

Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

26 July 2012

**Interim report of the Safeguarding Children & Young People Task Group
(July 2012)**

Purpose

1. To update the Committee on the work of the Safeguarding Children & Young People Task Group since its establishment on 29 March 2012.

Background

2. The Task Group was formally established by the Committee on 29 March to undertake a review of safeguarding arrangements in Wiltshire – an area the Committee had not focused on previously. It was subsequently agreed that the existing Placements for LAC Task Group 'become' the new Safeguarding Task Group using its existing membership, in order to enable a quick start-up and to harness the experience of those members.
3. As well as a focus on safeguarding, the Task Group retains responsibility for looking at issues relating to Looked After Children (LAC). Its terms of reference are as follows:
 - a) To monitor and scrutinise implementation of the improvements to safeguarding arrangements required by Ofsted following its inspection of Wiltshire's Safeguarding and LAC Services in March 2012;
 - b) To support Wiltshire Council and its partner agencies in developing robust safeguarding arrangements for children and young people in Wiltshire;
 - c) To monitor and scrutinise the impact of safeguarding arrangements in Wiltshire on outcomes for children and young people; and
 - d) To monitor and scrutinise the implementation of the Children in Care Commissioning Strategy and its impact on outcomes for Wiltshire's looked after children and their families/carers.
4. The Task Group's membership is:

Cllr Andrew Davis
Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman)
Rev Alice Kemp
Cllr Bill Moss
Cllr Carole Soden
Cllr Bridget Wayman

Activity to date and forward work programme

5. The Task Group has now met on three occasions with further meetings scheduled until November. These meetings have focused on the following objectives:
 - a) Understanding the 'safeguarding picture' – what responsibilities and functions Wiltshire Council and its partner agencies have in terms of safeguarding children and young people and how these are met
 - b) Understanding the particular weaknesses identified in the Ofsted Inspection report
 - c) Deciding which areas of safeguarding the Task Group wish to focus on during its review and how

Understanding the 'safeguarding picture'

6. Members of the Task Group have now undertaken safeguarding training delivered by the Community Safeguarding Head of Service. Safeguarding is a complex area and training was thought to be essential to give members an understanding of the relevant legislation and processes, which will enable them to conduct a more productive scrutiny review.
7. The Task Group plan to enlist the services of a safeguarding specialist to act as a consultant to the Task Group and guide its activities. This will be a person from outside of Wiltshire with no previous connection to the local authority in order to ensure independence. The Democratic Services department hold a small budget for funding independent expert advice for scrutiny reviews.
8. The Task Group also plan to enlist the help of an elected member who has undergone a similar scrutiny process in the past. This will also be a person from outside of Wiltshire. This will give the Task Group a member's perspective on the pitfalls of conducting a scrutiny review into safeguarding

services. The Task Group will discuss these appointments further at their meeting on 26 July.

9. The Task Group are in contact with two other local authorities in the South West that have recently received Ofsted grades of 'Good' for their safeguarding services. Members hope to visit these authorities' safeguarding teams to hear their views on what makes a good safeguarding service and understand what improvement measures might be applied in Wiltshire.
10. The Task Group will receive a briefing on the new Ofsted Inspection framework for safeguarding services, which focuses more on outcomes and 'the child's journey' than processes and performance statistics.

Understanding the weaknesses identified in the Ofsted Inspection report

11. The Task Group has received a detailed presentation from the Community Safeguarding Head of Service on progress with implementing improvements to the Council's Referral and Assessment (R&A) processes. R&A act as a triage service, responding to referrals from people who have concerns about a children and young people, and deciding the appropriate course of action. Weaknesses to these processes were identified in the Ofsted inspection report.
12. The Task Group has received briefings on the recruitment of further Referral and Assessment staff, extra R&A staff training, managing the backlog of R&A cases that developed following an increase in referrals after the Inspection report, and the results of the internal audit of cases currently in the R&A system.
13. The Task Group intends to meet with groups of teachers, SENCOs, youth workers and other staff working with children to discuss their experiences of referring cases to the Council's R&A team.
14. The Task Group intends to meet groups of frontline R&A staff in order to understand their perspectives on the weaknesses identified in the Inspection report and their suggestions for how to improve these.
15. The Ofsted Inspection report includes measures for improvement for the local health services and for Wiltshire Police Authority, as well as for the Council. The Task Group is still considering where and how it can be effective in scrutinising the issues highlighted in the report in regards to these partner agencies.

16. The Chairman of the Task Group also sits on the Safeguarding Improvement Board (SIB), whose membership includes the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Children Services, Wiltshire Police and representatives from the local Health bodies. The SIB was established following the Ofsted inspection to assess evidence of improvement and direct action and its work is monitored by the Department for Education (DfE). The Chairman's membership of the SIB ensures better communication between these two bodies and prevents duplication of work.
17. The Task Group keeps informed of progress with the implementation of all the improvements required by Ofsted by receiving updates on the Safeguarding Improvement Plan – the key document of the Safeguarding Improvement Board. The Task Group also receives the weekly bulletins that are now sent to all Wiltshire Council social care staff.

Proposal

The Committee is asked to note the update on the work of the Safeguarding Children & Young People Task Group.

Cllr Jon Hubbard – Chairman of the Placements for LAC Task Group

Paul Kelly – Designated Scrutiny Officer and Scrutiny Manager

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Appendices

None

Background documents

Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and LAC Services – March 2012