

LRLSCB Independent Chair's Addendum – Written Answers to the Questions raised by the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10 September 2018

Q. Were there any barriers to learning because of the capacity of workers across the children's social care workforce?

Response

The Boards Training and Development Work is led by the Interagency Training, Group, which is shared with Leicester City LSCB. Agencies have given full assurance that caseloads that identify safeguarding children as a concern are allocated and managed. Leicestershire Children & Family Services have given assurance to the Board over the last three quarters that the annual report covers and the first quarter of this year that there have been no concerns raised by the service that this has restricted learning.

During 2017/18 evaluation of the interagency training programme was undertaken by Voluntary Action LeicesterShire (VAL), on behalf of the two LSCBs. Following introduction of a charging policy for no shows in 2016/17 the number of no-shows has reduced further by 25% this year to 106, in addition the number of cancellations halved to 71. Sickness was the main reason given for these with 'Other work priorities' was given as a non-attendance reason in 42% of cases. This is a small number of the total capacity offered

Q. Concern was raised regarding the capacity of officers to attend training and the non-attendance at this by the Probation Service.

Response

The Probation Service provide training for their staff. In relation to training, all NPS staff, regardless of role, must complete the Child Protection and Safeguarding Children, and the Domestic Abuse e-learning modules. All front-line staff who supervise or have contact with offenders also have to complete the two-day Safeguarding Children face to face training. As of April 2018, no staff had the e-learning outstanding, and only just under 10% of staff still require the face to face input. Whilst additional training offered by the LRLSCB agencies has been offered, take-up has been low due to workload demands; this is acknowledged as action required for the coming year.

Q. It was queried how the change in process around Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit cases being allocated to social workers would be monitored?

Response

The partnership has noted a sustained increase in the average caseload of the Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit non-recent team, however the Police report they are able to appropriately manage cases. Monitoring of these caseloads is via the Safeguarding effectiveness of the Board and a task and finish group led by a local authority Board representative has been established

to review the standard expectations for a range of child protection meeting. The police are also subject to external inspection.

Q. Were the computer systems across partner organisations synchronised so that they were compatible?

Response

The computer systems across agencies are not synchronised or compatible however there are systems in place to share information electronically. Validation of the data sometimes requires staff from agencies to manually check data together to understand why some differences may appear in data reports, this can often be due to different interpretation or recording practices, or different time capture periods and processing.

There is an NHS England national project, Child Protection-Information Sharing (CP-IS) which Leicestershire health systems are introducing. The aim of the project is that where a child is subject to a Child protection plan, a looked after child, or a mother of an unborn child on a pre-birth protection plan attends an unscheduled health care setting the CP-IS alert is visible, and a notification is sent to the child's social worker within the Local Authority that the child originates from. This enables an open dialogue earlier between: parents/carers, children's social care and health leading to an earlier intervention (where needed) for the most vulnerable children and young people.

The LRLSCB also has set templates which are used to provide data for case referrals

Q. The LRLSCB would continue to monitor the notable reductions in referrals and child protection plans in Rutland, and it was queried whether this would also be the case in Leicestershire?

Response

Monitoring referrals and child protection plans are key responsibilities of the local authority and the data is available to the LRLSCB. Should there be a significant fluctuation in the data the LRLSCB would want to monitor and understand the reasons from this and seek assurances from the local authority through the safeguarding effectiveness sub group.

Q. Was the LRLSCB satisfied with Leicestershire County Council's procedures and did it feel that the arrangements the County Council had in place were adequate?

Response

While we can never eliminate risk entirely. The Board is assured that, whilst there are areas for improvement, workers and agencies are working well together to safeguard children in Leicestershire and Rutland.

Children Services report they now have a Performance and Quality Assurance Framework. Monthly audits are undertaken to assure managers that children

are safe and protected. Managers and senior leaders have a clear line of sight to the quality of front-line practice

The Board shares its Multi-agency procedures with the Leicester City LSCB. Throughout the year the Board has reviewed and revised Multi-Agency Procedures in line with developments in practice and learning from reviews and audits. The Board updated the thresholds document for referral to children's services and has also revised procedures relating to: Reports for Child Protection Conference and the Whole family approach

Q. Further detail was requested regarding the 'Section 11' peer challenge process; was this successful and how would it be taken forward?

Response

This Peer Challenge approach was found to be a positive experience and more informative than the previous document-based approach. There was a good participation and contribution from partners in this process leading to a balance of challenge and support. This 'Section 11' peer challenge process is to be considered as part of a two-year model subject to future safeguarding arrangements for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Q. There had been a reduction in the number of Elective Home Educated children who had received a statutory visit. Why was this the case and what was being done to improve this?

Response

Local authorities have no statutory duties in relation to monitoring the quality of EHE on a routine basis. However, under Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996, local authorities can intervene if it appears that parents/carers are not providing a suitable and efficient education. The Local Authority seeks to engage regularly with home educating families, to determine whether the education is suitable and efficient and to ensure the child/ren are safe. However, families do not have to engage with the local authority, unless there are other reason for statutory intervention.

The LSCB requested a specific report regarding safeguarding and Elective Home Education. The report from the Local Authority outlined processes and procedures in place and provided assurance that arrangements in place were supporting safeguarding of children who are home educated and known to the authority. It showed that in Feb 2018 80% of parents/carers were engaging with visits from an EHE Officer.

It is helpful that this was raised by the Committee and the final LRLSCB Annual report will amend the wording to explain that the number of visits is due to lack of engagement by families not by problems in offering a service.

The number of EHE Children continues to increase

	Q2 17/18	Q3 17/18	Q4 17/18	Q1 18/19
Number of children educated at home – Leicestershire	387	386	496	537

Q. Had funding for the new local arrangements for safeguarding been secured from the Police, CCGs and local authorities?

Response

The named statutory agencies in WT 2018, the Local Authority, the CCG and the Police are aware of their statutory duty to fund the new arrangements and a commitment has been given to sustain this. The detailed budget plans are still to be finalised as the final structure of the arrangements and support systems are still to be agreed.

As Independent Chair I have indicated in my view that the current level of funding should be sustained at least for the first year to enable a smooth transition. The current funding level is sustained by underspends in previous years from budgets which have been set aside to fund serious case reviews. It is unlikely that the number of local case reviews will decrease therefore a sustainable agreement on how these should be resourced in the future is needed and will be part of the new arrangements. I believe these should be separate to the core budget and a separate agreement as the number and cost of these is difficult to forecast.