

Briefing for CYP Scrutiny Committee 15.08.13: Safeguarding Peer Review

1. Background

Peer Reviews are offered by the Local Government Association (LGA) to local authorities to support them in improving services. On request, Teams of Peer Reviewers, which include Directors, members and specialist practitioners from other local authorities, examine evidence from a wide range of sources in order to challenge the council and help them to recognise their strengths and identify areas for improvement. The key purpose of Peer Reviews is to act as a 'critical friend' and stimulate local discussion about how we and our partners can improve safeguarding outcomes for our children and young people.

A Peer Review was undertaken by request in Children and Family services, culminating in a fieldwork week beginning 3rd June.

2. Review process

The Review Team considered evidence from the following sources:

- Our self-assessment
- Performance data
- Documents
- Online questionnaire of frontline staff in safeguarding services and partner agencies
- A multi-agency case mapping exercise
- Interviews and focus groups held during the fieldwork week, including young people in care, elected members and staff and managers from Telford and Wrekin, partner agencies and commissioned services.
- An audit validation exercise (optional but requested)
- A case records review (again optional but requested)

3. Review findings

The Peer Review Team presented a summary of their findings at a multi-agency feedback event held at the end of the fieldwork week, and the detailed findings were confirmed in a letter which will be tabled separately, following a response from members of the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The feedback generally reflected our self assessment, and identified the delays regarding improvements in the CAMHS service and the need to increase the pace of change which are discussed in the update report on the Service Improvement Plan.

A summary of strengths and areas for consideration identified by the Peer Review Team follows:

Summary Strengths:

- Very committed and effective social workers and staff across the partnership
- Increasing recognition for need for data analysis to inform practice and maximise positive outcomes for children and young people
- Lots of support, collaboration and commitment across the partnership
- Effective Recruitment strategy achieving reduction in agency staff and stability of workforce
- The Council's Medium Term Plan reflects its commitment and willingness to fund safeguarding
- Aspirational leadership across the partnership
- DCS and Lead Member held in high regard across the Council and the partnership as a whole

Summary Areas for Consideration:

- Commissioning is underdeveloped across the partnership
- Integrated practice is still emerging
- Ensure reflective practice is captured in case recording
- Further develop the effectiveness and awareness of the “early help” offer across the Council, partners, children and families
- Lack of analysis and planning can sometimes mean going directly from information to action
- Ensure that all partners give constructive and effective challenge leading to timely action when necessary
- Greater focus and increased pace of effective change
- More clearly map the relationship between aspiration and frontline practice and help make it come alive for staff

4. Next steps

There is no compulsion to publish Peer Review findings, it is left to the discretion of the Director of Children and Family Services, but in line with our Co-operative values the Peer Review Letter will be published to staff and partners shortly after 8th August, as agreed with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

As discussed in the separately tabled progress report on the Service Improvement Plan, the areas for consideration identified in the Peer Review will be included in the refreshed Service Improvement action plan.

Tilly Heigh

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30th July 2013