



ANNUAL REVIEW 14 JULY 2009

1.0 OVERVIEW FROM INDEPENDENT CHAIR

This is the third annual review of Leeds Safeguarding Children Board. It has been an extremely busy and productive year and this report details the progress which has been made against the objectives of the second year of the three year Business Plan. This includes completing three Serious Case Reviews, developing further its Performance Management Framework, amending and updating policies and procedures in light of changing legislation and government guidance, progressing anti bullying and e-safety strategies, reviewing and delivering high quality multi-agency training and providing a conference for Third Sector organisations.

All of this has taken place against a background of increased public and media interest in safeguarding and child protection as a result of the death of Baby P. The Laming Review (published in March 2009) made 58 recommendations all of which were accepted by the Government and these are being addressed via "The Protection of Children in England: Action Plan." The Board is committed to reviewing its plans, objectives and governance arrangements in light of changing statutory guidance which will result from this.

During the coming year the performance of Leeds Safeguarding Children Board will be measured via both announced and unannounced inspections of children's services and the Board will use research being undertaken by Loughborough University to assist it in developing its effectiveness, including to what extent it is having a positive impact on outcomes for children. An event in April 2009 which involved Board members talking to young people was helpful in understanding safeguarding issues which are important to them and these will be used to influence the Board's work.

The effective functioning of the Board and Sub Groups would not have been possible without the dedication and continued commitment of both statutory and non-statutory partners and high quality business support. Despite the increasing challenges of the coming year I remain confident that the Board will respond well to required changes and will offer appropriate challenge to ensure the effectiveness and co-ordination of services in Leeds.

Judith Dodd
Independent Chair

2.0 REVIEW OF 2008/09 AND PLANNING FOR 2009/10

2.1 Co-ordination of activity to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

2.1.1 Strategies, Policies and Procedures

In conjunction with the other local safeguarding children boards in West Yorkshire, interagency safeguarding procedures continue to be updated on a six monthly basis. Additions this year have included procedures on children and young people who are at risk of 'forced marriage,' being 'trafficked' and sexual exploitation.

The Policy and Procedures sub group receives and comments on a range of procedures from partner agencies, ensuring that a multi agency perspective is included e.g. those relating to 'children missing education.'

Procedures for undertaking serious case reviews have been amended and revised on a case by case basis in the light of the developing expectations of Ofsted and ministerial guidance. Local Safeguarding Children Boards in West Yorkshire will undertake a comprehensive revision of procedures in 2009/10 in the light of the re write of chapter 8 of Working Together 2006 which has resulted from the Government's response (May 2009) to the Laming Review (March 2009)

Guidance for the application of interagency thresholds has been progressed through the uploading of a 'Levels of Need' document on the Children Leeds website. Work continues to develop a complementary document delineating the services that partner agencies deliver to children and young people in response to the levels of need identified.

Preparations for the introduction of 'Contact Point' in the autumn of 2009 have included the agreement of a policy and procedure for 'shielding' details of children and young people who may be vulnerable from inclusion in the data base.

Leeds has continued to progress its Anti-bullying Strategy through awareness raising and the recruitment of anti-bullying ambassadors in thirteen secondary schools. Consultation with children and young people has taken place to inform the updating of the strategy for 2009-14. The national 'Tell Us' survey suggested that whilst slightly less children and young people in Leeds experience bullying than the national average, slightly more are persistently bullied.

2.1.2 Protection of Children and Young People

The Board has continued to promote the development of interagency arrangements to protect children and young people who are suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm.

In conjunction with the National Children's Bureau work has progressed to improve interagency working between Adult and Children's Services for children and young people living in the context of parental substance misuse and / or mental health problems. Extensive consultation with professionals, parents / carers and young people has informed the development of draft joint protocols which will be piloted in 2009/10 with a view to a city wide rollout in 2010/11.

Arrangements have been planned to enable the comprehensive monitoring of police notifications of domestic abuse with a pilot undertaken by Children and Young People's Social Care to run from June 2009.

The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board E Safety Task group has progressed the development of an E Safety Strategy for Leeds based on the principles of prevention, protection, enforcement and support. Consideration has been given to proposals for logging and monitoring internet use through Leeds City Council computers and the Leeds Learning Network E Safety guide has been disseminated to all schools.

2.1.3 Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups

West Yorkshire Police has led the consultation and development of regional procedures for responding to children who become 'missing from home or care.' These will be implemented in 2009/10. The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board 'Missing' task group has progressed the development of multi agency training and it is planned to include a regular event in the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Training Calendar from 2010. It is acknowledged that 'return to home' interviews need to link into the development of the common assessment framework within Leeds.

The inclusion of 'children and young people who run away from home or care' as a national performance indicator (NI71) for Local Authorities in 2009/10 will provide a further focus on this issue, requiring quarterly assessment of arrangements to collate and analyse information and the development of protocols and prevention strategies.

Acknowledging the particular vulnerability of children and young people who are in the criminal justice system, the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board has set up a task group to consider their safeguarding needs. Safeguarding strategies, procedures and staff training in the Secure Children's Centre and the Young Offender Institution in Leeds are being reviewed and it is planned to monitor injuries resulting from the use of restraint. 2009/10 will see analysis of the needs of children and young people who are involved in criminal activity, including a small number who are viewed as being 'prolific offenders.'

2.1.4 Training

In 2008/09 the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Training and Development sub group training pool ran 74 courses within the interagency safeguarding training calendar involving the attendance of 1265 professionals from across partner agencies. Participant evaluations indicate that the training delivered continues to be of a high standard and well received. The provision of a dedicated training budget has enabled improved consistency in the quality of training venues.

The increasing demand from partner agencies for safeguarding training is welcomed, indicating as it does that the 'duty to safeguard' is being assimilated and embedded. However, a careful review of the content and scope of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Training Calendar and its relationship to training provided on a single agency basis will be required in order to ensure that sufficient capacity is identified across the partnership.

Identified specific learning needs have been responded to through bespoke events such as training for managers undertaking individual management reviews as part of a serious case

review. These have also provided multi agency input into the development of processes and procedures for undertaking reviews.

Disseminating the lessons from serious case reviews is viewed as a key role for the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board and the courses within the Training Calendar are updated as required. Briefings of the outcomes from local serious case reviews are to be provided to all trainers so that all opportunities for learning are maximised. The Area Safeguarding Children Groups are collectively taking a lead in holding city wide multi agency workshops to review the issues raised by reviews and the recommendations made to improve practice in the future.

2.1.5 Recruitment

Self assessment audits by partner agencies has maintained the profile of the need for safe recruitment practices and National College for School Leadership accredited courses continue to be included in the LEEDS SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD training calendar. Briefings about the implications of the establishment of the Independent safeguarding authority have been provided to managers in partner agencies. In 2009/10 the LEEDS SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD performance Management sub group will require partner agencies to put in place robust quality assurance systems for the safer recruitment of staff, including compliance with Criminal Record Bureau checks.

2.1.6 Allegations Concerning Staff

The Local Authority Designated Officer continues to receive and collate information about allegations made against staff. The annual report indicates that data for Leeds is comparable to other Local Authorities, both regionally and nationally. In 2009/10 the data will be presented to the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Performance Management sub group on a quarterly basis and comparisons will be with previous years and information from other areas.

2.1.7 Children and Young People who are Privately Fostered

Despite considerable progress by Children and Young People's Social Care in 2007/08 to implement measures to strengthen the notification, assessment and support of private fostering arrangements an Ofsted inspection in July 2008 judged these to be 'inadequate.' The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board has received reports on the response to this finding and the Performance Management sub group has monitored an improvement plan that indicates progress against all of the actions required and envisages overall completion of the plan by September 2009.

2.1.8 Interagency Safeguarding Processes

The planned restructure of the Children and Young People's Social Care Child Protection Section will be implemented in August 2009 facilitating increased flexibility and consistency in child protection conference arrangements.

Regular 'child abuse investigation' meetings are being re established between Children and Young People's Social Care, Health, Police and the Local Authority Legal Department to consider issues that have arisen and agree improvements to inter agency processes.

Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes continue to be rolled out across the city with approximately 1500 professionals having been trained and 1100 assessments now on the system. Further expansion is planned for 2009/10 to establish CAF as a key process facilitating interagency responses to the needs of children and young people in Leeds.

2.1.9 Planning and Commissioning of Services

The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board has been involved fully in the development of the new Children and Young People's Plan (2009 - 14) ensuring that 'safeguarding' provides a strong spine to the framework of strategy, policy and service planning for the coming period.

The importance of safeguarding in commissioning processes is well understood, with input being provided to the Vulnerable Groups Commissioning Partnership. Work initiated with Leeds City Council Procurement Department to consider the broad range of council commissioned services will be progressed in 2009/10.

2.1.10 Licensing Act 2003 & Gambling Act 2006

The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board support team continues to receive all licence applications and liaises with the Licensing authorities when safeguarding concerns are raised about children and young people. It is planned to strengthen links with Safer Leeds in 2009/10 to facilitate a more active engagement around these and other community safety issues.

2.1.11 Raising Awareness of the Need to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children and Young People

Engaging with the public about safeguarding issues and how it can contribute to keeping children and young people safe has been identified as an important role for the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board. The recruitment of more staff to the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Support Team will, in collaboration with the Director of Children's Services Unit, enable a more proactive approach to be generated in 2009/10. Leeds participated in the regional development of publicity materials to raise public awareness in preparation for Child Safety Week in June 2009.

Audits of partner agencies have identified the need for more consistent provision of information for children, young people and adults about who to contact if they have concerns about their own or others' safety and welfare. Follow up audits in 2009/10 will indicate the extent to which improvements in this area have been made.

The Third Sector sub group has promoted awareness of safeguarding issues across voluntary, community and faith based agencies through the development of a communication strategy (in conjunction with Leeds VOICE) involving workshops and a city wide conference.

Area Safeguarding Children Groups in the five wedges continue to provide the key link between the activities of the Board and practitioners and managers across the city. They are responsible for organising wedge based Interagency Support Groups to disseminate safeguarding messages, consider the implications for practice and promote networking.

2.1.12 Responding to Unexpected Child Deaths

The NHS Leeds 'rapid response' service has established and operated the process required to respond to unexpected child deaths and to provide regular reports for consideration by the Coroner and the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Child Death Overview Panel. This is facilitating a better understanding of the factors involved in such tragic circumstances for the families involved and in reviewing services provided both before and following the deaths.

The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Support Team in liaison with the Director of Children's Services Unit is reviewing the effectiveness of information gathering processes when a child or young person dies in circumstances which attract media attention. In 2009/10 an improved framework will facilitate a more coordinated and proactive multi agency and partnership response to media requests for information about individual children and young people and the services provided for them.

2.2 Ensuring the Effectiveness of Work in Leeds to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children and Young People

2.2.1 Partner Agency Compliance with Statutory Safeguarding Requirements

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and section 157 of the Education Act 2002 laid out clear duties and responsibilities on all agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Performance Management sub group completed a self assessment audit of partner agencies represented on the Board which identified a number of common areas for improvement and priorities for action. A follow up audit has been initiated which will report on progress in 2009/10.

The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Third Sector sub group has concentrated on supporting voluntary, community and faith based agencies to meet this 'duty to safeguard' continuing to provide workshop support for agencies in preparation for undertaking the audit. The appointment of a full time safeguarding officer to the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Support Team in 2009/10 will enable increased individual support to be provided to agencies and for compliance within the sector to be improved incrementally.

2.2.2 Serious Case Reviews

The establishment of a standing Serious Case Review Panel meeting on a monthly basis has facilitated robust and consistent consideration of all serious childcare incidents. Recommendations are made as to whether the criteria is met to undertake reviews (as set out in chapter 8 Working Together 2006) with the decision being made by the Independent chair of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board.

In 2008/09 four serious case reviews were initiated and three were completed. The complexity of the cases reviewed and the need to ensure high quality assessments and independent oversight has resulted in difficulties meeting the timescales set out for completion in Working Together 2006. Nevertheless, extensions for completion have been sought and agreed with Government Office Yorkshire & Humberside, and these completed within the agreed extensions.

The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Performance Management sub group monitors progress against the action plans for serious case reviews and partner agencies are required to provide evidence of completion.

2.2.3 Child Death Overview Panel

Systems have been in place since April 2008 to collect the required data from partner agencies relating to the deaths of all Leeds children and young people. This is a complex process requiring the collation of (anonimised) information from a wide range of agencies whilst working within statutory processes such as the Coronial system. In 2008/09 the Child Death Overview Panel began to meet to consider summary reports relating to each child death, to identify key issues and to categorise the deaths according to the criteria of 'preventability'. The panel's first annual report, which will draw out public health and social trends, is due to be produced in January 2010.

2.2.4 Effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in Leeds – the performance of single and interagency activity.

The Local Authority was judged to be 'adequate' with regard to 'Staying Safe' in its Annual Performance Assessment in December 2008. Major strengths identified included the effectiveness of the adoption service and improvements in the timeliness of initial and core assessments. Areas requiring improvement included the fostering service (judged 'inadequate'), the quality of children's homes and the timeliness of reviews for children and young people who are 'looked after.'

A prerequisite for effective safeguarding is cross agency compliance with statutory arrangements as set out in the Children Act 2004 and the Education Act 2002. The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board has established that there is a high level of compliance in partner agencies represented on the Board whilst identifying that improvements were commonly required in recruitment practices, involvement in Common Assessments, the establishment of robust information systems to monitor practice and the routine auditing of files.

Compliance in the Third Sector is more uneven with the smaller, local agencies typically requiring support to identify their safeguarding responsibilities and to ensure that plans are put in place to meet them. A common area for improvement is the need to update single agency child protection policies and procedures.

The processes in place for identifying the areas for improvement highlighted through the examination of individual cases have identified a number of lessons learnt and generated action plans to implement required changes to practice. Key themes that reflect on the effectiveness of interagency safeguarding activity include communication between agencies, collaboration between agencies and responding to children and young people living in the context of parental substance misuse / mental health / domestic abuse problems.

During 2008/09 the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Performance Management sub group has received a variety of performance information from across partner agencies, in the form of statistics, reviews inspections and SCR action plans. This has enabled an initial population of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Performance Management Framework and initiated consideration of safeguarding performance across the partnership. Key indicators are (i) the number of children and young people subject to child protection plans which is in line with comparator authorities and (ii) the number of children and young people who are 'looked after', which remains approximately 25% higher than comparator authorities.

Collation of a more comprehensive data set and inclusion of the proposed national safeguarding indicators in the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Performance Management framework will be a priority in 2009/10 and will facilitate the production of a report on the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in Leeds for the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Annual Review in July 2010.

2.3 Development of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board

2.3.1 Governance Arrangements within the Children's Trust Arrangements

The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board has established itself as an independent component of the Children's Trust Arrangements. Its constitution, structure and membership will be revised in 2009/10 in the light of the awaited re write of guidance in Working Together 2006.

2.3.2 Participation of Children, Young People, Parents and Carers

Whilst the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board has access to the outcome of participation programmes undertaken by Children Leeds, the Board has taken the view that it would benefit as a result of establishing its own process. An initial event involving board members and a group of young people aged 13 to 18 enabled discussion about how the concept 'safeguarding' is understood by them and how the Board should prioritise its activities. It is intended to establish such events on a regular basis in 2009/10.

2.3.3 Effectiveness of the LEEDS SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

Chapter 3 of Working Together 2006 sets out the two overriding objectives for Local Safeguarding Children Boards: to coordinate work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people, and to ensure the effectiveness of that work. The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board, through its business plan 2007 – 2010 has set out a programme of work designed to make progress across all the functions expected of it (Working Together 2006 3.17 – 3.45). The broad agenda which is 'safeguarding' places widespread duties and responsibilities on the Board, covering universal, targeted and protective services as well as those relating to community safety issues. In line with guidance in Working Together 2006 and in response to increasing public scrutiny, the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board continues to prioritise its core activity of ensuring the coordination and effectiveness of protective work. In particular, reviewing child deaths and undertaking serious case reviews has comprised the bulk of the Support Team's work in 2008/09.

In January 2009 the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board undertook a 'stocktake' of its role and activities. This identified that considerable progress had been made in the coordination of interagency safeguarding activity but that more needs to be done in ensuring the effectiveness of that work through the development of comprehensive performance management processes which can inform analysis and generate improvement plans.

The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board has approved a 'Performance Improvement Process' to drive action plans that have resulted from persistent performance shortfalls and three key monitoring tasks have been identified: implementation of action plans emanating from reviews, compliance with statutory requirements and interagency performance indicators. Restructuring of the Performance Management sub group along with increased

support from the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Support team will facilitate progress to a more comprehensive and informative approach in 2009/10.

Whilst responding to a fast changing national agenda on 'safeguarding' the Board must ensure that it retains and develops links with staff throughout partner agencies. Area Safeguarding Children Groups provide a crucial multi agency link between the Board and practitioners / first line managers across the city and will require increased support to ensure their effectiveness in 2009/10.

2.3.4 Resourcing the Work of the Board and the LEEDS SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD Support Team

The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board is essentially reliant on work being undertaken on its behalf by staff from all partner agencies. The input from those who chair and are members of sub, task and area groups is crucial to the operation of the Board and, given the level of commitment required, is worthy of mention. The increasing demands of servicing serious case review processes within tight timescales has placed a growing burden on partner agencies to provide individual management reviews and participate in standing and overview panels.

As in the previous year, the Board responded to increasing expectations on Local Safeguarding Children Boards by reviewing the capacity of the Support Team and identifying the need for more staff to support undertaking serious case reviews, performance management, the Third Sector and community safety work. Accordingly a budget uplift to £388,000 was agreed for 2009/10 (see appendix). As in 2008/09 this increase was largely borne by Children's Services and Health.

2.3.5 LEEDS SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD Business Plan 2007 – 10

This annual review is supported by the second year of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Business Plan 2007 – 10 (see appendix). All Leeds Safeguarding Children Board groups consider and report against their sections of the plan on a quarterly basis, with the full plan being reviewed by the Board / Executive group.

Bryan Gocke, Leeds Safeguarding Children Board Manager