

## The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

**The Local Safeguarding Children Board is good**

### Executive summary

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) in Bracknell Forest is good. A highly motivated, committed group of partners is well led by a respected, influential chair who sets high expectations and provides effective challenge to improve services. The consistent board membership from a good range of agencies has enabled it to become a strong and critical friend to partners. Well-established links to other boards and partnerships, and engagement with senior leaders, ensure sufficient oversight of safeguarding arrangements. The board extends its reach through an effective, twice-yearly partnership forum which enables information sharing and learning for a wider audience of board members.

The mix of pan-Berkshire and local sub-groups is effective in maintaining sufficient scrutiny of local safeguarding arrangements while allowing collaboration, information sharing and pooling of resources across Berkshire. Findings from a wide range of audits, regular reports and a thorough section 11 process ensure that the board retains sufficient oversight and challenge to local safeguarding practice. Most audits are of good quality, contain feedback from children, families and professionals, and result in action plans to improve services. Section 11 work is particularly strong, and the involvement of general practitioners and the process to strengthen school improvements are most notable.

Several priority areas in the business plan are carried over from past years, reflecting a thorough approach by the board to assuring itself that safeguarding arrangements are effective. The current business plan reflects local needs and priorities, and has been directly influenced by children's views to ensure that children are protected from online safety risks. Broadening the engagement with children, community and faith groups is an emerging strength of the board.

The board is not fully meeting its statutory responsibility by monitoring the effectiveness of training. Although recognising that this area of board activity requires increased focus, it has not yet completed a full training needs analysis and is not fully aware of the provision, take-up or quality of single-agency training.

The performance dataset does not include information from all partners to provide a better focus on business priorities and outcomes.

## Recommendations

84. Ensure that a full training needs analysis is completed, and that information regarding the availability, attendance and quality of single-agency training is developed.
85. Review and strengthen the performance dataset in order for it to assist the board to measure outcomes against its business priorities.

## Inspection findings – the Local Safeguarding Children Board

86. A well-respected, committed independent chair leads a consistent and motivated board that acts as a strong and critical friend to partners. The board has well-established links with other strategic boards and partnerships, such as the Health and Wellbeing Board, the children and young people's partnership and the community safety partnership, to ensure that priorities are aligned. Quarterly safeguarding monitoring meetings between senior leaders, such as the director of children's services, chief executive, lead member and the Independent LSCB Chair, ensure that safeguarding arrangements and practice are kept high on the agenda.
87. The board is well represented by senior leaders in partner agencies. Attendance by board members at meetings is high, including two lay members with contrasting backgrounds and experience. The lead member for children's services sits as a participating observer, and this strengthens political oversight.
88. The board structure is regularly reviewed to ensure that it works effectively and efficiently for Bracknell Forest. Four pan-Berkshire sub-groups provide opportunities for collaboration, information sharing and pooled resources, while a further five Bracknell Forest sub-groups ensure that local needs are given sufficient focus. It is a strength of the board that, to fully assure itself of local safeguarding arrangements and practice, it has retained its own child sexual exploitation and section 11 sub-groups while also participating in the pan-Berkshire arrangements.
89. Section 11 work carried out by the board is strong. Bracknell Forest has a sub-group to audit section 11 returns for local organisations. Panel meetings are robust, and evidence regular and thorough auditing of children's social care commissioned services, schools and early years providers. The section 11 process to support school improvement has been further strengthened by follow-up visits carried out by the lead education safeguarding officer and a consultant. These visits include interviews with children, parents and staff to look at strengths, the areas requiring further work and the development of action plans. All general practitioners (GPs) in Bracknell Forest have completed section 11 audits. They are involved in local learning events to consider safeguarding matters and share information. The resulting increased

awareness has brought additional benefits, such as more GPs completing reports for child protection case conferences.

90. The LSCB business plan is made up of core functions and targeted priorities to ensure that it meets its statutory responsibilities while also responding to changing local needs. Several priority areas in the business plan are carried over from previous years, reflecting a thorough approach by the board in assuring itself that safeguarding arrangements are working well. Child sexual exploitation, for example, has been a priority in the past two years, and now remains as a core function due to well-embedded arrangements, such as sexual exploitation and missing risk assessment conferences, improved rates of return home interviews and examples of disruption activity.
91. The LSCB has a good understanding of children missing and children at risk of sexual exploitation. The Pan-Berkshire sub-group has been instrumental in developing a coordinated response across Berkshire, for example by implementing the sexual exploitation screening tool. Joint working across Berkshire has also resulted in the requirement for taxi drivers to undertake safeguarding training in order to obtain a licence. This training has to be refreshed every three years, otherwise the licence is revoked. Work with local hotels to raise awareness has resulted in examples of disruption activity. For example, a hotel called the police when the staff were concerned about a young person who turned out to be a missing girl from a neighbouring authority.
92. The board receives an array of audits, reports, presentations and performance data to monitor and evaluate frontline practice and inform its priorities. Recent audits include those on domestic abuse, thresholds and the quality of case conference reports. Most audits are of good quality and result in action plans that are monitored by an audit tracker that shows outcomes and impact. Audits identify service strengths and areas for improvement, and contain the views of children, families and professionals. Learning from audits is disseminated to partners through notifications that include key messages, the views of children and families, and recommendations for improved practice.
93. A number of audits, reports and presentations have assisted the board to monitor the effectiveness of early help. These have included an audit on thresholds, which reported positive findings on the step up/step down process, and an audit considering the early help services that are available to support primary schoolchildren who have been excluded from school. In addition, the board receives annual reports on oversight by the early intervention hub and the common assessment framework (CAF). The dataset complements this information, for example with the numbers of step up/down arrangements. It also identifies emerging trends, such as higher numbers of children from secondary schools being referred.
94. Although the dataset provides some useful data, it does not include information from all partners. This would provide the board with a clearer

view of the difference that agencies are making and give further weight to the board when holding partners to account. For example, the dataset is weighted towards children's social care yet lacks some essential information, such as the frequency of social work visits to the children on plans. The board could also strengthen its monitoring of the effectiveness of early help if it regularly had a breakdown of agencies completing CAFs. Moreover, the dataset does not indicate the number of staff who do not undertake multi-agency training. A more explicit link between the dataset and business priorities would assist the board to show how progress is being achieved. (Recommendation)

95. A 'risks and challenges' log highlights the determination of the board to improve safeguarding services for children. Examples include a challenge to children's social care regarding the number of missing children who have been screened for sexual exploitation. This led to a review of these children and provided a benchmark for further audits. The log also records repeated concern about the loss of a therapeutic service for children who have experienced domestic abuse. This resulted in the LSCB instigating an audit regarding domestic abuse and support services and, due to this continued challenge, additional services are now in place.
96. A thorough quality assurance learning and improvement framework sets out how the board will identify and embed learning from a range of sources such as audits, performance data, serious case reviews (SCRs) and feedback from children, families and practitioners. The most recent SCR (C) was published in 2016 but relates to a case in 2013. All action plans have now been completed. The LSCB requested follow-up reports from six agencies after 12 months to show what differences had been made to practice. Learning from this SCR was disseminated prior to publication and, most significantly, resulted in a multi-agency protocol regarding bruising/suspicious marks on non-independently mobile babies and children. An audit of cases in 2015 showed the positive impact of this protocol, with cases referred by the Royal Berkshire Hospital and appropriately followed up by other agencies.
97. Most social workers spoken with during the inspection had some knowledge of the LSCB and the most recent SCR. Findings from SCRs, both locally and nationally, are incorporated into safeguarding training, and information on SCRs and audit findings are disseminated to staff through LSCB notifications. In addition, a comprehensive LSCB website provides information on safeguarding for professionals, parents, carers and young people, and links to other sites and publications, including training, threshold documents, the LSCB report and the business plan. The communication and community engagement sub-group is developing further ways to disseminate information. This has already led to the production of an animated version of the threshold document, and a 'Take5' campaign is being developed to provide the key safeguarding messages in just five minutes.
98. Following an evaluation of the previous Pan Berkshire arrangements for training in June 2016, the LSCB established a local Training and Professional

Development Sub Group to meet the specific training needs of Bracknell Forest staff. Although the LSCB training website evidences a range of multi-agency safeguarding training, learning and improvement workshops, and links to relevant publications, the LSCB is not fully monitoring the effectiveness of training. It does not have a comprehensive training needs analysis for all partners and is not able to identify the availability, quality or numbers attending single-agency training. In recognition that more needs to be done, the LSCB has introduced a charging policy for training and is using the funds to secure a consultant to develop the training needs analysis and further strengthen the process to evaluate training courses. (Recommendation)

99. The LSCB extends its reach to partners effectively through a twice-yearly partnership forum. The forum is made up of a wide range of board members, including from the voluntary and community sectors, who come together to consider reports, audit findings and presentations. This is highly valued by partners, who see it as an effective means of networking, sharing information and learning. Members report that it is a concrete way to test awareness, such as learning from SCRs, and whether agencies are undertaking training.
100. Work to engage further with children and families, faith, voluntary and community groups is an emerging strength. The communication and community engagement sub-group, led by one of the lay members, has planned an event this summer for children from 10 local secondary schools to discuss safeguarding issues and concerns. Children's concerns regarding online safety and the fragmented response have directly influenced the board to set it as one of its priorities for this year.
101. The Pan-Berkshire policies and procedures sub-group ensures that policies and procedures remain up to date and are effective. The threshold document was refreshed in 2016 and clearly sets out the core principles, levels and indicators of need, and the services available. A threshold audit in 2016 tested the effectiveness and understanding of thresholds by considering 13 case files of children receiving early help or children's social care. This was followed up with feedback from the children and their families. Staff attended workshops on the findings and shared their own views on multi-agency working. The audit concluded that there was effective multi-agency working at all levels.
102. The LSCB annual report 2015–16 provides a detailed overview of the work of the board, learning from audits and reports, progress against the business plan and how these have shaped future priorities. Although the report demonstrates the board's scrutiny in a wide range of service areas, it is not always clear whether the work described has made a difference to services or what still needs to be done. The board has recognised that it needs to do more to show the impact of its work across services and has taken steps to address this.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences of children and young people who have needed or still need help and/or protection. This also includes children and young people who are looked after and young people who are leaving care and starting their lives as young adults.

Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children, young people and families. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with families and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the local authority knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

The inspection of the local authority was carried out under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board was carried out under section 15A of the Children Act 2004.

Ofsted produces this report of the inspection of local authority functions and the review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board under its power to combine reports in accordance with section 152 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The inspection team consisted of seven of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted.

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