

DECISION-MAKER:	HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL		
SUBJECT:	LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S BOARD UPDATE		
DATE OF DECISION:	22 APRIL 2014		
REPORT OF:	INTERIM HEAD OF SERVICE – CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING		
<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

None.

BRIEF SUMMARY

Children and Families Services are going through a substantial improvement and transformation programme. The presentation to scrutiny will outline the current position in relation to the present position of child protection performance including an update on Serious Case reviews both those completed and those currently underway. A future scrutiny report could consider more widely Children's outcomes across the city including those of our Looked after Children.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) The Panel is recommended to review and consider the information provided

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To enable the Panel to consider the evidence in order to agree findings and recommendations regarding the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

2. None

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

3. The City's vulnerable children have experienced poor outcomes across many areas and for some time. The health and wellbeing of children in Southampton is generally worse than the England Average, 26% of our children under 16 years of age living in poverty and whilst crime is down year on year as is violent crime in Southampton there are more than 5,400 calls to the police for domestic violence per annum -a steady 11% upward trend.
4. Our schools across the City are steadily improving but the outcomes for vulnerable children; those children designated as children in need, looked after children etc; are poor – school attendance and fixed term exclusions add to the poor outcomes for these groups.

5. Our teenage pregnancy rates whilst showing an improvement continue to be far too high, as do the hospital admissions relating to alcohol use, injuries and mental health conditions. Too many of our young people are engaging in criminal activity and some of them in very serious crime.
6. Our services have not historically been structured in a way so as to impact upon need at an early point and as children needs and risks have escalated the City has experienced extensive and unmanageable demand upon its high end services. All of this context has led to far more children in the city being wither the subject of a child protection plan or becoming a child in care than our statistical neighbours. Add to this overheated system a workforce who have for many years been depleted both in number and morale and a perfect storm was brewing in the past 3-5 years
7. There were a number of very serious incidents in 2011/2012 that have led to the four serious case reviews that are presently underway. The learning from those reviews is presently being identified and one of the appendices to this report highlights some of the key themes.
8. It is important to note that the deep exploration of the issues within these cases is also reflected in other review and audit work undertaken in the past six months and highlights poor practise over many years in a number of instances.
9. It is important to understand these matters as a system failure – it is certainly true that some of the errors and missed opportunities within the serious case reviews presently underway are not limited to City Council provision but are sadly shared with our health, police and probation colleagues.
10. It has therefore been essential this year to steady the ship – ensure the service is increasingly safe and simultaneously make any essential changes to ensure the failures that have existed in the past cannot happen again.
11. **Vision and Leadership**
Staff and the families we service have required strong and firm but fair leadership to navigate them through what has been and what will continue to be challenging times. Part of that credible leadership has been to install behaviours and practise standards and ensure that ambition and opportunity are the key watchwords for the services of the future.
12. **Strategy**
The vision is now clearly defined and increasingly owned and shared across the City
An Early Intervention City with a multi agency, integrated service provision that works to ensure children's needs are met at the earliest stage. Where possible, and children's welfare is assured, these needs will be met within their family and community resources.
It is essential that we focus on identifying those families with emerging needs focus on assisting them to care for their own children whilst concurrently ensuring that those rarer families where children cannot be protected we act quickly and effectively in removing those children and sourcing them a safe and loving alternative family.

To this end we have a newly developed looked after children strategy that will ensure we have a good range of fostering and adoptive households to ensure we have local provision that is safe and ambitious for those children.

13. **Structure**

Our structures did not support our vision or our strategy. It has been essential that we focussed on improving communication and joint working both internally and with our partners. The new Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the new designated Early Help Teams ensure that we can deliver on our principles of an effective Team around the Family where expertise and information is shared in a timely and effective manner making sure that children and families only have to tell their story once and that there are no gaps or duplications where children can either fall through or dangerous individuals be hidden from the professional network.

We also need to reframe our Looked after Children services to ensure improved outcomes for this most vulnerable group. This process commences at the end of April

14. **Systems**

Many of our systems have not been fit for purpose and are the subject of ongoing review and modernisation.

15. **Staff and Skills**

We have been successful in recruiting staff and increasingly in retaining them. Whilst many of them are newly qualified we are embarking upon a robust Learning and Development programme both for front line practitioners and managers. This will take some time to feed through but with a more robust performance management and quality assurance structure in place we can feel confident that there is a suitable plan in place which in time will deliver a turnaround of children's outcomes.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital/Revenue

16. None.

Property/Other

17. None.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

18. The duty to undertake overview and scrutiny is set out in Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

Other Legal Implications:

19. None.

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

20. None

KEY DECISION? No

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	None
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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

1.	LSCB Annual Report
2.	ME Single Agency Report
3.	ME Single Agency Powerpoint
4.	Child F Action Plan
5.	Child G Action Plan
6.	Themes from ongoing SCRs

Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None
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Equality Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out.	Yes/No
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Other Background Documents

Equality Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:

Title of Background Paper(s)

Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)

1.	None	
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