

Safeguarding Improvement Board – 20th February 2013

Item XX – Scrutiny Task Group report on Improvement milestones within 6 months

Background

On 16 November 2012, the Safeguarding Improvement Board (SIB) asked the Safeguarding Children & Young People Task Group to scrutinise the delivery of the improvement milestones set out in the Safeguarding Improvement Plan (SIP) for completion by end of October 2012.

The Task Group met on 17 January and considered evidence provided by officers of Wiltshire Council.

General comments

The Task Group concludes that there are a number of ways in which the Improvement Plan and other reports can be improved to enable more effective scrutiny of progress:

1. The Task Group are concerned that a significant number of the milestones within the Safeguarding Improvement Plan are not 'SMART' (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound). This makes it difficult to assess whether they have been achieved or not.
2. The Task Group particularly noted the use of the word 'some' within milestones (as in 'some evidence', 'some good feedback') as not being specific enough to represent a useful target. (It is noted, however, that the use of the term was taken from Ofsted's own inspection framework).
3. The Task Group recommends that each milestone is accompanied by a list of the evidence sources / indicators that illustrate whether it has been achieved or not. This will make scrutinising progress with milestones quicker, easier and more effective.
4. The Task Group also suggests that any groups scrutinising the delivery of the Improvement Plan be provided with a RAG-rated exception report highlighting which milestones are slipping (i.e. red or amber).

The Task Group believes that the issues above must be addressed so that effective scrutiny of safeguarding improvements is possible in the future.

Conclusions on the milestones

Goal	Milestone	Comments and conclusions
Children and young people are safe(r)	1. There is evidence that safeguarding is improving from regular management information reports and “off-line/independent” single and multi-agency audits.	<p>Partially achieved.</p> <p>It was clarified that 10 of the 13 ‘Category 1’ cases audited had progressed well or were on track.</p>
Quality assurance of safeguarding has improved	2. Managers within social care are undertaking regular case file audits.	<p>Partially achieved.</p> <p>The Task Group recommend that this milestone should be to undertake ‘monthly’ (not ‘regular’) audits.</p> <p>It was noted that a December audit was not undertaken and the January audit will be available at the end of January.</p> <p>It was noted that Principal Social Workers (PSWs) are now delivering practice-orientated training focused on the outcomes of these audits. Auditors are currently also looking at the training being provided in response to audit outcomes.</p>
	3. The programme of independent/off-line audits of social care cases has been established.	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>The Task Group was satisfied that the programme of audits has been established and looks forward to seeing more detailed evidence in the future.</p>
	4. A new programme of LSCB multi-agency audits has been established.	<p>Achieved.</p>
	5. There is some evidence that follow up action taken in response to audit findings is impacting on practice.	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>The Task Group was happy that the audit results constituted ‘some</p>

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		evidence'. However, they felt that the term 'some evidence' should be made more specific.
	6. Role and functions of child protection chairs has been reviewed and job descriptions and person specifications revised.	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>The Task Group were pleased that the role of Child Protection Chair has been formally upgraded.</p> <p>It was accepted that little written evidence could be provided for this milestone due to the HR process still being underway.</p>
	7. Monthly reports on performance of child protection chairs are being produced.	<p>Partially achieved.</p> <p>Only reports from September and October had been completed. However, it was noted that November's report is taking longer because the performance measures are being aligned to the new practice standards.</p>
	8. There is some positive feedback from families and professionals attending conferences.	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>The Task Group felt that the term 'some evidence' should be made more specific.</p> <p>It was noted that challenge amongst professionals in Wiltshire may still not be robust enough and therefore the positive feedback received may not be entirely justified.</p>
	9. There is some evidence from case file audits that the quality of chairing is good.	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>The Task Group felt that the terms 'some evidence' and 'good' should be made more specific.</p>

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		It was noted that there is a need to ensure that professionals from all agencies in Wiltshire understand what 'good' looks like.
	10. All looked after children are receiving a similar standard of service.	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>The Task Group recommended that this milestone be amended because a '<i>similar</i> standard of service' could actually be a consistently poor service.</p>
	11. An options appraisal has taken place to assess when LAC cases should best transfer to longer term teams.	<p>Partially achieved.</p> <p>The options appraisal is underway.</p>
The skills and quality of managers have improved	12. All social care managers are clear about the social care leadership and management approach and the management standards required.	<p>Partially achieved.</p> <p>A draft set of social care management standards has been produced, but further evidence of its impact is required for this milestone to be 'Achieved'.</p>
	13. All managers have received training on the approach and standards. This is being reinforced in supervision sessions.	<p>Achieved.</p>
	14. Managers use a variety of performance reports and evidence from case file audits to assess the quality and impact of practice.	<p>Achieved.</p>
	15. There is evidence from case file audits of good management oversight and decision making.	<p>Partially achieved.</p> <p>The Task Group noted that the audit scores for 'Management Oversight' showed an upward trend, but there is still much room for improvement.</p>
The skills and	16. All social workers are clear about the Wiltshire approach to	<p>Partially achieved.</p>

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quality of front line workers has improved	social work and are using the Wiltshire Social Work standards as a guide for their practice.	The practice standards have been introduced, but future audits are needed to demonstrate whether social workers are clear about what is expected.
	17. All social workers have received training and briefing sessions on the approach and standards and this is being reinforced in supervision sessions.	Partially achieved. No evidence was provided to show that training was being reinforced in supervision sessions.
	18. Social workers are aware of the management information reports and quality audits being used to monitor and improve practice. Some social workers can evidence how feedback from case file audits has influenced practice.	Partially achieved. The Task Group noted that this milestone was only partially achieved, and recommended that the weekly Social Care Bulletins be redesigned (perhaps with the involvement of the Communications team) to be shorter and more inviting to the reader. The Task Group felt that the term ‘some social workers’ was not specific enough.
The child protection system is working effectively	19. The Safeguarding Improvement Plan is on track.	No conclusion. The Task Group felt that this milestone was too broad to be meaningful.
	20. The Improvement plan has been revised and updated.	Achieved.
	21. The role the LSCB, the Executive and all sub-groups have been reviewed and terms of reference have been updated as necessary.	Partially achieved. The review is underway but not complete.

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	22. The LSCB performance monitoring report has been reviewed and revised.	<p>Partially achieved.</p> <p>The performance monitoring report has been reviewed, but the new format is due to be discussed at the Quality Assurance sub-group on 24th January 2013 (the Task Group met on 17th January).</p>
	23. The Scrutiny Task Group has developed methods for scrutinising the child protection system.	<p>Partially achieved.</p> <p>The Task Group is still considering methods of scrutinising safeguarding and will be including recommendations on this in its final report (due to the Children’s Select Committee on 28 March).</p>
	24. Social Care staff and managers within the Council report that communication has improved.	<p>To be tested through Peer Review staff survey.</p>
	25. Staff and managers from all agencies are clear about their safeguarding responsibilities	<p>To be tested through Peer Review staff survey.</p>

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