

Report to Education and Vulnerable Children Overview and Scrutiny Committee

25 November 2015

Birmingham Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2014-15

1.0 Purpose of report and decisions to be made

- 1.1** To present to the Committee the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) Annual Report 2014-15 (for discussion and consideration)

2.0 Summary

- 2.1** The BSCB Annual Report provides a full description and robust analysis of the Board's activities in 2014-15 and the impact of that activity on improved outcomes for the children and young people of the City. The Report for the first time in a number of years presents a positive picture of progress over that year in most aspects of the Board's work.

3.0 Recommendations

The Committee receives the Report.

4.0 Context

The BSCB is an independent statutory multi-agency Board established under Section 13 of the Children Act 2014, with two statutory objectives:

- *To 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*
- *To ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.*

Independently chaired, the Board is required to report annually on the effectiveness of those two objectives. The Report must be presented to the Chief Executive of the Local Authority, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board. It is presented to the OSC at their request.

5.0 Main Issues

The Report is long, largely because of the need to provide strong evidence of that progress, and to set out the range of activities, projects, programmes and service improvements that have been underway during the year. It has been drafted in line with national guidance on what a good report should contain. However the Report fundamentally addresses six key questions. It assesses the Board's work objectively against the evidence and against the guidance provided by guidance as to what a Board must do. It evaluates the quality of what we are doing against the criteria for what constitutes a "good" Board, and against the evidence we have of the impact of our work.

The conclusions are short, and framed in the context of what the work of 2014/15 tells us about what we need to be doing next, the priorities for 2015/16 and the challenges we are setting.

These challenges are:

The challenges we are setting for 2015/16 are:

To the Board:

However, a major challenge that the Board has not yet addressed, is finding the best ways to engage with and involve children and young people, their families and their communities in the work of the Board and in providing high support and high challenge as critical friends of what we do.

The BSCB should build on its experiences of the last few years by challenging itself to think radically together as partners in terms of examining what functions should be led by whom, how and where in order to be far more effective in contributing to and supporting the co-ordination of what is done collectively

The Board's challenge in 2014/15 of developing stronger, clearer and more mutually robust and accountable relationships with all key partnership bodies remains a challenge in 2015/16. The Board needs to ensure that the Community Safety Partnership, the Adult Safeguarding Board, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the BSCB Board can agree a protocol governing the relationship between them, address the issue of who leads on what, agree shared priorities and a shared work-streams.

To improve the span of agencies driving the priorities forward, and the consistency of their focus and "ownership" of the issues, and to share the work across partner agencies more effectively, reducing "silo" working.

To the Council with its' partners:

Improving the safety of children's lived experiences in their communities presents a significant challenge to the Council and its partners

The challenge for the lead agency, Birmingham City Council with every partner will be to design and implement a new whole council partnership framework for multi-agency co-operation, co-ordination, and commissioning of services to meet children's needs. This will need to also feed into the "Future Birmingham" process.

To the Strategic Leaders Forum and Early Help and Safeguarding Partnership:

The major challenge for partners is to retain the confidence brought into the system through the work done in 2014/15, whilst 're-balancing' resources, investment, staff capability and capacity so early help takes precedence over child protection for the majority of children and young people needing support.

There is a major challenge ahead for the new partnership bodies established to lead children's services across the city, in establishing new ways of working, developing real cooperation across the system, rather than cooperation on specific issues and to ensure the most effective ways of delivering services as

resources reduce, capacity shrinks, and demand increases

The challenge for 2015 is for the multi-agency partnership, through the Missing Operational Group, to develop an integrated approach to identifying responding to and intervening with children missing from home, care, school and from view. This should include the development of a shared data base, some simple accessible systems and processes and the ability to ensure appropriate early help or statutory interventions are put in place with each individual child.

In 2015 there is also a major challenge for the strategic leaders forum, local authority and BSCB who together need to assertively and decisively strengthen the work of the CSE Strategic Sub Group, agree a programme delivery plan behind it and deliver the new CSE Strategy, as well as continue to improve and develop services to support children and young people at risk of CSE and to disrupt and pursue the perpetrators.

Arising from the Annual Report we confirmed our priorities for 2015-16 as follows:

- Continue to focus on and improve the delivery of effective practice in relation to the voice of child, early help and safe systems (adding children in care to child protection and court processes)
- Clarify the governance arrangements for and deliver a more coherent strategic approach to CSE ,support the development of an effective operating model and implement the strategy
- Address the gap in relation to missing children
- Strengthen still more our challenge and scrutiny functions and the use of our intelligence to inform partner and single agency priorities for service delivery, practice improvement
- Intensify and extend our multi-agency audit work
- Deliver even stronger accountability and challenge relationships with each agency and use that to inform collective strategic activity
- Facilitate the development of a much better learning culture and reduce unnecessary processes in relation to LLR's and SCR's
- Support and challenge the development of a new partnership landscape between partners and Children's Services and corporately
- Address the question of what a "new" approach to scrutiny, challenge, coordination, performance and quality assurance, learning from practice and from what good practice looks like in order to agree how best to approach these requirements across the system by April 2016

6.0 Conclusions

In terms of the five dimensions of a Board's responsibilities set out by Ofsted, we are now meeting our statutory responsibilities, with varying degrees of effectiveness with the exception of missing children. We are able to provide substantial evidence as to how we have worked to support and co-ordinate the work of statutory partners in helping, protecting and caring for children, and we are able to demonstrate how we monitor effectiveness.

We are not yet however monitoring multi-agency training for its effectiveness and evaluating its' impact on practice. In fact although we have continued to provide significant amounts of training we have not yet created a learning and workforce development approach to multi-agency workforce training and learning. We do check that policies and procedures and thresholds for intervention are applied properly through our audit programme and the work of the Front Door Reference Group. Whilst partners can be quite challenging of each other in meetings they do not consistently demonstrate how they challenge practice and audit casework in their own agency and across the partnership.

We cannot as yet demonstrate that we meet the criteria for a good LSCB. In fact we are still quite a long way from that, and we certainly require improvement to be able to get to good. However we can demonstrate progress against the criteria in terms of

- The priority given to safeguarding by statutory LSCB Members and how that is demonstrated both through S11 assessments, sound financial contributions (although how sound varies) and contributions to the audit and scrutiny activity of our sub groups
- Our policies and procedures, and the way we review these.
- Case file audits and the use of data and audit evidence to determine priorities for the board, the challenge we put into the system and the assurances we seek.
- Our contribution to and influence in informing senior leaders, and supporting planning and commissioning activity
- The provision of a high level of high quality training
- A rigorous and transparent assessment of our performance and effectiveness, as a board and across local services

However we will remain inadequate as a Board if we cannot demonstrate that we understand the experiences of children and young people or fail to identify where service improvements can be made. Whilst we have made significant progress in both these areas it is not yet secure, embedded or wide reaching enough.

It is appropriate to say that overall the Board's arrangements are increasingly sufficient to meet our basic responsibilities and to ensure children are safer in the City. The biggest challenge of all is to explore whether there are better ways to achieve the same ends within an overarching statutory framework. Children are getting a better service, but it could be much better if we allow ourselves to think more radically about how we work together and as a Board.

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