



Bath & North East Somerset
Local Safeguarding Children Board

KEY MESSAGES FROM THE CHAIR MARCH 2016

Welcome to this, our first “Key Messages from the LSCB”. The aim of this document is to update everyone about the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and in particular some of the issues that were considered at our Board meeting on 1st March. You are of course always welcome to read the minutes of the meeting when they are published on our website. There are a lot of things going on in the world of safeguarding children, some local and some at a national level. All of these will affect the way that you do your job and how you interact with partner agencies.

REVIEW of LSCBs

Nationally, a review of LSCBs and Serious Case Reviews is taking place. This is being led by Alan Wood a former Director of Children’s Services and is due to report at the end of March. It already looks likely that there will be proposals to change the way that Serious Case Reviews are undertaken and how learning is disseminated. At the time of writing, we await the imminent publication of a triennial review of serious case reviews and this I hope will lead to further reflection and improvement as it will underscore many lessons that need to be acted upon everywhere. There is a new policy and guidance for whistle - blowers in relation to children’s social care and a NSPCC helpline. Further information can be obtained from NSPCC and the government publications website.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/dedicated-helplines/whistleblowing-advice-line/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/whistleblowing-about-childrens-social-care-services-to-ofsted>

PRESENTATIONS

At our Board meeting of 1st March we received two really valuable presentations that raised the awareness of Board members and prompted some discussion about our agencies’ working practices;

1. Modern Slavery

Firstly we heard about the work of Unseen, a voluntary organisation working in our area to support exploited people and working to tackle the systemic

issues of modern slavery. It is already clear that this is a substantial issue in the UK and thus far the statistics really only represent a fraction of those who are believed to be affected. Victims of trafficking and slavery include children and the CHiPs project has been established to support children in Bristol and surrounding area. It is clear that the scale of trafficking and slavery is far higher than previously imagined. It is now claimed to be the second largest illegal trade worldwide. Unseen are able to provide bespoke training for organisations and departments and if anyone is interested please visit: <http://www.unseenuk.org/learn-more/frontline-professionals/training1> They will also be advertising a general but comprehensive 2 hour training session open to anyone who may come across a victim of trafficking in their work. These dates will be advertised on their website in the next couple of weeks. More information about Unseen, trafficking and modern slavery in general can be found here: www.unseenuk.org

In addition B&NES Council will be offering training in this area – please visit the Learning Zone <http://bathnes.learningpool.com/my/>

2. Health and Wellbeing

We also learned about the findings of the Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing Survey undertaken by the Directorate of Public Health. This was an electronic survey undertaken via 29 Primary and Secondary Schools in which 1,653 children took part; representing an impressive 82% participation rate. The findings included some valuable insights into internet use, bullying, sexual health, body image, emotional wellbeing and staying safe. This is the third year that the survey has been conducted and some interesting trends have emerged. There is a lot for schools to learn from the trend data and this will be fed back to them in the coming weeks. The key concerns are that vulnerable pupils (for example, being in receipt of free school meals, young carers and looked after children) are most likely to be exposed to tobacco smoke, to try smoking by year 8, to have sex by year 10, to drink alcohol and be offered drugs. There seems to be a worrying perception amongst many young people who are neither overweight nor obese, that they need to lose weight. High numbers of girls are considering self-harm as a coping strategy. The survey will undoubtedly inform future commissioning, service design and policy.

THEMED REVIEW – MISSING CHILDREN

At every LSCB meeting we explore a theme of safeguarding children in depth. The intention is to raise awareness and knowledge within the Board and to identify future actions and things we need to monitor more closely. On this occasion we turned our attention to missing children. We were fortunate to have Charlie Hedges MBE, an internationally regarded expert on missing children at our meeting. One important point from this part of our meeting is that children who go missing rarely if ever do so without good reason. Whilst sometimes this might be because they have fallen out with their parents or carers, it can often be the symptom of something very wrong going on. Good practice includes thorough investigation, effective management of reports and a clear understanding of the linkages between missing children and forms of harm including criminality. Not surprisingly, there are links to our current work

in addressing child sexual exploitation. The theme was linked to the report of the work of our CSE and Missing sub group as well as the very successful stakeholder event on CSE that was held in January. Details of a single point of contact and a related website for CSE will be published on our website.

LSCB SUB GROUP REPORTS

The LSCB received a report from our Professional Practice Group. This group is responsible for routinely auditing casework along a programme of themes of work. It is clear that there is a lot of excellent work being undertaken by staff in all agencies to protect and support improvement in the lives of children and young people. The Group routinely send letters of congratulation to staff who by reference to the files are considered to be making a difference. Arguably, the most significant area for improvement is in the commitment of agency staff to attending and submitting reports in support of strategy meetings and conferences. This is a matter that the LSCB will pursue further with partners.

We also heard of the work of our Communications sub group. A lot of work is in train to develop a new dedicated website for the LSCB that will be linked to that of the Safeguarding Adults Board. It is hoped that these will be launched in June.

MULTI AGENCY POLICY UPDATE

Our LSCB website will also provide access to a number of policies that the LSCB approved at the March meeting. These include the B&NES Council Parenting Strategy, the LSCB Early Help Strategy and the LSCB Guidance for Parents/Carers/ Children: Complaints and Appeals Process. New leaflets are now available to agencies on Keeping Children Safe from Poisonous Substances in the Home and Keeping Families Safe in the Home.

The theme for our next meeting in June will be domestic abuse. This is very timely as last week the Office for National Statistics revealed that in almost 200,000 child protection assessments last year; domestic abuse was the most significant feature.

Reg Pengelly
B&NES LSCB Independent Chair
March 2016