

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRUST			
Meeting title	Children and Young People's Trust		
Meeting date	25 th November 2009		
Report sponsor	Clive Webster		
Report title	Implementation of Action Plans from Serious Case Reviews and Up Date from Local Safeguarding Children Board		
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Paper approved by Trust Steering Group	Approval not required.	Paper approved by Children and Young People's Trust Executive	Approval not required.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Safeguarding Children Board is reporting on the implementation of four serious case review action plans and is highlighting themes from these serious case reviews for Trust agencies to take forward.

The Safeguarding Children Board is asking the Trust to ensure that key elements of safeguarding are put in place to improve outcomes for children and young people.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1
- 1 That the actions to implement the action plans from four serious case reviews are noted and that all agencies are asked to consider how the themes from the serious case reviews can be embedded in practice within their agency.
 - 2 That the Trust considers the implications for service delivery of the continuing high caseloads of social workers in children's workforce.
 - 3 That the Trust actively supports the strategy for the roll out of the Common Assessment Framework as a key element in the safeguarding of children in Southampton.
 - 4 That the Trust ensures that an up-dated information sharing protocol is developed and introduced for the exchange of information to safeguard children.

3 DETAIL

Background

- 3.1 In the course of the last year, the Southampton Safeguarding Children Board published four serious case reviews and one has been finalised and is awaiting publication.

These serious case reviews covered incidents of shaking injuries to a baby and serious physical injuries to young children.

Detailed action plans were developed for all of the serious case reviews and the implementation of action plans for the serious case reviews that have been published has been overseen by the Serious Cases Sub Committee of the Safeguarding Children Board.

A consultant was commissioned by the Serious Cases Sub Committee to audit the implementation of the plans and to collate documentation from all agencies to demonstrate compliance with the actions in the action plan.

A meeting was held on the 18th September between the Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board, the Director of Children's Services and the Safeguarding Adviser for the Government Office for the South East and the lead for Safeguarding from the Strategic Health Authority. This meeting reviewed progress on the implementation of the four action plans and evidence was presented by the Consultant of the actions taken by all agencies to achieve the implementation of the plans.

The main themes from the reviews have been communicated in workshops to staff across all agencies, and two workshops have been held specifically for supervisors and managers in agencies. Two more workshops for supervisors and managers are scheduled.

The main themes have been:

- the need to be clear about any changes in household composition
- the need to engage and assess male partners as well as mothers
- the need for all practitioners to identify risk factors from parental history
- the need to recognise which policies apply to the current situation
- the need to undertake multi-agency pre-birth assessments
- the need to assess the implications of drug and alcohol misuse on the capacity of parents to meet the needs of their children.

None of these themes are new and all are consistent with findings from serious case reviews nationally. The challenge for agencies of the Children's Trust in Southampton is not just to learn the lessons again, but to embed the learning in practice to make a difference for the provision of services to improve the safeguarding of children.

The themes have been passed to the chairs of the Monitoring and Evaluation and the Professional Practice sub-committees of the Safeguarding Children Board and to the lead on workforce development to consider how we can embed the necessary changes and to verify that the changes have been effective in safeguarding children.

3.2 OTHER BOARD CONCERNS

Capacity within the children's social care workforce

As a result of the section 11 audit process undertaken last autumn, the Safeguarding Children Board reported concerns to the Director of Children's Services and to the Trust about the very high caseloads of social workers and thus their capacity, and that of their supervisors, to safely manage the workload within Southampton.

The Board has received updates on the action taken within the City Council and it is clear that the concerns were taken seriously and that additional funding was made available to seek to improve the capacity within the workforce.

Information has been presented to the Board which demonstrates that there has been a reduction in the number of cases held by children's social workers, and while the Board is able to report to the Trust that there has been progress in this respect, it is clear that caseloads within the children's social work workforce, although reduced, remain very high. The Safeguarding Children Board will continue to monitor the capacity within the children's social care workforce while this level of risk remains.

Common Assessment Framework

The strategy for the strengthening of the role out of the Common Assessment Framework was presented to the last meeting of the Safeguarding Children Board. While the Board welcomes the renewed vigour of the strategy, the Board is concerned about the slow pace of engagement by Trust agencies with the Common Assessment Process. The CAF is an essential component of an integrated multi-agency assessment process, designed specifically to identify needs at the earliest possible stage to reduce the potential for the escalation of problems and to increase the potential for improved outcomes for children. The Board considers that it is essential that Trust agencies fully engage with the new strategy for the role out of the CAF to catch up with practice nationally.

Information Sharing Protocol

The Safeguarding Children Board has previously highlighted concerns to the Trust about the lack of implementation of an information sharing protocol for children. This was an issue raised by Lord Laming in his recent review of safeguarding services.

It is evident from workshops undertaken by the Board that not all staff within partner agencies are working with the principles of information sharing established from the Children Act, 2004 where a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children was introduced for all statutory agencies. It is essential that all agencies work to agreed principles on information sharing, and the Board is eager for the Trust to provide an up-dated protocol on information sharing that is fully implemented by all partners.

5 RESOURCES/JOINT COMMISSIONING IMPLICATIONS

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**IMPACT ACROSS THE FIVE OUTCOMES OF EVERY CHILD MATTERS AND
THE PRIORITIES IN THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN 2009**