

By: Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services
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Gill Rigg, Independent Chair of Kent Safeguarding Children Board

To: County Council – 17th September 2015

Subject: Kent Safeguarding Children Board – 2014/15 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 2014/15, and outlines the challenges ahead over the next year.

Recommendation: County Council is asked to COMMENT on the progress made and NOTE the 2014/15 Annual Report attached.

1. Introduction

(1) This report presents the 2014/15 Annual Report produced by Gill Rigg, 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 (2015) issued by the Department for Education, 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, through its review of last year's key priorities, progress across Kent in the improvement of child protection practice. It 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 (SCRs), multi-agency audits and child deaths within the reporting period.

(4) In Working Together 2015, 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.

2. The 2014/15 Annual Report

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

(2) In her first year as Independent Chair of KSCB, Gill Rigg has undertaken a significant reorganisation of the Board's structure. The main changes have been to the lines of accountability between the Board's Groups and the Board itself through the new created Business Group. This Group is made up of the Chairjs of all of the Board's Groups and is responsible for driving forward the Board's business and reporting activity, progress and outcomes to the Board. It has been recognised by both Business Group and Board members that this is already having a significant impact on how the Board conducts its business.

(3) KSCB had two external challenges during the year. Kent was one of eight authorities chosen to take part in the Ofsted thematic review of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in October 2014. Whilst there was no Kent specific report, the Inspectors did feedback that they thought that there was a growing and informed understanding and commitment to the work on CSE, but that the CSE strategy and action plan was under developed. There were examples of positive work, but also inconsistencies. As a result, a further action plan was developed, and the efforts of the Board have been redoubled in this area. We have also ensured that our response to children and young people who go missing was given a much higher priority.

(4) Our second external challenge was inviting a team of peers to undertake a Peer Review of the work of the Board, and this took place in December. They felt that the Board restructuring was positive and gave agencies confidence that it was truly multi-agency, that processes were in place to hold partners to account, and there was a sense of purpose and stability. They concluded that there was good support from the Safeguarding Business Unit. However, they felt that the Board needed to connect more at a more local operational level, and that the voice of children and young people was not evident in the work on quality assurance.

(5) With regard to the question 'how safe are children in Kent?' the report indicates, the number of children with a Child Protection Plan (CPP) has risen from 1117 in March 2014 to 1240 in March 2015. 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.

(6) The year on year figures for Children In Care, show a reduction of 122, from 1624 to 1502. On the 31st March 2015, excluding Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, there were 148 Kent Children in Care placed outside of Kent. This compares to 143 at the same time last year.

(7) The issue of asylum seekers continues to receive high profile media and political attention. At the 31st March 2015, there were 368 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Children in Care in Kent. This is an increase of 150 from 218 at 31st March 2014.

(8) Early Help and Preventative Services (EHPS) launched the new Kent Family Support Framework (KFSF) in September 2014, replacing the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), to ensure the highest quality service delivery and improved outcomes for children, young people and families who need Early Help. The full impact of this change is yet to be realised.

(9) KSCB is committed to publishing the findings from all Case Reviews. One Serious Case Reviews (SCR) was commissioned during the last year and this is due to be published in September 2015. 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.

(10) 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.

3. Conclusions

(1) During 2014-15, KSCB and our partner agencies have built on the good work from the previous year which saw Ofsted lift the Improvement Notice on the Council (December 2013). The Board has continued with its scrutiny and challenge role through the development of the Business Group and the stricter governance and lines of accountability. The Board's Groups have established a more consistent and stable membership which has allowed them to be more focussed on the key issues, for example, Early Help, 'children who go missing', 'On-Line safety' and FGM. All of these continue to feature in the Board's Strategic Priorities for 2015-18, alongside, Child Sexual Exploitation, Radicalisation, Domestic Abuse and working with parents with mental health and/or substance misuse issues.

4. Recommendations

(1) County Council is asked to:

- (a) COMMENT on the progress and improvements made during 2014/15, as detailed in the Annual Report from Kent Safeguarding Children Board
- (b) NOTE the 2014/15 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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