

Committee(s):	Dated:
Safeguarding Sub Committee Community and Children Services	06/02/2018 09/02/2018
Subject: Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report	Public
Report of: Jim Gamble, Independent Chair of The City & Hackney Safeguarding Board	For Information
Report author: Rory McCullum, Senior Professional Advisor	

Summary

The City & Hackney Safeguarding Board (CHSCB) annual report for 2016/17 is a transparent assessment on the effectiveness of safeguarding and the promotion of child welfare across the City of London and the London Borough of Hackney.

- The report describes the **governance and accountability** arrangements for the CHSCB, outlining the structures in place that support the CHSCB to do its work effectively.
- It sets the **context for safeguarding children and young people** in the City of London, highlighting the **progress made by the City partnership** and the challenges going forward.
- It sets out the lessons that the CHSCB has identified through its **Learning & Improvement Framework** and the actions taken to improve child safeguarding.
- The report also describes the range and impact of the **multi-agency safeguarding training** delivered by the CHSCB and a brief account of the single agency training delivered by partners.
- It sets out the **priorities going forward** and the **key messages** from the Independent Chair of the CHSCB to key people involved in the safeguarding of children and young people.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report and the conclusions set out in this cover report.

Main Report

Background

The publication of an annual report by the CHSCB is a requirement set out in the statutory guidance Working Together 2015.

Its purpose is to provide a transparent account of the strength and weaknesses of local child safeguarding practice – as determined by the Independent Chair and the Board itself.

Current Position

The report sets the context for child safeguarding activity over 2016/17. During this time period both the City of London Corporation and the CHSCB were subject to external scrutiny by Ofsted.

The City of London Corporation was judged to be Good overall, with Outstanding leadership and management. The CHSCB was the first local safeguarding children board in the country to receive an Outstanding grading.

‘This is an outstanding LSCB. It is a dual board covering both the City of London and Hackney. The board demonstrates an unwavering determination to safeguard children, with a firm commitment to sustaining and improving partnerships.’ Ofsted 2016

The report reflects many of the strengths identified through this inspection process and can be read in full here. (*hyperlink to be circulated separately once report formatted*)

Conclusion

In terms of past performance, the City of London Corporation has a strong and positive story to tell – as reflected in previous CHSCB annual reports.

The UK as a whole has one of the most sophisticated safeguarding systems in the world and whilst there will always be lessons to learn and practice to improve, it is important to reflect the enormous efforts made by front-line staff from a variety of different agencies. Staff who come to work every day with the intention of helping people and making them safer.

It is also important to reflect the inherent risks that are evident in the national system right now.

- Workload – CP investigations up 60% over 10 years
- £2 billion funding gap by 2020
- 5 million children in poverty by 2020
- Austerity – More in need & fewer getting help
- Mental health and emotional resilience for children and YP
- Threats of exploitation and abuse
- Organisational Change

In addition to the above, the Children & Social Work Act 2017 has led the way for the abolition of LSCBs and revised statutory guidance – Working Together 2018. This is seen by both the Independent Chair and the Senior Professional Advisor to the CHSCB as one of the most significant risks facing safeguarding partners given its permissive approach.

Experience in this field would evidence that such an approach will not work. Lord Laming was not wrong. Multi-agency working does not happen by itself or even via the good will of dedicated staff. Multi-agency work needs to be harnessed and driven and must at its heart be open to independent and continuous challenged to do better.

A framework that encourages constructive ambiguity won't help us improve. Left to their own devices and steered by a 'permissive' framework (if any framework at all), partners will delegate responsibility, but not authority. We will be left with no guarantee that important issues will be identified and addressed at the right strategic level or with the appropriate expertise or experience set.

Building on what has worked well, strengthening the independent insight and challenge provided by boards as well as enhancing their relationship with and between Inspectorates would have had a far greater positive impact. A framework is necessary to ensure compliance with the basics and it is the basics that often go wrong.

If the answer to this criticism and concern is that a new arrangement will deliver the same singular child centric focus in a new and similar format - why change? Why introduce a dangerous level of ambiguity and the potential for post code confusion in future safeguarding arrangements? – particularly in the context of the demands set out above.

Given the permissive nature of the new approach, many LSCBs will change in name only and whilst the CHSCB will always continue to seek ways to improve and enhance our partnerships to deliver better outcomes for children; all partners have agreed locally to retain our current systems and approach (*notwithstanding those areas where statute will drive explicit and non-negotiable change* (i.e. SCRs and CDOP))

After years of experience we have learnt that to be effective, safeguarding must be everyone's business. That statement is not and never should be treated as mere rhetoric.

Appendices

None

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