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To: County Council – 17th July 2014

Subject: Kent Safeguarding Children Board – 2013/14 Annual Report

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This attached annual report from Kent Safeguarding Children Board describes the progress made in improving the safeguarding services provided to Kent's children and young people over 2013/14, and outlines the challenges ahead over the next year.

Recommendation: County Council is asked to COMMENT on the progress made and NOTE the 2013/14 Annual Report attached.

1. Introduction

(1) This report presents the 2013/14 Annual Report produced by the Independent Chair of Kent Safeguarding Children Board (KSCB) and endorsed by members of that Board. Current Government guidance captured in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013) sets out the requirement introduced through The Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2006 for Local Safeguarding Children Boards to produce and publish an annual report. This report provides a rigorous and transparent assessment of the effectiveness of local child protection arrangements and has been designed for circulation to all front line staff working with children across Kent.

(2) This report identifies progress across Kent in improving the child protection system and also identifies areas of vulnerabilities and what action is being taken to address challenges where they remain.

(3) The Annual Report includes lessons from management reviews, serious case reviews and child deaths within the reporting period.

(4) In Working Together 2013, (issued by the Department for Education), it is recommended that once the report is published it should be submitted to the Chief Executive (where one is in situ) and Leader of the Council, the local Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

(5) KSCB is forceful in carrying out its scrutiny role in overseeing child protection arrangements in Kent, and findings from its multi agency audits, Section 11 audits and all SCRs can be found on the KSCB website.

(6) In March 2014, Gill Rigg was appointed the new Independent Chair of KSCB, taking over from Maggie Blyth.

2. The 2013/14 Annual Report

(1) The report details the ongoing activities undertaken by agencies to ensure that children in Kent are safe.

(2) As the report indicates, the number of children with a Child Protection Plan (CPP) has risen slightly from 1025 in March 2013 to 1177 in March 2014. KSCB will continue to monitor this to see if this continues to be in line with those of our statistical neighbours. KSCB will make sure that the focus remains on ensuring that all agencies have a common understanding of thresholds for child protection intervention.

(3) During the year 2013-14, KSCB has noted the improved use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) with an increase of 53% on last year. What is extremely positive is the number of Team Around the Family (TAF) closed with the outcomes recorded as 'achieved' has increased by 121%.

(4) Ofsted identified that interventions for children in need (CIN) across Kent were inconsistent which reinforced the need for KSCB scrutiny across the partnership about support given to this group of children. This will continue to be a focus with the number of children who have been on a Child In Need Plan for more than 6 months and more than 12 months having risen over the last year.

(5) There has been significant progress over the last 12 months in how Kent is responding to the risks highlighted by the Children's Commissioner and more recently, the HO Select Committee, to children at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE). KSCB has continued to develop training for front line staff and a toolkit for assisting in identifying and assessing risk of CSE and publicity material has been distributed, drawing attention to the signs that may indicate that young people are at risk of CSE.

(6) To ensure that the spotlight is retained on those young people at risk of going missing and CSE, more detailed multi-agency work is being undertaken to ensure greater accuracy on the reporting and recording of missing incidents as well as putting in place tighter arrangements for offering 'return interviews' to those young people who go missing. This will provide partners with a greater understanding of what happens to young people when they go missing and provide intelligence that can be used to implement more preventative measures. KSCB is also requiring statutory agencies to understand more clearly the trends relating to children missing in Kent to ensure that the most vulnerable young people are supported at the right time.

(7) KSCB is committed to publishing the findings from all Case Reviews. There were no new Serious Case Reviews (SCR) commissioned during the last year. Other reviews have been undertaken and the lessons from all of these and from other National SCRs have influenced the focus of KSCB's multi-agency learning and development strategy and training programme. KSCB obtains assurance from all Kent agencies that actions following these reviews are properly monitored and progress evidenced.

(8) Specific challenges are highlighted around action taken to learn lessons from cases when things go wrong and where children are the subject of sexual abuse.

These areas feature within the 2014/15 Strategic Priorities and specific work has been commissioned by the Case Review and Quality and Effectiveness Sub Groups to look into this area in more depth.

(9) During this reporting period KSCB has undertaken a number of multi agency audits to understand what is happening across different front line settings in protecting children. The follow up to the Section 11 audit was undertaken with statutory agencies across Kent providing evidence to the Board on how they are meeting the many aspects of their action plans following their original submissions. Where specific action has been required by certain agencies to improve their contributions, KSCB is closely monitoring this to ensure all agencies are discharging their safeguarding duties.

(10) The work of supporting Kent's 1831 Children in Care (including 190 unaccompanied asylum seeking children), as well as the 1194 looked after children placed by other local authorities in the county, continues to place massive pressures on public agencies responsible for supporting vulnerable children in Kent, including Specialist Children's Services, schools, police, and health services. KSCB will continue to seek evidence that Kent agencies are adequately able to care for all children placed in the County and supports more rigorous risk assessments for children placed in Kent by other authorities.

(11) The Annual Report states that there remain concerns about assessment and treatment of vulnerable groups of children with emotional wellbeing and mental health needs. Waiting times in the West of Kent have reduced significantly in recent weeks but KSCB will continue to require NHS representatives to report on progress in this area.

3. Conclusions

(1) The Improvement Notice was lifted on 11th December 2013. Kent agencies have worked hard to ensure that the failings identified in 2010 by Ofsted have been addressed. Overall, the Independent Chair of KSCB is satisfied that progress has been made and that the child protection system in Kent has improved. However, challenges remain to ensure that there is a common understanding of thresholds in Kent; that partnership agencies in Kent are suitably equipped to support the most vulnerable children and young people; and that those children identified as children in need are supported by all partner interventions.

(2) The revised Improvement Notice placed specific expectations on KSCB during 2013/14. All agencies in Kent were required to demonstrate improved outcomes for children in relation to safeguarding and will be reporting on this to the Improvement Board. Through its Quality Assurance Framework, KSCB has evidenced its capability to take on the role of the Improvement Board, through the reviewing of members' progress reports. This was supported by findings from the Executive Group member 'walk-about' of front line settings.

(3) Furthermore, there are specific challenges for Kent agencies in supporting those children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation and having a greater understanding of the picture of children who go missing.

(4) The Independent Chair of the Improvement Board will undertake a 6 month review of Kent's continued progress in July 2014.

4. Recommendations

(1) County Council is asked to:

- (a) COMMENT on the progress and improvements made during 2013/14, as detailed in the Annual Report from Kent Safeguarding Children Board
- (b) NOTE the 2013/14 Annual Report attached. Following this meeting, this document will be available for download at the KSCB website.

5. Background Documents

None

6. Contact details

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