resources and ability to recover from adversities.

SSCB is pleased to see the partnership working together to achieve better outcomes for children and young people through the development of the Safer Surrey approach.

## Early Help

1. The need to reform the Early Help offer in Surrey followed the Ofsted Safeguarding inspection and the subsequent department for education improvement notice requiring the development of a “collaborative and cohesive Early Help offer delivered by partners.
2. In 2014 – 2015 there were five ‘front doors’ allowing access to safeguarding services for children in Surrey. This led to an inconsistent response for children, as the application of thresholds varied within each area as did the overall experience and quality of information received.
3. The establishment of a co-located Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and four Early Help Coordination Hubs has been challenging, however, the programme ‘went live’ as planned on 5 October.
4. Surrey has a huge range of preventative Early Help services across statutory, voluntary, community and faith sector partners. These services are not always well coordinated or effectively engaged in the Early Help partnership. Efforts are being made to build on current arrangements and maximise the choices available by the whole range of Early Help providers.
5. SSCB would like to ensure the development and implementation of a strengths based approach to practice. The roll out of Signs of Safety to accelerate practice improvement throughout Surrey Family Services and within the wider partnership is to be encouraged.
6. SSCB has been impressed by the radically improved focus, leadership and partnership work demonstrated during this period of significant change.

## Child Protection Services in Surrey

7. Local authorities have an overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people in their area (1989 and 2004 Children Acts). Responsibilities include specific duties in relation to children in need and children suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm. The Director of Children’s Services and Lead Member for Children’s Services in Surrey are the key points of professional and political accountability with responsibility for the effective delivery of these functions.
8. Local agencies, including the Police and health services, also have a duty under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to ensure that they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their functions
9. During the period of this report there has been growing evidence of improvement in both social work and multi agency practice. Partnership working is stronger and there is a greater sense of partners owning the necessary system wide improvement.
10. The quality of practice across Surrey remains variable and in particular there is more work to do on supervision, management oversight and information sharing across the partnership. In particular, the timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences continues to fluctuate and the attendance by partners at conferences remains variable.

11. SSCB would like to see partners continuing to focus on the positive shift in culture brought about through new leadership initiatives.

### **Looked After Children**

12. A 'Looked After Child' is a child or young person under the age of 18 who is being looked after by their local authority. They might be living:
  - a. with foster parents;
  - b. at home with their parents under the supervision of children's services;
  - c. in residential children's homes; or
  - d. other residential settings like schools or secure units.

All Members of Surrey County Council (SCC) have responsibility as corporate parents to ensure the wellbeing of children in care, supported by all partners with statutory responsibility for services for children.

13. Overall, there has been some positive progress in 2016, with evidence of improvements in the priority areas including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).
14. Looked After Children are one of the key vulnerable groups likely to be affected by CSE. Partners have worked well together to improve procedures for responding to CSE cases and provide support and training for front line workers, multi-agency arrangements have been put in place to oversee CSE planning including disruption activity against perpetrators.
15. Despite efforts to date from staff and colleagues in partner agencies there remain too many children placed out of county.
16. The increasingly challenging context in which Looked After Children and care leavers services are delivered can't be ignored. Demands for services continues to increase and at the same time financial constraints tighten.
17. The views of younger children, unaccompanied asylum seeking young people and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) need to be considered in a more robust way.

### **Serious Case Reviews**

18. Local safeguarding children boards are required to consider holding a Serious Case Review (SCR) when abuse or neglect is known or suspected to be a factor in a child's death or serious harm and there are concerns about how professionals may have worked together.
19. The purpose of an SCR is to establish whether there are lessons to be learnt from the case about the way in which local professionals and organisations work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

20. Between April 2016 and March 2017 SCRG received 16 referrals for consideration. Five SCRs were initiated during this period plus two partnership reviews.
21. The number of cases being referred to the SCRG is gradually increasing. This could be seen as a positive move as professionals become more confident to share concerns around practice.

## Addressing our priorities

### Neglect

22. Working Together 2015 defines neglect as: 'The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.'
23. Surrey has a higher than normal average percentage of children subject to child protection plans for reasons of neglect, (at 31 March 2017 812 children were subject to child protection plans of which 553 were under the category of neglect) the data and other evidence from audits informs the work of the SSCB Neglect Group.
24. The problem of Neglect is recognised in Surrey and SSCB partners have begun work to develop a neglect tool kit, guidance and action plan.
25. There is an appetite across all partners to adopt a unifying approach that supports the work they do with children and families including the use of a common language. To help with this Safer Surrey is currently being embedded across Children, Schools and Families and the wider partnership.

### Child Sexual Exploitation

26. Surrey has been on a long journey to improve its response to CSE since the 2014 Ofsted inspection. The SSCB has prioritised improving partnership work by focussing on developing robust multi-agency oversight structures. The Sexual Exploitation and Assault Management Board (SEAMB) is now fully operational, and is providing a tangible sense of direction and purpose. This has been recognised by Ofsted. A number of key developments in 2016 have moved the Surrey response to CSE to a position of greater direction and purpose.
27. SEAMB is undertaking work to more effectively identify, refer and assess children at risk of CSE, to provide consistently high quality support to children who reach 18 and require ongoing support as well as to focus more explicitly on children with additional vulnerabilities (including boys, children with care experience, children with additional learning needs/disabilities as well as unaccompanied asylum seeking children).
28. It is known from audits and the peer review that practice standards need to improve as do the supporting structures. The Missing and Exploited Children's Conferences (MAECC) were introduced in May 2016, and are the key vehicle for overseeing our response to CSE in Surrey. The monthly MAECC meetings are intended to bring together key agencies to agree and co-ordinate actions to support children assessed at medium or high risk the area. At the time of the report SSCB is concerned that MAECCs are not as effective as they should be.

29. At the time of the report there was no bespoke CSE training plan, which is likely to be a reason for the inconsistent practice which is seen through auditing. A partnership CSE training plan has been developed and will be rolled out within Children's Services and Youth Support Services, and then across the wider partnership – stage 1 to be developed and delivered from January to July 2017 and stage 2 from September 2017.
30. Surrey has a mixed economy of provision across the CSE pathway and further work is required to develop a comprehensive commissioning plan which will enable the partnership to direct funding in a way that complements existing service provision. The development of a joint commissioning plan could provide an opportunity to develop innovative and effective responses to children with additional vulnerabilities (including children in care or with care experience).

### **Missing Children**

31. Whilst the majority of children who go missing will return or be located quickly, there are many others who will either be at risk of, or will suffer, harm. Their physical and emotional health may suffer as well as their general health, education and social relationships.
32. The Adult and Children Safeguarding Boards have worked together to support the development of a 'Missing' strategy. Approved in January 2017 the strategy outlines the agreed priority actions to support the implantation of robust, co-ordinated multi-agency responses. It includes children missing from children's home, care or educational settings, home and children placed here from another local authority and has been agreed by all partners.
33. The 2016 LGA peer review of CSE and Missing and the supplementary review of MAECCs, referenced the poor emphasis on missing in Surrey. Despite raising concerns over 'missing' children and young people. It is clear that SSCB has not paid sufficient attention to the work of partners on reducing the safeguarding risks and issues associated with children missing from home or care. This will be monitored and scrutinised until SSCB is satisfied that practice is effective and sustainable.

### **Domestic Abuse**

34. Domestic abuse is the highest reported violent crime in Surrey and yet numbers show that domestic abuse is still a 'hidden' crime.

The 2015 – 2016 data tells us:

- a. 14,498 incidents of domestic abuse were reported to Surrey Police involving 6,533 children (5,336 were involved, 448 witnessed, 335 perpetrated, and 414 were victims).
  - b. 650 children on child protection plans and 2,625 children in need had DA as an identified factor. DA is also recognised as a driver for other risks such as CSE and children missing from home and school.
35. The Surrey DA Strategy (2012 – 2018) focuses on:
    - a. Developing services that maximise prevention, early intervention and provide holistic responses to those affected by DA.

- b. Developing services and responses that support children, and their families, impacted by DA.
  - c. Providing the opportunity to break the cycle of abuse and improve the health and wellbeing of future generations.
36. For the first time in Surrey all children who are identified as experiencing or having previously experienced domestic abuse will be offered support. These responses can include:
- a. specialist children's DA intervention provided by the outreach services,
  - b. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) early intervention (jointly commissioned services which have been significantly enhanced in the last year), and
  - c. DA trained SCC family and youth support workers.

### Additional functions of the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board

#### Child Death Overview Panel

The SSCB has responsibility for reviewing the deaths of all children who live in Surrey, other than still births or planned terminations that are within the law, through the arrangements of a Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) which is a sub group of the SSCB (Working Together 2015).

### Conclusions:

During this period the leadership across the partnership is significantly changed, giving rise to stronger governance and a clearer sense of direction. Significantly, there is a greater sense of cohesion and integration across the partnership, and clear evidence of a shared drive to improve practice across all services.

Whilst this report points out that the quality of practice still remains variable and in particular some partners have more work to do on supervision, management oversight and case recording, it is hoped that readers get a sense of the achievements made and the real drive to improve.

Partners should be congratulated for the way in which they have addressed problems and maintained focus and pace. The coming year will require the same high level of drive and commitment. Demand for services is unlikely to lessen and financial constraint will continue across the partnership. In addition, the 2017 Children & Social Work Bill and the Wood Review of the role and functions of local safeguarding children boards will demand considerable attention.

**Report contact:** Elaine Coleridge Smith, Surrey Safeguarding Children Board

**Contact details:** [Elaine@windmill-farm.co.uk](mailto:Elaine@windmill-farm.co.uk)

#### Annexes

Annex 1 – Surrey Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2016 -17

#### Sources/background papers

Working Together 2015

