

London Regional Safeguarding Advisers

Brochure February 2011

London
safeguarding
children board

www.londonscb.gov.uk

Background

Three London Regional Safeguarding Adviser (LRSA) posts were appointed to in April 2010 to offer additional capacity to support improvements in arrangements to safeguard children in London.

Since then, the advisers have been working within a host borough 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 improvements and service developments. In addition, the advisers support some of the priorities of the London Safeguarding Children Board in developing how partners work together across London to keep children and young people safe.

The advisers are experienced in working in a range of safeguarding settings and benefit from having built up good intelligence about safeguarding practice across London. They have knowledge about service developments and innovative practice in individual boroughs, good contacts across local authorities and partner arrangements and close contact with

the London Safeguarding Children Board and its networks of safeguarding professionals from across London.

The advisers will undertake planned work with local areas in response to commissions, as well as prioritise safeguarding support where there may be a more urgent need. Advisers can be commissioned to provide a block of support or to provide support over time, e.g. one day a week over the medium/ longer term.

A template is available on the London Board's website for local areas to complete and request support from an adviser, or contact us direct if you'd like to discuss a possible support request.

The advisers



Vivien Lines is a qualified social worker with significant experience in a range of operational and strategic roles in local authority children's services, including responsibility for partnerships, performance, strategy and commissioning in social care. She has developed and implemented

large scale programmes at a national, regional and local level in areas including prevention, family support, safeguarding and children in care. Vivien came to the LRSA role having spent four years working in central and regional government and with a range of local authorities subject to statutory intervention for safeguarding. Vivien's particular interest lies in engaging organisations in diagnostic and improvement activity in safeguarding and social care, and supporting improvement through the development of good performance management and quality assurance arrangements which are focused on improving outcomes for children and families.



Kathy Bundred has had a long career in social work and children's services including senior management posts in local and central government and a period as an inspector with the Social Services Inspectorate. Prior to joining London Councils, Kathy was an interim manager

working as an assistant director in children's services in London

and the south east and, most recently, as a safeguarding adviser in the Government Office for London. Kathy's main interests are in ensuring safe and effective child protection social work, and in developing management skills in children's social care.



Kay Bell has 25 years' experience since qualifying as a social worker, in practitioner, operational and senior management roles spanning local authority adults and children's social care, voluntary sector, HMI inspection, regional and national government. Kay came to the LRSA role following a regional government lead role for safeguarding and children's social care. This included direct work with local authority children's services where performance was judged inadequate by external inspection, and engaging in improvement programmes that have led to significant progress. Kay's particular interests include solution and outcome focused activities and engaging partners to ensure improved collaboration and working together.

Details of LRSA support offer

Examples of specific commissions include:

1. Specific service reviews/peer reviews and improvement planning

Example time allocation: 3-5 days including preparation, on-site activity and write up.

Detail: An adviser could be commissioned to undertake a review of a specific service area to inform a local view about safeguarding arrangements and service design. The reviews can precede an expected inspection or provide follow up by testing out improvements recently put in place. Reviews provide a good opportunity to promote local thinking about strengths and weaknesses and to share thinking from across London. They can enable an area to check out its current service arrangements and provide an independent evidence base to inform further improvements.

Focus of service reviews could include:

- The effectiveness of referral and assessment services
- Safeguarding looked after children
- Reviews of fostering and adoption services against National Minimum Standards
- Disabled children's services.

Methodology can be designed to meet local need, but could include review of key documents and data, observations of business processes, interviews and focus groups, and case reviews.

2. Service redesign

Example time allocation: 5-10 days

Detail: An adviser can support a review and redesign of a specific service area in accordance with specific local requirements and ensure that safeguarding is fully considered in any proposed service changes. The local aspiration may be to improve specific outcomes, enhance integrated arrangements or to support effective targeting of resources on children in need of safeguarding alongside a wider preventative strategy.

Advisers have been commissioned to:

- Undertake analysis of child protection data to support local discussions about how to best meet need and demand
- Review arrangements for services to disabled children to ensure the principles of Aiming High for Disabled Children are met and services are fully integrated at the same time as disabled children who may be suffering harm being effectively identified and safeguarded
- Options appraisal for improving integrated services for particular targeted vulnerable children
- Support the redesign of contact, referral and assessment arrangements.

3. Development activity

Example time allocation: 1 day + preparation

Detail: Advisers can support local development activity with relevant stakeholders in relation to specific safeguarding issues or to facilitate engagement on specific issues.

Advisers have been commissioned to support:

- LSCB development days to review and agree priorities for the LSCB
- Development work with Children's Trust Boards on specific performance areas or priorities
- Development work with specific groups of staff to develop skills and knowledge around core safeguarding functions, e.g. third tier managers or child protection conference chairs.

4. Interim management and mentoring

Example time allocation: by negotiation

Detail: Advisers all have experience of operational and strategic management in local authority children's services to second tier. They can provide short-term interim management in children's social care either to bring additional management capacity to a specific safeguarding issue for a time limited period or to fill a vacancy on an interim basis. In addition, advisers can provide mentoring to safeguarding managers.

Advisers have been commissioned to:

- Provide back-fill as an interim assistant director to enable the permanent assistant director to concentrate on a short-term project such as service review or redesign, or urgent improvement activity
- Support an assistant director or third tier manager newly appointed in post.

5. Support with specific safeguarding projects

Example time allocation: 5-10 days

Detail: Advisers could be commissioned to add some capacity to a local safeguarding project or practice development. This could include leading the initial scoping and options appraisal, discussions with partners and the development of a local implementation plan. Examples include:

- Supporting multi-agency engagement on a specific project or policy development with a safeguarding impact such as 'Think Family'
- Reviewing local approaches and developing options appraisals in specific service areas including benchmarking with other London boroughs
- Developing new approaches in specific service areas, e.g. information sharing or integrated services in specific areas such as disabled children's services.

Case studies

Examples of work undertaken in the first year of the project include:

Borough 1 has historically high numbers of children on child protection plans and numbers continued to rise in recent years. They are a self aware authority with good quality data and a well established audit framework involving all managers up to and including the director of children and families.

Two LRSAs undertook an audit of recent child protection cases and interviewed a sample of managers and child protection chairs. Data comparisons were made with two other similar London boroughs. A number of recommendations were made which should enable the borough to halt the rise in child protection plans. For example; identification of families who can be worked with using child in need plans rather than child protection plans, as it is less stigmatising for families and less resource intensive for children's services and other agencies, but equally positive in respect of outcomes for children.

Borough 2's Children and Young People's Plan sets out the need to further improve services for children and young people with learning disabilities and special needs. The Disabled Children's Service had previously been managed in the Education Division and had earlier in the year been transferred to Social Care. There was a pressing need to integrate provision across the CT Partnership to improve support to disabled children and their families, as well as to identify any potential efficiencies through this process. The LRSA were commissioned to undertake a diagnostic of current provision, gather evidence of good joint working and delivery arrangements, identify overlaps or gaps leading to a final report that would recommend a number of strategic options to be considered for improvements that would be presented to the CT.

A care pathways workshop was led by the LRSA, demonstrating the 'journey of a disabled child' and visualising for stakeholders and the borough where improvements could be made. A final report was presented to the Strategic Project Group in December, which has since been used to present costed options to the CT for final decisions. The input of the LRSA highlighted where further efficiencies could be made through reducing the number of assessments, panels and being clearer on each agencies roles/responsibilities, as well as embedding good practice that already existed in the borough. Furthermore, the LRSA was able to signpost the borough to other integrated arrangements across London and other parts of the country which enabled a more outward looking approach to 'what works', reducing the likelihood of re-inventing the wheel.

"I read your report with delight. The report and options are very clear...I would like to thank you for your support",
divisional director social care

Borough 3 are reconfiguring their children's services as part of an overall council restructure. The director of children's services and assistant director for children's social care requested additional senior management capacity during this period to free up the assistant director to participate more fully in the work of the council's senior management team. At the same time, senior manager posts have been reduced in children's services and the LRSA has been working with the assistant director and the relevant service managers to consider how the services can continue to be delivered safely by a smaller management team.

Work has included providing direct support to the service manager, ensuring that there is consistency across the borough in the assessment teams and the safeguarding and support longer terms social work teams. As part of this work, the LRSA has worked closely with the assessment service, undertaking some line management responsibilities and advising on how to develop the service to work more efficiently while ensuring safeguarding is effective.

Outcomes:

- Overall reduction in worker caseloads which were previously too high
- Better use of non social work staff to reduce the workload of social workers and managers
- This in turn should lead to better retention of staff and consequently better services to children and families.

"Thank you. This has been exactly what I hoped you would be able to do", assistant director.

Borough 4 recognised that the implementation of CAF was not as well embedded across the service as it would like and was also concerned that it was not getting value for money from some of its services. The LRSA were commissioned to work one day per week in the borough to look at how increased engagement with adults services and health partners could be achieved to develop a much more holistic and responsive approach to parents with MH and how this model could be applied to other parental concerning areas such as substance misuse and alcohol.

Agreement was reached with senior officers to establish a Think Family Project Group. The LRSA engaged key partners, health (PCT commissioner, GP, CMHT, HV) adult and children's social care and representatives from the voluntary sector (NSPCC, Family Action). A number of pieces of audit work in health and social care were undertaken to identify areas for development locally.

Outcomes:

- Think Family Project Group has enabled key partners to come together to discuss improving joint working arrangements; in addition, it has led to partners undertaking joint training events in schools, and joint audit improving practice by all agencies
- LRSA have also been able to signpost the borough to other areas where Think Family approach is more embedded and has engaged public health in looking at commissioning and joint working opportunities
- Input has also led to the conclusion that CAF on its own will not fully engage partners so developing work on Whole Family Assessment (WFA) tool
- The LRSA have also developed an outcomes based approach to measuring impact of social care intervention
- Work on Think Family is significantly contributing to the borough's move towards developing an early intervention commissioning strategy.

Borough 5 commissioned a LRSA to support them in taking forward a recommendation from a serious case review relating to the quality of specific elements of child protection practice locally. The LRSA have worked with staff from all agencies to identify and strengthen the safeguarding process, drawing from international research and good practice emerging from around London and the rest of the country. In the process of this project, the LRSA have supported the sharing of emerging good practice between a number of London boroughs. This work is enabling improved multi-agency investigation, assessment and child protection planning with a view to

improving the experience of children and families and the effectiveness of agencies in keeping children safe.

Host borough arrangements are in place in three boroughs. This arrangement enables the LRSA to get to know the LA well and provide support on a range of safeguarding developments over time; the arrangement is for LRSA to work in the borough a day a week over the two years of the project. In all three boroughs this has meant that the LRSA have been able to develop relationships with the director of children's service, assistant director, third tier managers and local partners to support safeguarding developments in identified areas. Areas of work undertaken to date across the boroughs include:

- A review of safeguarding provided to disabled children, which included meeting staff, managers, partners and a review of cases and a recent SCR in order to develop and implement required improvements. The LRSA were able to identify opportunities to work more efficiently, by social workers working more closely with other parts of children's social care and partners, and to improve safeguarding outcomes for disabled children by improving the skills and knowledge of the team.
- Work with referral and assessment services including preparation for annual inspection, auditing and work with managers focusing on the quality of assessment and safeguarding interventions
- Development work with chairs of child protection conferences to improve their advice and guidance and the quality of child protection planning

LRSA support to the London Board

All three advisers work on London Board sponsored projects as well as individual borough work. For example:

Vivien Lines has been working with Local Government Improvement and Development to develop a new safeguarding quality assurance framework for local areas and to support a number of pilots around London on specific safeguarding issues which will improve the impact of local services on safeguarding children outcomes.

Kathy Bundred has been supporting a multi-agency project which aims to develop better intelligence sharing arrangements to deliver better outcomes for children at risk.

Kay Bell is leading a London-wide pilot to improve learning from serious cases. The planned outcomes from this project are the development of expertise in London to undertake case review based on systemic analysis of practice. This will support deeper learning and recommendations, which will lead to improved safeguarding practice locally. In addition, the pilot aims to demonstrate methodologies which provide better value for money for local areas.

Contact

If you would like to commission any support from an adviser visit www.londonscb.gov.uk/london_regional_safeguarding_advisers or contact Ian Dean, London Board Manager at ian.dean@londoncouncils.gov.uk, tel 020 7934 9714.