



Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board Scrutiny Sub-Group

**15 July 2011 in Committee Room Three,
County Offices, Lincoln**

PRESENT:

Councillors Mrs C M H Farquharson, J R Hicks, J D Hough, H R Johnson, R A Shore and S F Williams.

Added Members: Mr Fred Mann JP (Lincolnshire Police Authority).

Chris Cook (Independent Chairman of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board) was also in attendance.

Officers in attendance: Sheridan Dodsworth (Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board Business Manager), Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer), Graham Watts (Democratic Services Officer) and Sue Westcott (Assistant Director, Children's Services).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor S F Williams be elected as Chairman of the Scrutiny Sub-Group for the 2011/2012 Municipal Year.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr R Childs (NHS Lincolnshire), Mrs E French (Parent Governor Representative Added Member) and Mr S Tyrell (Foster Carer).

3. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor J D Hough declared a personal interest in all items on the agenda as his partner was a Non-Executive Director of the Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and he was a Member.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD SCRUTINY SUB-GROUP HELD ON 19 MAY 2011

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 May 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

5. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD OPERATIONAL DELIVERY GROUP MEETINGS HELD ON 12 MAY 2011 AND 16 JUNE 2011

Members considered the draft minutes of the meetings of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board Operational Delivery Group held on 12 May 2011 and 16 June 2011. During discussion, the following issues were raised: -

i) 12 May 2011

Minute number four in the draft minutes referred to a proposed Sexual Assault Referral Centre for children. Clarification was sought as Members were unclear what stage any proposal was at or whether this was an initial concept based on a need in the county for such a facility. It was reported that examinations of children would currently be undertaken by a Paediatrician at Hospital in Lincoln or Boston and that a centre for children was needed in Lincolnshire. The proposal was a vision at this stage, however, discussions were currently ongoing with the Sexual Assault Referral Unit Management Board.

An E-Safety Audit was commissioned by the School Improvement Service in order to identify e-safety training requirements, as referred to in minute number five of the draft minutes. Despite a request two years ago by the local authority for all schools to identify an E-Safety Officer, most schools did not have an E-Safety Officer in place. The County Council had invested £350,000 into the Securus system but only 30 schools used it, with most schools claiming that they found it difficult to find the required contribution of £450 or that the system was not needed due to the fact that teachers could adequately monitor children and young people using computers in school. Members agreed that the protection of children and young people was paramount, however, concerns were expressed that overprotection could result in restricting legitimate access to things such as the internet and electronic mail. It was noted that the local authority provided advice to schools on e-safety, however, any final decision regarding limitations to internet access or electronic mail usage at schools would be up to individual institutions. Members agreed that an officer from the Council's Information Technology provider and the E-Safety Officer should be invited to attend the next meeting of the Sub-Group to discuss issues associated with limiting access to the internet and email facilities in schools.

ii) 16 June 2011

The issue of out of county placements was referred to in minute number ten of the draft minutes and a question was raised in respect of the transition of individuals and who was ultimately responsible for their welfare. It was reported that the placing authority would be responsible for any child or young person it transferred to the services of another local authority.

Minute number fourteen of the draft minutes referred to Serious Case Reviews and clarification was sought as to whether such reviews could be conducted alongside police investigations. It was reported that Serious Case Reviews could be undertaken at the same time as any police investigation.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the draft minutes of the meetings of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board Operational Delivery Group held on 12 May 2011 and 16 June 2011 be noted.
- (2) That the E-Safety Officer and an officer from the County Council's Information Technology provider be invited to attend the next meeting of the Scrutiny Sub-Group to discuss issues in respect of e-safety at schools.

6. CHILD PROTECTION PLANS

A report by the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board Business Manager was considered, which set out the outcome of an audit into Child Protection Plans that was undertaken in January 2011.

Following the meeting of this Scrutiny Sub-Group in November 2010, the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board Quality Assurance and Risk Management Group undertook an audit of 25% of all Child Protection Plans. This amounted to 60 plans which were selected at random from each of the Children's Social Care Area Teams, including the Children with Disabilities Team.

The audit confirmed a number of aspects of best practice, which were noted as follows: -

- all children had a Child Protection Plan;
- all plans had been developed by a multi-agency group of practitioners involved in the child's care;
- the Plans had been agreed at a Child Protection Conference with an independent Child Protection Conference Chairman;
- all Plans were reviewed within the prescribed timescales;
- all Plans had clearly identified Primary Presenting Concerns that had led to the child being made the subject of a Child Protection Plan;
- overall, the Plans met the requirements set out in 'Working Together 2010'.

There were some recurring issues identified that the Safeguarding Children Board sought further clarification on, which were categorised as follows: -

- identification of the child's needs – in some instances these were generic rather than specific to the Primary Presenting Concern that led to the need for a Protection Plan;
- details of the actions required to address unmet need – these were not always clearly linked to the Primary Presenting Concern;
- details of the services to be provided, including the frequency of that service, were not always specific;
- identification of the 'lead' person for specific actions – this was often identified as the Social Worker even when it appeared that another agency could more appropriately lead on the action. Rarely were parents identified as being responsible for specific actions to safeguard their children;
- details of when actions should be or had been conducted were not evident;

- details of the planned outcome for an action were not always clear – there appeared to be some confusion between ‘process’ and ‘outcome’.

These issues were reported to the Team Manager and Head of Service that had responsibility for the Child Protection Conferencing Service. It was clear that some of the information that appeared to be missing was determined by the format of the Integrated Children’s System on which the Child Protection Plans were recorded. There were some limitations currently as to the level of details that could be recorded on the Plan itself, however, it was emphasised that the detail relating to specific Protection Plans would be included in the minutes of Child Protection Conferences. This was currently being reviewed by the Children’s Services Directorate.

The Safeguarding Children Board was keen to ensure that all practitioners could produce Child Protection Plans that: -

- clearly identified what the proposed outcomes were for a child as the result of the planned actions and that progress in reducing risk could be measured;
- had planned actions that directly related to the Primary Presenting Concern and were clear to families about what needed to change.

A revised training regime on an inter-agency basis, taking into account the issues raised as part of the audit, commenced in February 2011 and had been well received by a number of agencies, specifically commenting that they benefitted from the opportunity to draw up a Child Protection Plan in the training context.

The Safeguarding Children Board would continue to review Child Protection Plans through the usual course of business undertaken by the Inter-Agency Case Review Sub-Group. Should there be any concerns regarding the quality of Child Protection Plans reviewed through this group they would be referred to the Safeguarding Children Board Quality Assurance and Risk Management Group and the relevant Assistant Director for Children’s Services.

The Board would also continue to work with the Child Protection Conferencing Service Team Manager over the issues raised in respect of the Integrated Children’s System.

During discussion, Councillors expressed their concerns in terms of the perceived limitations of the Integrated Children’s System. An Integrated Children’s Services Governance Board was in place and officers agreed to invite Councillor H R Johnson to the next meeting, who would report the Scrutiny Sub-Group’s concerns. In addition, officers agreed to schedule a meeting between Councillor H R Johnson and the Integrated Children’s System Trainer.

It was agreed that an example of a new Child Protection Plan would be provided for Members at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Sub-Group, in order that they could understand what changes had been made as a result of the audit. In addition, a report on attendance rates of various organisations at Child Protection Conferences would be submitted to the next meeting.

In closing, it was noted that this particular audit was a very good example of overview and scrutiny work, which had been a direct result of this Sub-Group’s deliberations and recommendations.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That Councillor H R Johnson be invited to attend the next meeting of the Integrated Children's Services Governance Board, to report the Scrutiny Sub-Group's concerns in relation to the Integrated Children's System.
- (3) That a meeting be scheduled between Councillor H R Johnson and the Integrated Children's System Trainer in order to discuss the Scrutiny Sub-Group's concerns relating to the Integrated Children's System.
- (4) That an example of a new Child Protection Plan be submitted to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Sub-Group.
- (5) That a report on the attendance rates of various organisations at Child Protection Conferences be submitted to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Sub-Group.

7. PROPOSED MERGER OF SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD AND SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD SCRUTINY SUB-GROUPS

A report by the Sub-Group's Scrutiny Officer was considered, which sought Members' views on a proposal to merge the Safeguarding Adults Board Scrutiny Sub-Group with the Safeguarding Children Board Scrutiny Sub-Group.

An overview of the current arrangements for both bodies was set out in the report, together with the draft terms of reference for the proposed merged Safeguarding Scrutiny Sub-Group.

It was noted that, following consideration at this meeting, the proposed merger would be considered by the Adults Scrutiny Committee and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 9 September 2011 and 28 September, respectively, as the Sub-Groups' parent committees.

Members were informed that the proposed merger was considered by the Safeguarding Adults Board Scrutiny Sub-Group on 12 July 2011, where Members outlined their support.

The County Council's Political Group Leaders had also considered this and agreed with the proposal, in principle, but recommended that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Group should be elected at a meeting of the County Council, in line with the authority's standard committee structure practice. A question was raised as to whether this would result in a financial implication for the Council in terms of remuneration having to be paid to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman in the shape of Special Responsibility Allowances. It was reported that the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel would have to consider this and submit a recommendation to the County Council, who would be required to make a decision on whether or not the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Sub-Group should be provided with a Special Responsibility Allowance.

Discussion ensued, during which the following comments or views were noted: -

- a slight concern was expressed in relation to weakening the Safeguarding Children Board Scrutiny Sub-Group. Members felt that this Sub-Group was more effective than the adult equivalent, mainly due to the fact that the Independent Chairman of the Safeguarding Board attended all meetings of the Scrutiny Sub-Group. It was the understanding of Members that this practice was not replicated for the Safeguarding Adults Board Scrutiny Sub-Group;
- in the event of the proposed merger being implemented, both Independent Chairmen of the Safeguarding Boards should see it as part of their role to attend meetings of the body;
- the way in which the proposed merged body conducted its business needed to be carefully considered. It was envisaged that agendas for meetings would be split to clearly indicate business relating to the Safeguarding Adults Board and the Safeguarding Children Board, but provide opportunities for the consideration of items relevant to both Boards, such as transitional arrangements for example;
- a suggestion was made that meetings of the two current Scrutiny Sub-Groups should remain separate but be held on the same day, rather than having to go through the process of a merger. This was in view of the fact that, although there were some common themes, the issues of adults safeguarding and children's safeguarding were very different.

In conclusion, the proposal was supported in principle but it was agreed that further thought should be given towards retaining the current arrangements and holding the two meetings on the same day. Members also felt that consideration should be given to whether the attendance of the Independent Chairmen of the two Safeguarding Boards should be incorporated in the draft terms of reference for the proposed merged body. A suggestion was subsequently put forward to run a trial to see whether or not a merged safeguarding scrutiny body would work in practice and evaluate this after six months.

RESOLVED

That the views of this Scrutiny Sub-Group, as outlined above, be submitted to the Adults Scrutiny Committee and Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in respect of the proposed merger of the Safeguarding Adults Board Scrutiny Sub-Group and the Safeguarding Children Board Scrutiny Sub-Group.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report by the Sub-Group's Scrutiny Officer, which invited Members to discuss and agree the Safeguarding Children Board Scrutiny Sub-Group's work programme for 2011. A copy of the work programme was appended to the report.

It was noted that the meeting of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board Operational Delivery Group on 21 July 2011 had been cancelled. Councillor S F Williams agreed to attend the meeting of the Operational Delivery Group on 8 September 2011. In addition, Councillor R A Shore agreed to attend the meeting of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board Strategic Management Group on 13 October 2011.

Further to minute number seven above, Members were informed that items from this Sub-Group's work programme would be transferred to a new work programme in the event of the two Scrutiny Sub-Groups being merged.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be agreed, subject to the inclusion of the additional items set out in minute numbers five and six above.

9. ADDITIONAL ITEM – OFSTED INSPECTION

The Assistant Director of Children's Services reported to Members that the Council's Fostering Service had recently undergone a three day onsite inspection by Ofsted. The Council had since been informed that it received 'outstanding' in each of the five 'Every Child Matters' outcome areas. The Assistant Director took this opportunity to thank Members of the Scrutiny Sub-Group for their continued support and reported that inspectors were very satisfied with the scrutiny arrangements the Council had in place.

The Scrutiny Sub-Group wanted to put on record its congratulations and thanks to the Assistant Director and her staff for achieving such excellent inspection results.

The meeting closed at 11.50 a.m.