

London Safeguarding Children Board: Highlights 2010/11

The past year has seen a huge amount of change for everyone working with children and young people, with wide ranging reforms to key universal services such as schools and the NHS, large scale reviews of family justice, early intervention and the wider child protection system, and reductions in the budgets of all agencies. With this in mind, and with the loss of other regional bodies such as Government Office for London, the London Board's unique role feels increasingly important to support the development of robust local safeguarding partnerships and provide strong strategic leadership across London.

As you will see from the wide array of work highlighted in this report, we have achieved a great deal over the past 12 months to help support local efforts to develop strong safeguarding practice, influence national developments and collate, develop and disseminate best practice across the region and more widely into the rest of the UK. For this, we are fortunate to be able to draw on the commitment and enthusiasm of our range of practitioner networks and sub-groups, which have been particularly proactive in identifying and responding to common issues. Much of the work described overleaf has either originated from, or been led by, these dedicated groups of practitioners. We have also enjoyed steadfast support from the senior membership of the Board itself, whose work to ensure that safeguarding remains high on the agenda of their respective organisations has been invaluable as structures and priorities continue to evolve.

The appointment of our team of regional safeguarding advisers has added a further dimension to the Board's work, giving us a unique opportunity to respond to safeguarding issues in real time and provide expert professional experience to both local and regional concerns as they arise. London boroughs have long been at the forefront of innovative child protection work in the UK, and this project is proving to be an excellent opportunity for London to consider its current practice in more detail, learn lessons from neighbouring authorities and build stronger links with partner agencies.

This partnership work will be ever more important in the year to come, when it will be vital for partners to continue to support each other, to share their experience and good practice, and to work together to meet the challenges that lie ahead. With all agencies working together through the Board, I am confident that London will remain at the forefront of the very best practice in safeguarding children.



Cheryl Coppel
Chair, London Safeguarding Children Board



Supporting the development of strong local safeguarding practice and partnerships

Throughout 2010/11, the London Board has continued to support the effectiveness of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) through a range of regular network meetings and online forums for groups such as LSCB chairs, managers and trainers, local authority child protection managers, serious case review authors and designated child protection professionals in health and mental health settings, providing a space to share best practice, discuss common issues and consider shared approaches.

The Board has also produced tools and research to help inform local multi-agency practice and decision-making and supported other bodies to meet their statutory requirements. Some specific examples include:

Resources to support local training programmes

Competence Still Matters training framework

In early 2011, a working group of the London Board's training sub-group produced a revised version of Competence Matters, the London Board's multi-agency training framework, updated in line with the 2010 reissue of Working Together to Safeguard Children. The framework has been designed to assist all employers, voluntary organisations and LSCBs to meet the minimum requirements for the provision of safeguarding children training, enabling professionals, volunteers, agencies, organisations and services to acquire the skills and knowledge to work effectively within existing guidance and procedures for safeguarding children. The revised version, Competence Still Matters promotes consistency across the London boroughs for the delivery of single and multi-agency training whilst allowing for the degree of flexibility required to meet locally identified needs.

LSCB induction training pack

In June 2010, the London Board training sub-group produced a training induction pack for LSCBs to adapt for use locally. This is designed for experienced trainers to deliver to those workers or volunteers within any organisation who are in contact/work with children and young people and adults who are parents or carers.

Safeguarding training for the 2012 Games

Members of the London Board's Safe Games for Children training sub-group, made up of four London LSCB training co-ordinators and

volunteers from the Met Police, NSPCC, the Red Cross and Children and Families Across Borders (formerly International Social Services UK) have now developed a range of training packages for volunteers during the Olympics, to be rolled out through City Operations and the London Ambassadors Volunteers Programme. All the materials developed through this work will be made available for boroughs to use when training their own volunteers locally, and will be disseminated through the London LSCBs.

Supporting strong quality assurance arrangements

Developing a stronger outcomes focus for LSCBs

Working with the Local Government Improvement and Development team (LGID), the London Board has produced new guidance to help LSCBs develop robust, outcomes-based quality assurance frameworks. The guidance is aimed at strategic partnerships and individual organisations with safeguarding children responsibilities, designed to help those with leadership, senior management or scrutiny responsibility to gain a better understanding of how safe children are in their services and communities. The elements and principles of the framework can also be applied throughout all levels of all organisations that make a contribution to the safeguarding of children (including frontline practice) so that each level of the organisation can self-assess whether it is being effective in keeping children safe.

Strengthening the LSCB's quality assurance role

The London Board also ran two development days for LSCB chairs and development officers in November 2010. These looked at how to develop effective quality frameworks for LSCBs, taking into consideration the use of outcomes-based approaches to support the impact that LSCBs have on safeguarding outcomes locally. Eight areas in London are now piloting the framework in relation to specific safeguarding outcomes.

Supporting robust data collection

The pilot phase of the London safeguarding dataset project has been completed, with an amended dataset agreed by the 10 pilot LSCBs. This has now been incorporated into an online database, which is administered by the London Board and was rolled out to all London LSCBs on 31 January 2011 to begin uploading and benchmarking data year-on-year. Hosting is commissioned externally until December 2011, and the London Board will evaluate the project and consider next steps in the autumn.

Strengthening local safeguarding partnerships

Supporting the recruitment of lay members

In response to the new statutory duty for LSCBs to appoint two lay members, the London Board has developed a set of resources to support local recruitment. This includes a sample job description, person specification and confidentiality agreement, and will be supported by a series of induction sessions once LSCBs appoint lay members into post.

Improving decision-making processes in child safeguarding

This series of free one-day courses explored professional practice between social work professionals and the lawyers that represent

them, with a focus on the court environment. The course, funded by Capital Ambition, was aimed at all professionals working to safeguard children, particularly local authority solicitors, family court legal advisers, service/team managers and members of the judiciary. Lively and interactive workshop sessions helped develop a common understanding of decision-making processes, with space given for critical exploration of practice to make the best possible assessment and analysis in the interest of children and their families. Nine sessions were held for over 350 professionals from 30 boroughs, health organisations and bodies such as NHS London, the London Fire Brigade and the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), and the Board is currently considering how best to build on this work in the absence of further funding.

Safeguarding and the role of the voluntary and community sector in the Big Society

This was the second in a series of regional events reviewing the engagement of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) within safeguarding, supported by a regional planning group of the London Board, NSPCC and Children England. The event was chaired by Cheryl Coppell (London SCB Chair), with presentations from Maggie Jones (Chief Executive of Children England) and Jonathan Bacon (Munro Review of Child Protection), and attendees were a broad mix of statutory and third sector representatives. The roundtable focussed on four interactive workshop sessions, addressing serious case reviews, the role of volunteering in the Big Society, early intervention and commissioning, and the utility of a Think Family approach to safeguarding. A full report from the session is now available to download online at www.londonscb.gov.uk, and a copy was sent to the Munro Review team to help inform national thinking.



Developing new guidance and sharing best practice

Updated child protection procedures

The Board has published a full update of the London Child Protection Procedures, bringing them in line with the latest national guidance and legislation prior to any further changes arising from the Munro Review of Child Protection. This is supported by a number of documents to help with local roll out, including a summary of key changes and a training presentation for LSCBs.

Building good practice in reviews of serious cases

The London Serious Case Review (SCR) Toolkit is designed to provide supplementary guidance to LSCB members in the whole process of undertaking a SCR. Its focus is to support the carrying out of a SCR effectively, through supporting consistency in approach, providing additional guidance on undertaking the process and sharing learning and emerging good practice tools and exemplars. The overall aim is to maximise the learning that comes from the SCR in a local area.

The Board has also compiled a list of serious case review panel chairs and overview report writers to assist local authorities commissioning reviews locally, with contact details for each person's most recent commission to help LSCBs make an informed decision.

Pan-London safeguarding children culture and faith project 2010-11

This is an action-research project which aims to promote a step-change in safeguarding London's children living in minority ethnic, culture or faith communities or groups. The project will run for 18 months to December 2011, and comprises three parts:

1) The London boroughs of Barnet, Bexley, Brent, Enfield, Hackney, Merton, Newham and Tower Hamlets are currently piloting projects designed to promote statutory and voluntary agency

safeguarding children partnership working with local minority ethnic and faith communities and groups.

2) The 32 London LSCBs will run consultation focus groups for communities and professionals in their areas to gather views on how to improve safeguarding for London's children living in minority ethnic, culture or faith communities or groups.

3) The London borough of Bexley will interview all the London LSCBs to map activity and aspiration for partnership in safeguarding London's children living in minority ethnic, culture or faith communities or groups.

Project activity and findings will be published in a project report. The project outputs will include:

a) Guidance about the additional issues which a professional may need to think about and act on, in relation to children and families across different cultures and faiths, to accompany the London Child Protection Procedures.

b) Training which will help professionals to identify children across cultures and faiths who are in need of support or protection.

c) A local safeguarding children board model engagement strategy to assist minority ethnic communities and faith groups in protecting their children and working with statutory services to do so.

The Board is holding a joint conference with Trust for London in May to share initial findings from the Trust's Safeguarding Children's Rights Project, which aims to develop and/or strengthen community-based preventive work to ensure the safety, well-being and positive quality of life of African children living in London (with a particular focus on tackling faith-based abuse linked to a belief in spirit possession).





Keeping London at the forefront of national developments in safeguarding

The multi-agency London Safeguarding Children Board continues to meet quarterly to take a strategic lead on safeguarding across London, and monthly business meetings bring together senior leaders from the Met Police, NHS London and London Councils to ensure that local issues can be addressed at a senior level efficiently and effectively.

Piloting a new approach to learning lessons from practice

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) is working in collaboration with the London Safeguarding Children Board to pilot the SCIE Learning Together model for case reviews in seven London Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs). The pilots will provide valuable evidence about how we might provide better opportunities for staff from across agencies to come together and reflect critically on their practice, and learning from the project will be used to inform national considerations around possible alternatives to the current system of serious case reviews.

Safeguarding trafficked children toolkit

On Thursday 3 February 2011 at the CEOP Centre, the London Safeguarding Children Board launched a new guidance document and toolkit to help agencies identify and support children who have been trafficked. The guidelines were developed in close partnership with the national Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and a range of government and third sector agencies, and aim to support social workers, teachers, police, health workers and other professionals who may come into contact with suspected victims of trafficking.

This work brings together a wide range of tools and good practice into one document for the first time, and provides some excellent advice on joint working to tackle this complex issue. Having been piloted extensively in a number of local authority areas over the past 18 months, the London Board and ADCS have now agreed to make this work available

to local authority children's social care teams and LSCBs across the UK.

The Board is also working with a range of partners in drafting a bid for European funding to roll this work out more widely across the EU. Organisations currently interested in supporting the bid include Glasgow City Council, Southwark Council, Manchester City Council, Hillingdon Council, Counter Human Trafficking Bureau (CHTB), and the International Organisation for Migration [IOM]. Discussions are also underway with partners in Denmark and Italy.

Sharing good practice in tackling sexual exploitation

The London Safeguarding Children Board and Barnardo's held a free seminar on Friday 2 July to share learning from Croydon Eclipse, a three-year Home Office funded partnership project aiming to reduce child sexual exploitation in Croydon. Eclipse is a flagship for London in being the first joint partnership whereby the police and Barnardo's missing and sexual exploitation teams have been working under one roof. The partnership builds on the experience gained from the Blackpool 'Awaken' model and on the Derbyshire Police Sexual Exploitation Team, and has produced excellent outcomes for extremely vulnerable children and young people in the area.

Co-ordinating London's response to the Munro Review of Child Protection

In early June, Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove invited Professor Eileen Munro to conduct an independent review of children's social



work and frontline child protection practice. The Board submitted brief feedback to the initial call for evidence in July and, on Monday 11 October, hosted a consultation workshop for practitioners from a range of agencies across London to engage directly with Professor Munro on the review's initial report, consider possible improvements to the current system in line with the themes from the review and share local good practice. A range of afternoon workshops considered specific aspects of the review, with comments and suggestions fed back to government. Further consultation was held following publication of the review's second interim report, with members of the review team attending a range of the Board's networks and sub-groups to gather views.

Safeguarding London's Children Conference

The London Board's annual safeguarding London's children conference was held on Wednesday 8 December 2010 at the QEII conference centre. The morning plenary featured keynote presentations from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families Tim Loughton and National Clinical Director for Children at the Department of Health, updating delegates on national multi-agency developments in safeguarding children in light of ongoing government reviews. The afternoon offered delegates the opportunity for a more detailed discussion and debate on specific issues impacting on the future of safeguarding children services with individuals currently leading national and regional policy development. In between, seminars showcased local good practice in areas such as first response, peer review, third sector commissioning, think family and social work re-design.

All the presentations from the conference, including those from the wide range of workshops that took place on the day, are now available to download at www.londonscb.gov.uk/diary/2010_safeguarding_londons_children_conference

Ensuring strong child protection practice in the changing health economy

The Board has been working closely with NHS London to support the safeguarding teams' efforts to ensure that child protection arrangements remain robust in the new structures. A crib sheet has already been circulated to LSCB chairs with a list of suggested questions to ask of their health colleagues in relation to transforming community services.

The Board has also written to Tim Loughton and the Munro Review team to stress the importance of safeguarding as the new health economy continues to evolve, highlighting in particular the key role of health and wellbeing boards, the need for consistent public health representation on LSCBs and the importance of ensuring that new GP commissioning arrangements are developed with safeguarding children considerations firmly embedded. With this in mind, the Board will shortly begin work with Children England and NHS London to create an aide memoire for GP pathfinders on commissioning children and young people services.

Tackling delays in the court process

The Board is currently working with the courts service, local authorities and the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) on an ambitious project aimed at reducing delays in care proceedings. This is a highly complex area, which has a big impact on the children, young people and families involved. All agencies have been affected by a recent rise in care proceedings and, with no additional resources available, this project is considering how to alleviate some of the pressure by improving practice within local authorities, the judiciary, courts and Cafcass. The work is closely linked to the ongoing Family Justice Review, and the Ministry of Justice are monitoring developments closely as they look to reform the court system nationally.

Developing robust multi-agency information-sharing processes

The Board is supporting a multi-agency project which aims to develop better information-sharing arrangements between the range of agencies working with children and young people, with a particular focus on the quality of partnership work when child protection referrals are initially received. This work was inspired by the successful implementation of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in Exeter, which is being considered alongside a range of options as a possible model to be adapted for London. The project is backed by a range of senior partners, with high level involvement from London local authorities, the Metropolitan Police Service, GLA and London Probation Trust. Fourteen boroughs have now signed up as pilot sites, and are considering a range of options to tackle this issue locally.



Supporting local improvement through the London Regional Safeguarding Advisers

In April 2010, the London Safeguarding Children Board appointed three high level regional safeguarding advisers to help build capacity and resilience within the London child protection system. Each adviser has now spent a year working within a host borough (Barking and Dagenham, Kensington and Chelsea and Hillingdon) for one day a week on agreed safeguarding issues, as well as responding to commissions from local areas for specific pieces of work to support local service improvements. In addition, the advisers support some of the priorities of the London Safeguarding Children Board in developing partnership work across London to keep children and young people safe.

Areas of work undertaken to date in the host boroughs include:

- A review of the quality of safeguarding provided to disabled children.
- Work with the local referral and assessment service, including support with preparations for annual inspection, a range of auditing activity work with managers focusing on the quality and timeliness of assessment and safeguarding interventions.
- A project to improve partnership working between children's and adults' services, particularly in relation to parental mental health, through the 'Think Family' approach.
- Development of a revised auditing/quality assurance framework for children's social care services, introducing a stronger focus on outcomes for children and young people when reporting to the LSCB, senior management and elected members.

Each individual London borough has been allocated 10 days of adviser time free of charge, which can be used to consider an issue that is proving particularly tricky locally (i.e. an increase in children on child protection plans, or recommendations

from a recent inspection or serious case review), to analyse and assess an area considered to be good practice, or simply to audit existing child protection arrangements or contribute to thinking about service redesign. Outside of these 10 days, the advisers are also available to be commissioned at a significantly reduced rate. A number of boroughs have already taken advantage of this offer, and work completed to date has successfully unravelled some particularly complex issues and identified some strong learning with relevance across London on issues such as:

- Reducing the number of resource intensive child protection plans through the judicious use of child in need plans.
- Best practice in safely integrating previously separate service areas.
- Developing improved multi-agency investigation, assessment and child protection planning with a view to improving the experience of children and families and the effectiveness of all agencies in keeping children safe.
- Developing improved local quality assurance approaches, including the use of the London Board audit tools.
- Considering the learning emerging from new approaches to child protection practice and child protection conferences emerging around the country, and sharing developing learning and resources between a number of London boroughs who are interested in or starting to use the approach.

More details on the work of the advisers, including detailed case studies of their work to date, are available at www.londonscb.gov.uk/london_regional_safeguarding_advisers