

London Safeguarding Children Board: Highlights 2009/10

The London Safeguarding Children Board is a multi-agency regional improvement body that supports the development and dissemination of good practice in relation to safeguarding children. It provides strategic advice and support to London's 32 Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) and their partner agencies, including the Metropolitan Police, NHS London and third sector organisations.

Under the auspices of the London Board, joint working between London LSCBs and their member agencies has enabled London-wide adoption of important and influential guidance and innovative safeguarding initiatives.

This year has seen the successful delivery of the London Board's multi-agency work plan. This report highlights some of the many individual examples of work delivered this year. It reflects a more integrated approach, with full involvement and engagement of London leaders and elected members in the Board's activity.

As this year ended, the Board welcomed the three new London Regional Safeguarding Advisers into post, leading the country in establishing a peer-led approach to improving safeguarding practice across London.



Cheryl Coppel
Chair, London Safeguarding Children Board





Supporting the development of strong local safeguarding

Throughout 2009/10, the London Board has continued to support the effectiveness of LSCBs through regular network meetings and co-ordinating online forums to develop and share strong local practice. The Board has also produced tools and research to help inform local multi-agency practice and decision-making and supported other Boards to meet their statutory requirements. Some specific examples include:

LSCB Chairs' guidance

Published in July 2009, this guidance aims to support the development of strong, clear and co-operative local partnerships supported by effective chairing and to develop the LSCB's focus on monitoring local safeguarding arrangements. This work was facilitated by the first in a series of development days and regular network meetings for all London LSCB chairs, providing regular opportunities for chairs to share good practice, debate common issues and seek advice on the latest national requirements.

Subsidised safeguarding conference

Held in December 2009, with excellent attendance from all the main agencies working to safeguard children in London, the conference provided an opportunity to expose practitioners from all settings to learning in relation to the complex issues of gang activity, child trafficking, the effect of domestic violence on children, and living with trauma, family violence and multiple abuse. Seminars also covered the latest learning from serious case reviews in London, the work of the NHS London Safeguarding Improvement Programme, and the role of elected members and senior borough officers in local safeguarding services. A key theme was the benefit of multi-agency working and sharing research findings, knowledge and information.

Providing leadership and supporting professional networks

The London Board supports a number of networks for safeguarding children professionals from a range of disciplines in London.

This year, this included establishing a network of designated doctors and nurses for safeguarding which has led to the design and development of specific care pathways. The group has met regularly for peer supervision. London Board members have also supported three cohorts of paediatricians and nurses on a bespoke leadership course for health professionals with specific safeguarding children responsibilities.

Ensuring the consistent engagement of the voluntary and community sector (VCS)

Developed following a multi-agency discussion forum, this work identifies ways of sharing local and regional experiences and areas of emerging practice, increasing awareness of the needs of the VCS, and identifying mechanisms to improve the engagement and representation of the VCS within local and regional planning.

LSCB training sub-group

Re-launched with a strong multi-agency focus, the group has now produced an induction pack for LSCBs to adapt locally, helping to ensure that all new workers with access to children and young people are effectively and consistently trained in their responsibilities to safeguard children.

LSCB funding survey

Completed in May 2010, this survey established a London-wide picture on safeguarding board capacity and gives local SCBs a strong tool to encourage more consistent contributions from partner agencies.

Olympics sub-group

The London Board has identified a range of key safeguarding issues relating to the 2012 Olympics and is working with LSCBs to ensure that they receive appropriate support with preparing for the Games and putting a preventative programme into place, as well as advising Olympic delivery agencies on discharging their duties around safeguarding children.

London safeguarding dataset

A common dataset was developed and is being piloted via a central database commissioned for London. This will give London LSCBs a tool to measure their own performance and easily evaluate this against that of neighbouring boroughs.

Safer workforce

The network is made up of Local Authority Designated Officers (LADOs) responsible for handling allegations against members of staff. The group meets regularly to work through the detail of case work issues, share good practice and maintain an awareness of London-wide concerns.



Ensuring high level commitment to safeguarding, regionally and locally

Through its extensive links across London, the Board has worked with senior leaders from all sectors working with children in the capital to address pan-London safeguarding issues and ensure appropriate engagement in LSCBs.

The multi-agency London Safeguarding Children Board continues to meet quarterly to take a strategic lead on safeguarding, and a new monthly business meeting brings 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. Some specific examples include:

London Safeguarding Pledge

Signed by the leaders of all the main organisations involved with child protection in London, the Pledge formalised their commitment to continue working together to share experience and best practice, and prioritise investment in the safety of children. Signatories included the chair of the London Safeguarding Children Board, London Councils, the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS), NHS London, the Metropolitan Police Authority, the Government Office for London and voluntary sector partners.

The Protection of Children in England: Leaders' Responsibilities

Published in July 2009, this guidance supports council leaders to hold local safeguarding arrangements to account effectively and encourages strong local leadership and governance from the top of the organisation.

Member safeguarding development sessions

Established this year for leaders and lead members to get more involved in supporting LSCBs. Four sessions have already been held for a total of 26 members (comprising 15 lead members for children's services, four council leaders and seven scrutiny chairs). A further five sessions are planned for September 2010. Action learning sets will be implemented in the autumn and an annual policy forum in February 2011.





Taking a regional lead on learning lessons from practice

Recent analyses of London's serious case reviews have consistently identified a number of common factors, and the Board and partners have held a series of events throughout the year to support the learning of lessons and share good practice. These key issues have also been incorporated into the work plans for the Board's three new London Regional Safeguarding Advisers, who will work proactively with boroughs to embed learning across London. The Board particularly focused on three key themes in 2009/10:

Domestic violence

The London procedure for safeguarding children abused through domestic violence (DV) was developed to assist any professional or volunteer in contact with children and their families to prioritise the needs of a child, assess the risk of harm and respond appropriately. The procedure adapts the existing assessment framework to refer specifically to risk factors around DV, and includes a new risk assessment matrix for professionals to use when assessing the needs of a child living in a family where domestic violence occurs. Throughout 2009/10, the Board has continued to promote this approach through the roll out of a tailored training programme, developed and delivered by Barnardo's to raise awareness across all sectors of specific safeguarding issues associated with domestic violence.

Parental mental health

The London Board co-ordinated regular meetings of named professionals for safeguarding children in the 10 London mental health trusts, providing a forum for practitioners in this highly specialist role to meet regularly and share good practice. The Board also supported the development of a training strategy to promote best practice in safeguarding children within London's mental health trusts and led the development of a report highlighting the strengths and limitations of safeguarding practice across London's mental health organisations. The report is being presented to the London network of mental health trust chief executives, supported by a number of detailed recommendations.

Newly arrived communities

The London Board successfully bid for £125,000 from the Migration Impacts Fund (Communities and Local Government), to cover a range of projects for 2010/11. These include: 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; training to help professionals identify children across cultures and faiths who are in need of support or protection; and an LSCB 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 led best practice sharing seminars throughout 2009 on developing safeguarding policies and good working practice with children in faith communities, engaging with BME communities to safeguard children abused through domestic violence, developing strategies to better safeguard children in highly diverse communities and introducing a community-led partnership initiative to enhance the life chances of BME children.





Providing regional guidance on emerging safeguarding issues

The Board continues to provide a regional lead in response to newly emerging safeguarding issues and has produced a host of resources, guidance and procedures throughout 2009/10, to help local areas respond effectively and consistently to areas of concern without needlessly duplicating effort. Some examples of this work include:

Female genital mutilation (FGM) resource pack

Published in November 2009, bringing together a wide range of existing work into one handy document for the first time as a key tool to help professionals and community groups work together to combat FGM. It contains detailed information about FGM, as well as guidelines on how to spot victims of abuse or girls at risk. These include a set of questions for midwives to ask women attending their clinics. There is also advice on how community groups can help to prevent FGM, and information to help professionals discuss the issue with parents and children.

London trafficked children toolkit

Piloted in 13 boroughs, the toolkit is aimed at any professional who may come into contact with a trafficked child. It includes legislation, local structures, training plans and an updated version of the original London procedure for safeguarding trafficked and exploited children.

London procedure for safeguarding children affected by gang activity/serious youth violence

Published in partnership with the Youth Justice Board, London Serious Youth Violence Board and a multi-agency practitioners steering group. The procedure was produced as a direct response to requests from London practitioners struggling with this relatively new and increasingly prevalent issue, and includes, amongst other tools, an adaptation of the existing assessment framework to refer specifically to risk factors around gang activity.

London guidance for assessing children and families affected by adults viewing child sexual abuse images on the internet

Produced to provide consistent support for practitioners dealing with this particularly difficult issue.

For further information on the work of the London Safeguarding Board please see www.londonscb.gov.uk or contact the London Board Manager, Ian Dean, on 020 7934 9714 or ian.dean@londoncouncils.gov.uk

