

Meeting date: Thursday 11 April 2019

Report to: Full Cabinet



Subject/report title: Proposal for new children's multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

Report from: Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Skills

Report author/lead contact officer: Stephen Eccleston
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Solihull Local Safeguarding Children Board

Wards affected:

- All Wards | Bickenhill | Blythe | Castle Bromwich | Chelmsley Wood |
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath | Elmdon | Kingshurst/Fordbridge | Knowle |
 Lyndon | Meriden | Olton | Shirley East | Shirley South |
 Shirley West | Silhill | Smith's Wood | St Alphege

Public/private report: Public

Exempt by virtue of paragraph: N/A

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to introduce the attached proposal for the children's multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in Solihull, to replace the current Solihull Local Safeguarding Children Board in line with changes introduced by the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

2. Decision(s) recommended

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet support the proposed future children's multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in Solihull.

3. What is the issue?

- 3.1 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 has brought about significant change to local children's multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. This Act amends certain safeguarding provisions within the Children Act 2004 by removing the statutory requirement for areas to have Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB's). This has been replaced by the requirement for the safeguarding partners (which are the local authority, chief officer for police and the local clinical commissioning group for the area) to make arrangements to safeguard children and promote their welfare within their area. Additionally, the safeguarding partners should name relevant agencies that they consider appropriate to work with in exercising their functions, and those named

agencies then have a duty to co-operate. The legislative changes introduce a great degree of flexibility as to how the three safeguarding partners achieve these responsibilities.

- 3.2 The Department for Education require that all areas must have agreed and published their new multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements by 29th June 2019 at the latest, and have adopted those arrangements as their way of working by 29th September 2019. Solihull are one of a small number of areas across England who have worked with the Department for Education as an 'early adopter', and as such we are keen to publish our new arrangements at the earliest opportunity, both to provide a possible model and guidance for other areas across the country, and to develop and strengthen our current local working arrangements.
- 3.3 The Solihull arrangements have been subject of considerable discussion and design involving all partners involved in the current structure. This work has resulted in the proposed arrangements as set out in Appendix A. The partnership is committed to both publishing and moving to the new arrangements on Wednesday 1st May 2019, well ahead of the date set by the Department for Education, so benefiting all those areas that are still in the development phase, and putting Solihull at the forefront of these important national developments.
- 3.4 As can be seen, each of the three safeguarding partners carry a considerable responsibility in ensuring the effectiveness of these new arrangements, and scrutiny of these arrangements by each of the safeguarding partners' internal governance processes is the final stage of their development. This report contributes to the Local Authority's governance of their role as a safeguarding partner.

4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?

- 4.1 The local impact of the legislative changes to multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements was first considered by Solihull LSCB Board members in a development session in January 2018, which focused on how Solihull partners might respond to these changes and the opportunities they presented to improve on the effectiveness of the current Board arrangements. All current Solihull LSCB activities were considered individually in the context of their effectiveness in supporting the delivery of efficient and effective child safeguarding arrangements. This process led to the proposed model being developed, which is intended to promote a more dynamic and flexible approach to continuous improvement within our children's safeguarding arrangements.
- 4.2 As can be seen, it is proposed that a 'board' type body, the 'Local Safeguarding Children Partnership' (LSCP) is retained within the arrangements. The LSCP will be responsible for ensuring the arrangements run efficiently and effectively and partner agencies are engaging as they should, and members sit at the executive level of their respective organisations.
- 4.3 The development of these new arrangements has included particular consideration of both the framework for independent scrutiny, and the strength of contribution of

schools, early years and other education providers in Solihull in view of their importance to safeguarding children. Independent scrutiny will be provided by both internal and external mechanisms, and schools, early years and other education providers will retain their own forum within the safeguarding arrangements, with a direct route into the LSCP via their own representative. Further detail can be found within the attached document.

- 4.4 As all local authority areas are subject of the responsibilities of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and so find themselves redesigning their partnership arrangements, there is little evidence available to inform this work or indicate 'best practice'. Due regard has been taken however of other 'early adopter' areas and the learning available from those, and where opportunities have presented, Solihull have collaborated with other 'early adopter' work, for example with our move to child safeguarding practice reviews as part of the wider West Midlands project.

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

- 5.1 It is recommended that this proposal for the future multi-agency children's safeguarding arrangements should be the preferred option for the following reasons;
- It provides for a more 'learning focused' and flexible approach to improving children's safeguarding arrangements in Solihull.
 - It retains the engagement of Solihull partners within the arrangements.
 - It retains the strengths of the current Solihull Local Safeguarding Children Board arrangements (for example the multi-agency audit process and training offer)
 - It focuses activity on the delivery of improvements in line with the partners' safeguarding priorities.
 - It has a robust independent scrutiny framework.
 - It is compliant with the legislative requirements of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children – July 2018'.
 - It delivers all of the above within the agreed multi-agency funding arrangements for the current Solihull Local Safeguarding Children Board.

6. Implications and Considerations

- 6.1 Delivery of key themes in the Council Plan:

How will the options/proposals in this report contribute to the delivery of the key themes in the Council Plan? *(select which themes apply and briefly state how the options / proposals in this report contribute to their delivery):*

- Improve Health and Wellbeing – Effective multi-agency children's safeguarding arrangements contribute to protecting the wellbeing of children and young people in Solihull, with a particular focus on the current priority areas of neglect, child exploitation and early help for children.
- Managed Growth -

Build Stronger Communities -

Deliver Value -

6.2 Implications for children and young people, vulnerable groups and particular communities:

6.2.1 The adoption of these arrangements will ensure effective oversight of the multi-agency arrangements for the safeguarding of children and young people in Solihull, and the promotion of their welfare. This in turn will ensure that agencies are working together to ensure an efficient and effective response to children and young people at risk of or subject to harm.

6.3 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.3.1 These arrangements have been subject of extensive consultation with all partner members of the current Solihull Local Safeguarding Children Board, and the original concept for them was developed at an event attended by representatives from all partner agencies currently represented on the Solihull LSCB.

6.3.2 The development of these arrangements have been guided by a Project Steering Group which included all safeguarding partner representatives and the Lead Member, and have been presented to other 'early adopter' areas from across England for consultation at a Department for Education event.

6.3.3 The final draft arrangements have been scrutinised by the full Solihull Local Safeguarding Children Board on 12th March 2019. They have also been presented to the Solihull Safeguarding Adult Board as part of the consultation.

6.3.4 In addition the arrangements are being considered by both the West Midlands Police and Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group internal governance arrangements.

6.4 Financial implications:

6.4.1 Funding for the current Board and future Partnership is referenced in s11 of the proposed arrangements, as set out in Appendix A. SMBC's contribution is budgeted for within the Children's Services and Skills portfolio.

6.5 Legal implications:

6.5.1 In addition to the need under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 to move to new arrangements, there is a statutory requirement within 'Working Together to Safeguard Children – July 2018' that the published arrangements contain certain details, for example how the arrangements will be independently scrutinised, the geographic boundaries for the arrangements, and a list of named 'relevant agencies'. The attached document is compliant with these statutory requirements.

6.6 Risk implications:

- 6.6.1 Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility, and effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements rely upon the active involvement of all agencies in those arrangements. The implications of these arrangements not being implemented or failing to work effectively are that the efficiency and effectiveness of children's safeguarding in Solihull will be undermined.
- 6.6.2 This risk is being mitigated in a number of ways. Firstly, the planning and consultation that has preceded these arrangements has sought to ensure continued strong multi-agency working practices. Secondly, those working practices of the Solihull LSCB which are recognised as very strong practice have been retained within these new arrangements. Thirdly, an independent external peer review of the arrangements has been arranged for October 2019 to allow any developing risks as a result of the new system to be identified at a very early stage. This peer review is to be conducted by subject experts from the Local Government Association. Finally, all key positions within the new arrangements are filled by senior safeguarding partner representatives with extensive experience in multi-agency safeguarding practice.

6.7 Statutory Equality Duty:

- 6.7.1 The new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements allow the flexibility to respond to emerging risks to particular groups and communities should the need be identified.
- 6.7.2 Within the arrangements, all partner agencies retain their own responsibility to discharge their duties in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

7. List of appendices referred to

- 7.1 Appendix A - Arrangements for Safeguarding Children and Young People in Solihull

8. Background papers used to compile this report

- 8.1 None

9. List of other relevant documents

- 9.1 Please note that although the arrangements contain links within the document, these will not be active until the arrangements are actually published. The documents referred to as linked are therefore contained in Appendix A pages 19 – 28.
- 9.2 There are a considerable number of relevant documents associated with this work, including LSCB and project steering group minutes, consultation documents, and project management documents.