Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee
28 March 2013

Subject:	**Final Report of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group**

Executive Summary

The report presents the conclusions and recommendations of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group for endorsement.

The Task Group was established in May 2012 following a multi-agency Ofsted inspection of Wiltshire, undertaken in March 2012. The inspection identified significant failings in the contribution made by local agencies in Wiltshire to ensuring that children and young people were properly safeguarded. Wiltshire's safeguarding services received a grade of 'Inadequate' for their overall effectiveness and 'Adequate' for their capacity for improvement.

The Task Group met on 16 occasions in addition to undertaking many other evidence-gathering activities. This report contains 41 recommendations, grouped under the four work themes chosen by the Task Group at the beginning of its review. These were:

1. Communications
2. Children's Social Care workforce
3. Locality working
4. Members and safeguarding

Proposal

That the Children's Select Committee endorses the Task Group's Final Report and refers its recommendations to the relevant executive bodies for response.

Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group
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Schedule of recommendations:

R1. A single 'master' set of safeguarding performance indicators should be collated and circulated to all relevant local bodies. This should;

    a. Be designed in such a way that more detailed data can be included or excluded depending on the needs of the audience, but there should be only one master set;

    b. Where, necessary, include historic and benchmarking data and include brief analysis, so that the document serves as an effective sign-post to what is happening;

    c. The Council's Communications and/or Performance teams should be enlisted to make this document inviting and accessible to as wide an audience as possible;

    d. It should be clear to all parties who is responsible for collating and circulating this data, to whom and when.

R2. The weekly Social Care Bulletins should be redesigned to be shorter, clearer and more inviting to the reader. The Communications team should be enlisted in the re-design process.

R3. In addition to the Social Care Bulletin, the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children's Board (WSCB) should coordinate a multi-agency safeguarding bulletin, produced co-operatively by the relevant local agencies, to communicate and promote the ongoing changes to safeguarding in Wiltshire. Wiltshire Council's Communications team should be enlisted in making this an accessible and inviting document to read.

R4. All milestones within the Safeguarding and Adoptions Improvement Plan should be SMART, i.e. Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

R5. Each milestone within the Safeguarding and Adoptions Improvement Plan should be accompanied by a list of those indicators that illustrate whether it has been achieved or not.

R6. Any groups scrutinising the delivery of the Safeguarding and Adoptions Improvement Plan should be provided with a 'RAG-rated' exception report highlighting which milestones are slipping (i.e. red or amber milestones).

R7. A 'SMART' approach needs to be taken to *all* reports illustrating the delivery of safeguarding improvements, especially when the Safeguarding and Adoptions Improvement Board is disbanded.

R8. Wiltshire Council should create a new, permanent 'Safeguarding Peer Liaison' post to give professionals around Wiltshire advice and guidance on the appropriate courses of action and tiers of services for potential child in need or child protection cases.

R9. It should be ensured that all Multi Agency Forums (MAFs) are attended by the Peer Liaison Post proposed under Recommendation 8 (or a social worker with the appropriate skills and knowledge) as a matter of course. Future Scrutiny of safeguarding should include the monitoring of attendance at MAFs.

R10. Future scrutiny to include considering how the Council currently quality-assures the operation of Multi Agency Forums, including if and how appropriate attendance is ensured.

R11. Whenever possible and appropriate, youth workers must be involved up to and including the initial assessment stage when they have made the referral to the children's social care team, in order to

    a. Harness the youth worker's knowledge of the young person and their situation; and

    b. Maintain the youth worker as a supportive presence in the young person's life during the assessment process.

They should also receive feedback on the outcome of the initial assessment.

R12. Future scrutiny of safeguarding should include a focus on:

    a. the implementation of the new Social Care Workforce Strategy, with particular regard to the use of agency workers, interim appointments and the management of caseloads for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs);

    b. the turnover of children's social care within each team

    c. the make-up of children's social care teams in terms of the proportions of temporary/agency and newly qualified staff

    d. performance indicators showing children's social care caseloads;

e. performance indicators showing the 'throughput' of cases (because the Ofsted inspection identified that cases were being held open for longer than was necessary);

R13. These performance indicators should all be included in the master set of KPI data recommended under Recommendation 1.

R14. The Council exploits all opportunities to co-locate and integrate different safeguarding teams and agencies in order to maximise the development of close working relationships between individuals. NB. The Task Group does not consider teams being located in the same Council hub, with the ability to hot-desk near each other, to be sufficient as it is does not guarantee regular contact between individuals, nor the development of close working relationships.

R15. Community Operations Boards are encouraged to include hot-desking provision for social workers – which must accommodate confidential conversations – in community campus projects.

R16. That the Referral element of the Council's Referral & Assessment social care service is maintained as a countywide service, but incorporates a more multi-agency approach, possibly through co-location projects such as the development of a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

R17. That the Assessment element of the Council's Referral & Assessment social care service reverts to operating as a patch-based service where social workers cover discrete areas of the county in order to harness the knowledge of local professionals.

R18. That if this service model is not adopted, future scrutiny includes the consideration of the benefits realised from the adoption of the countywide Referral & Assessment team structure, including an analysis of the time officers spend travelling, the associated cost and the environmental impact.

R19. Future scrutiny to include consideration of the Referral and Assessment service.

R20. That Cabinet makes plans to review and optimise the alignment of the various geographical clusters, where possible and appropriate.

R21. Each service section of the Councillors' Handbook 2013 (which will be a web-based resource) should include guidance on what safeguarding considerations might be relevant to that area of Council business.

R22. Following the 2013 elections, all elected members should be required to sign a statement confirming their legal duties in respect of safeguarding. This was agreed by Full Council on 26 February 2013.

R23. Following the 2013 elections, all members (including co-opted members) should undertake both corporate parenting and safeguarding training and this element of the induction should be given the highest possible profile. NB. The Task Group notes how the training provided for the Task Group by the NSPCC focused on the specific safeguarding roles and responsibilities of members. It therefore strongly recommends that this is repeated for all members within the 2013 member induction process.

R24. Following the 2013 councillor induction, the Councillor Development Group should

    a. implement an ongoing programme of safeguarding training specifically aimed at members who did not attend safeguarding training during the induction programme and at members elected following by-elections; and

    b. work with Group Leaders to maximise the number of members who complete this training.

R25. Following the 2013 elections, all members should receive an 'easy-reference' guide to safeguarding. This should explain in plain terms the roles and responsibilities of the various bodies and individuals involved, elected member' specific responsibilities, plus key contact details.

R26. Following the 2013 elections, all elected and co-opted members of the Children's Select Committee should undertake further child safeguarding training, designed to enable them to perform their scrutiny role. Committee members should also undertake an ongoing programme of refresher training in order to keep up with new legislation and the outcomes of serious case reviews etc.

R27. All members of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel (which is proposed under Recommendation 35) should undertake further safeguarding training, designed to enable them to perform their additional Panel role (just as members of the Corporate Parenting Panel undertake two days of 'Total Respect' training).

R28. The Children's Select Committee and the WSCB should agree a memorandum of understanding to clarify their future working arrangements.

R29. Future scrutiny of safeguarding should include consideration of a mid-term *and* annual report from the WSCB, including figures showing WSCB member attendance.

R30. Future scrutiny of safeguarding should include comparisons between the WSCB's Business Plan and the minutes of its meetings in order to ensure that its agreed objectives are being addressed.

R31. A programme of Scrutiny member engagement with safeguarding services (at a range of locations) should be developed, including elected member visits to safeguarding teams and attendance at officer safeguarding training.

R32. The Children's Select Committee to re-establish the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group with the following terms of reference:

   1. To monitor the implementation of any recommendations made by the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group that are endorsed by the Children's Select Committee and accepted by the executive.

   2. To scrutinise Wiltshire Council's delivery of improvements to safeguarding children and young people as set out in the Safeguarding and Adoptions Improvement Plan.

   3. To receive a twice-annual report from the Council's Lead Member for Safeguarding Children and Young People providing details of their safeguarding activity.

   4. To continue/conduct ongoing scrutiny of services for Looked After Children (LAC).

   5. To work in collaboration with the Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel to clarify future joint-working arrangements [the establishment of which is proposed under Recommendation 35]

R33. The Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group should

   a. continue its work for at least 18 months after the Safeguarding Improvement Board has been disbanded;

   b. receive an update on the work of the Safeguarding Improvement Board (SIB), or from the LSCB upon the SIB's demise, at each meeting;

R34. The Children's Select Committee to establish rapid scrutiny exercises when appropriate to undertake related additional tasks, such as considering the

outcomes of the recent Ofsted inspection of the Council's adoptions service and the monitoring of any required improvements.

R35. The Council to establish a Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel. This should be <u>in addition to</u> robust scrutiny of safeguarding, undertaken by the Children's Select Committee or a task group. The advantages of such a 'dual body' arrangement have already been witnessed with the former Placements for LAC Task Group and the Corporate Parenting Panel, with the former conducting scrutiny of budget management and performance and the latter focusing on developing the best care arrangements for looked after children.

The Panel should be run in a similar manner to the Corporate Parenting Panel, in the following ways:

- membership to include both members and officers
- close liaison with the broad range of teams and local agencies
- involving parents, children and young people (when appropriate) to develop policy
- a clearly defined and mutually agreed distinction between the Panel's liaising role and the monitoring and scrutinising role of Scrutiny.

R36. In light of the additional commitment from members required by the formation of a Safeguarding Children Panel, the Council to consider reducing the elected membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

R37. A clear and user-friendly document is created and circulated setting out the differing safeguarding roles and responsibilities of the Safeguarding Improvement Board (SIB), the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children's Board (WSCB), the Children's Trust, the Portfolio Holder and Lead Member for Safeguarding, Children and Young People and Children's Select Committee. This document should be complete in time for the May 2013 elections and should be reviewed prior to the Safeguarding Improvement Board being disbanded.

R38. An ongoing programme of safeguarding training is implemented for the lead executive members for safeguarding. This should be designed to reflect executive member's statutory duties as set out in legislation and in the Monroe and Laming reports and including refresher training on new legislation, serious case reviews etc.

R39. That a job specification for the lead executive members for safeguarding, reflecting their statutory duties, should be adopted.

R40. An ongoing programme of tests of assurance should be implemented to ensure that the statutory safeguarding responsibilities of the director for children's services and the Lead Member for Children's Services are being met.

R41. All reports to Wiltshire Council committees, including Cabinet, should include a dedicated 'Safeguarding considerations' section (like the 'Environmental considerations' section). This will encourage report authors, directors and members to consider how any proposals, no matter what the service area, might impact upon the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults, and what could be done to mitigate any risks. This puts safeguarding at the centre of everything the Council does.

Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee
28 March 2013

Final Report of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group

Purpose

1. To present the conclusions and recommendations of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group for endorsement.

Foreword

2. NB. Throughout this report 'safeguarding' can be read as 'safeguarding children and young people' (as opposed to 'safeguarding vulnerable adults'), except where otherwise stated.

3. In March 2012 Ofsted identified significant failings in the contribution made by local agencies in Wiltshire to ensuring that children and young people were properly safeguarded. While Ofsted's more positive findings should be acknowledged, in particular those relating to the Council's services for Looked After Children (LAC), the fact that vulnerable young people were put at real risk of harm or neglect as a result of weaknesses in Wiltshire's safeguarding arrangements must remain foremost when considering the importance and urgency of making changes.

4. The Task Group wishes to acknowledge the dedication shown by staff and members in delivering the necessary improvements since the Ofsted report was published. Ofsted commented that the political and managerial ambition and prioritisation across the partnership were at least adequate and that the Council had taken immediate steps to commit resources and action to address the failings in child protection services (para 19). It is particularly important to note that, following the inspection a programme of audits was immediately carried out to identify any cases where further action was needed to ensure that children's welfare was protected. Since then, a new audit structure has been introduced to ensure there are ongoing improvements to social work practice and supervision. The Task Group wish to note the openness and transparency with which the, sometimes disappointing, results of these audits have been shared. Overall, an enormous amount of work has

been done and the Task Group is satisfied that progress is being made in ensuring that the weaknesses identified by Ofsted are being addressed.

5. However, the scale of the cultural shift still required should not be underestimated. It is the Task Group's view that the Council is still near the beginning of its journey towards

   a) instilling a culture of robust, cross-service, cross-agency challenge when it comes to safeguarding practice, and

   b) ensuring that there is a focus on safeguarding in every area of Council business.

6. The Task Group's own journey has been a long and challenging one. Many different agencies, coordinating bodies and services are involved in safeguarding and the relevant legislation and guidance is extensive. To add value to the programme of improvements, the Task Group undertook appropriate training and kept to a very intense schedule of evidence-gathering meetings, visiting another local authority and attending many of the numerous events that followed the Ofsted inspection.

7. A key reason for the Task Group's initial difficulty was their lack of direct experience of safeguarding matters, either as elected members or specifically as members of the Children's Select Committee. A similar picture can be found at many other local authorities. Many of the Task Group's recommendations seek to increase elected members' engagement with safeguarding and suggest more robust member scrutiny arrangements. The Ofsted report highlighted how important effective governance can be in protecting the welfare of children:

   "Performance monitoring and quality assurance functions carried out by the Children's Trust, Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board and elected members have all failed to identify the significant failings in child protection services."   Ofsted report, para 17

8. The Task Group believes that a significant role for a scrutiny task group remains. However, it will be different job to that undertaken by this task group over the last ten months: This review has required an intense, investigative approach and many meetings, but future scrutiny should adopt a more traditional challenge, oversight and scrutinising role, which reintroduces services for LAC into its work programme and reports regularly to the Children's Select Committee.

9.   The failings identified by Ofsted and the work subsequently undertaken during this review all point to one, overriding conclusion: Protecting the welfare of children and young people cannot just be the preserve of social care teams, or even of all professionals working in the children's services field. Safeguarding impacts upon every aspect of the Council's business and is therefore the whole Council's responsibility. This report seeks to make workable suggestions on how to embed a culture which reflects this by improving communication and co-ordination; raising awareness and engagement; and introducing better scrutiny and monitoring. It is the Task Group's belief that these measures will be key in lifting Wiltshire's 'Notice to Improve' (attached at Appendix 1) and in safeguarding Wiltshire's children and young people more effectively in the future.

Background

Ofsted inspection – March 2012

10.   The Task Group was established following a multi-agency Ofsted inspection of Wiltshire, undertaken between 5th and 16th March 2012. The inspection looked at the contribution made by all agencies to ensure that children and young people were properly safeguarded and the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers. The subsequent Ofsted inspection report was published on 24 April 2012 and the results are summarised as follows:

Safeguarding services	
Overall effectiveness:	Inadequate
Capacity for improvement:	Adequate
Looked after children (LAC) services	
Overall effectiveness:	Adequate
Capacity for improvement:	Good

Possible grades: inadequate, adequate, good and outstanding.

11.   Whilst the Ofsted report did find areas of good safeguarding practice, there were also significant failings, briefly summarised as follows:

- "The inspection found statutory requirements are not met consistently and that there are significant failings in the contribution made by Wiltshire Council and partner agencies to child protection work.

- The inspectors state that the level of robustness of managerial oversight and decision-making needed to improve to ensure that the risk to a child or young person is minimised.

- For some children and young people child protection procedures had not been followed in accordance with statutory guidance, resulting in them not being subject to a child protection plan when they should have been.

- Within health agencies and adult services it is highlighted that there is a lack of appropriate levels of safeguarding supervision and training for a wide range of staff who have direct contact with children, young people and families.

- Although there is a wide range of performance management and quality assurance systems in place across the partnership their effectiveness is variable. Performance monitoring and quality assurance functions carried out by the Children's Trust, WSCB and elected members have all failed to identify the significant failings in child protection services."

Safeguarding Improvement Board and Safeguarding Improvement Plan

12. Following publication of the Ofsted report in April 2012, a multi-agency Safeguarding Improvement Board was established in Wiltshire. This is responsible for monitoring progress against the requirements set out in the Ofsted report and the subsequent Improvement Notice, as well as for agreeing and implementing the Safeguarding Improvement Plan. The Improvement Plan is the key document setting out the actions required by Ofsted and the DfE, as well as further actions agreed by the Improvement Board itself.

13. The Improvement Board meets every six weeks, has an independent chair and its membership includes the Leader of Wiltshire Council (also now the Lead Member for Safeguarding), Portfolio Holder for Safeguarding (Children and Young People), Chief Constable for Wiltshire Police, Chairman of the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children's Board (WSCB) and senior representatives from the local Health services and schools. It also receives support and guidance from the national Children's Improvement Board. The Safeguarding Improvement Board is required to provide the DfE with evidence that the necessary improvements are being made and, if ministers are unsatisfied, they can invoke statutory powers to intervene. The Chairman of the Task Group also sits on the Improvement Board, which has enabled close communication between the two bodies.

14. In September 2012, the DfE published its Improvement Notice for Wiltshire. This reiterated the improvements required by Ofsted, but also added further requirements, primarily in regards to Wiltshire's adoptions service. The

Improvement Board consequently became the Safeguarding *and Adoptions* Improvement Board, and the Improvement Plan became the Safeguarding *and Adoptions* Improvement Plan, having now incorporated the necessary improvements to the adoptions service. The Improvement Notice requires the Council to aim to implement all of the necessary improvements by **December 2013**.

Task Group

15.   The Task Group was established by Children's Services Select Committee in May 2012 with the following terms of reference:

   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.

16.   The Task Group in effect replaced the Placements for Looked After Children Task Group, which had focused on issues relating to children looked after by the Council (LAC). The new Task Group retained this responsibility, but with the addition of matters relating to safeguarding. Because Ofsted's concerns were primarily around safeguarding, the Task Group focused on this area and due to the scale and complexity of this work, services for LAC have not yet featured in its work programme.

17.   Additionally, in November 2012 the Committee asked the Task Group to add adoption services to its remit, but again, there has not been time to tackle this area of work in addition to safeguarding. This report contains recommendations on how safeguarding, looked after children and adoptions could all be effectively scrutinised in future. It should be noted that the scrutiny work that is required after this review is different to that undertaken by the Task Group since May 2012. This review has required an intense, investigative approach, whereas future work should adopt a more traditional challenge, oversight and scrutinising role.

Methodology

<u>Membership</u>

18.   The Task Group had the following membership:

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

<u>Overall approach</u>

19.   Having agreed its terms of reference, the Task Group considered how it could play a role in scrutinising the delivery of improvements and developing better safeguarding arrangements in Wiltshire. It quickly became apparent that safeguarding is a wide-ranging and complex area: Many agencies and multi-agency bodies are involved and some of them have overlapping memberships and responsibilities. This is not to mention the wide range of services with specific safeguarding remits and the complex statutory procedures that must be followed. The Improvement Plan is itself over 60 pages long and contains more than 40 improvement milestones. Given these factors, the Task Group agreed the following approach to its work:

a) The Task Group would focus on specific themes rather than attempt to cover everything. It should not attempt to replicate the work of the Improvement Board in monitoring the delivery of the Improvement Plan in its entirety. Instead, the Task Group should work in collaboration with the Board whilst maintaining its independence, and choose specific safeguarding themes to focus on. These were:

1. **Communications**
2. **Children's social care workforce**
3. **Locality working**
4. **Members and safeguarding**

b) The Task Group should not attempt to attempt to conduct the review as 'technical experts' in safeguarding. The Centre for Public Scrutiny states, "Overview and Scrutiny provides a view from the local community including a lay perspective of services and experiences… It is important that Overview and Scrutiny committees are not seen as professional auditors or performance managers but are involved in providing a 'reality

check' on services. They have a potentially crucial role in influencing the ways in which safeguarding arrangements are framed and developed and making sure that barriers to effective safeguarding arrangements are identified, tackled and removed." ('Safeguarding Children Scrutiny Guide' – Centre for Public Scrutiny, 2009)

Training and guidance

20.   In order to gain a broad understanding of safeguarding, the Task Group undertook training sessions with the Head of Community Safeguarding at Wiltshire Council, and Tom Narducci, a senior consultant from the NSPCC. The Task Group also appointed Mr Narducci, plus an elected peer mentor, to act as expert advisors and guide the Task Group's work:

- Tom Narducci, Senior Consultant at the NSPCC. Tom's role included providing bespoke safeguarding training; advising on how the review should be conducted; advising on potential lines of questioning during meetings; and quality assuring the Task Group's final report.

- Cllr Patricia Arculus, West Sussex County Council. Cllr Arculus is a member of the LGA's Peer Mentor Scheme, a former chairman of West Sussex County Council's Community Services Select Committee and has previously been their Cabinet Member for Children's and Young People's Services.

21.   The Task Group would like the thank Mr Narducci and Cllr Arculus for their invaluable assistance in conducting this review.

Gathering evidence

22.   The Task Group met formally on 16 occasions, in addition to further evidence-gathering activities. The Chairman and other members also attended numerous safeguarding events, including Multi Agency Forums (MAFs), Safeguarding Peer Review events, Social Care staff forums, Gateway Panels and the launch of the new safeguarding thresholds document.

23.   During the review, the Task Group received evidence from:

- Cabinet Member for Children's Services
- Portfolio Holder for Safeguarding
- Corporate Director with responsibility for Children's Services
- Interim Service Director for Children, Families and the Integrated Youth Service

- Joint Service Director for Commissioning and Performance
- Safeguarding Improvement Plan Project Manager
- Head of Children in Care
- Chairman of Wiltshire's Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB).
- Social workers from the Referral and Assessment team
- Child Protection Chairs – these chair child protection conferences
- Independent Reviewing Officers – these are responsible for reviewing placements for looked after children
- Team Leaders and Youth Workers from the Integrated Youth Service

24. The Task Group also met with Swindon's Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Children's Services and officers from Swindon's social care teams and the independent safeguarding unit. This was a useful opportunity to hear from another authority on what Wiltshire might learn from their approach.

25. The Task Group met twice specifically to scrutinise evidence for the delivery of the improvements set out in the Safeguarding Improvement Plan – this was requested by the Safeguarding Improvement Board. The Task Group then reported members' views on where there was, and was not, evidence for the improvement milestones having been achieved (see Appendices 2 and 3).

Safeguarding roles and responsibilities

26. Readers of this report may benefit from some understanding of responsibilities for safeguarding and the following is intended to summarise the picture:

- **All Elected Members** carry a general responsibility for safeguarding children.

- The **Cabinet Member,** the **Director of Children's Services,** the **Local Safeguarding Children's Board** and the **Children's Trust** carry specific and explicit responsibilities, which are different, but complementary:

- **Cabinet Members for Children's Services** have political responsibility for children's services overall and therefore, in most cases, responsibility for safeguarding children. However, in Wiltshire, the Leader of the Council is the Lead Member for Safeguarding and thus now holds this responsibility (see paragraph 74 for more details).

- **Directors for Children's Services** have professional responsibility for children's services, including operational matters. In most cases, they are

held to account by the Chief Executive, but in Wiltshire's case this done by the Lead Member for Safeguarding (the Leader of the Council).

- **Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCBs)** are made up of professional representatives from local authorities, health bodies, the police, schools, voluntary organisations and many other local agencies. They are the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how organisations in each local area will co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and for ensuring the effectiveness of what they do. Local authorities must establish the LSCB, but the LSCB holds the local authority to account for its safeguarding arrangements.

- **Children's Trust Boards** are local partnership arrangements for promoting children's welfare generally and for ensuring vulnerable children are receiving support to improve their outcomes and live safe, fulfilled lives. The Children's Trust Board is held to account by the LSCB.

- **Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny committees** hold officers and executive members to account.

Conclusions and recommendations

Communications

27. One of the Task Group's biggest concerns about Ofsted's 2012 inspection of Wiltshire is that the safeguarding failings identified seemed to have taken everyone by surprise. A large amount of safeguarding data was being collated and a large number of individuals, services and multi-agency groups were responsible for monitoring, interpreting and acting upon it. However, this failed to identify deficiencies in the safeguarding practice taking place 'on the ground'.

28. Within Ofsted's report, Wiltshire received a grade of 'Inadequate' for 'Performance management and quality assurance'. Ineffective oversight seems to have pervaded all levels of the system, from social care managers responsible for quality assuring casework, to multi-agency coordinating bodies such as the LSCB. The Ofsted report states,

> "Although some issues of poor practice had been identified by children's social care improvement board prior to the inspection commencing, case file audits, performance monitoring arrangements by the Boards and single agency management oversight had all failed to identify key areas of risk or non-compliance with statutory

guidance…This led to some children being left experiencing ongoing risk of serious harm." (para 57)

"Performance monitoring and quality assurance functions carried out by the Children's Trust, WSCB and elected members have all failed to identify the significant failings in child protection services." (para 17)

29. For this reason, it is vital that information about all child protection work is communicated more effectively in future. This includes performance information in respect of child protection or child in need cases so that areas of possible concern can be identified early. It also includes communicating and promoting – within the Council and across the partner agencies – the many developments in safeguarding practice that have been initiated since the Ofsted inspection.

Safeguarding data

30. At present, the Improvement Board receives a large amount of data relating to all areas of safeguarding, for example, figures showing the number of children in need and the percentage of child protection referrals which led to initial assessment. Similar information is monitored and scrutinised by many other groups and individuals from various local agencies.

31. The Task Group believe it is essential that only one 'master' set of these indicators is compiled, and that there is cross-agency agreement about how it is collected, by whom, and how and when it is circulated and presented. Multiple sources of this information could lead to discrepancies and a general lack of clarity and agreement about what is taking place on the ground. This could mean that potential areas for concern are not identified or addressed. Having one agreed process for collecting and circulating this data will also avoid duplication of effort.

32. Different audiences will have different requirements and the 'master' set of indicators should be designed in such a way that data can be included or excluded depending on the needs of the audience. There will also be different preferences in terms of the guidance that accompanies the raw data, but it should be remembered that data is only useful when the audience understands the story it is telling. Shropshire Council's safeguarding KPI sheet is a good example of an attractive, user-friendly way to present safeguarding data (attached at Appendix 4).

Recommendation

R1. **A single 'master' set of safeguarding performance indicators should be collated and circulated to all relevant local bodies. This should;**

   a. **Be designed in such a way that more detailed data can be included or excluded depending on the needs of the audience, but there should be only one master set;**

   b. **Where, necessary, include historic and benchmarking data and include brief analysis, so that the document serves as an effective sign-post to what is happening;**

   c. **The Council's Communications and/or Performance teams should be enlisted to make this document inviting and accessible to as wide an audience as possible;**

   d. **It should be clear to all parties who is responsible for collating and circulating this data, to whom and when.**

Social Care Bulletins

33. Since March 2012, the Council has produced weekly Social Care Bulletins which provide a general update on developments in the Council's children's social care teams and on relevant forthcoming events. An example is attached at Appendix 5. These are circulated to all staff in the children and families teams, amongst other relevant groups and individuals.

34. Anecdotally, the Task Group understand that officers and members do not read the Bulletins consistently and it is felt they could be briefer and more inviting to the reader. It is also noted that the Bulletins only include activity relating to the Council's social care teams, even though safeguarding is a multi-agency responsibility.

Recommendations

R2. **The weekly Social Care Bulletins should be redesigned to be shorter, clearer and more inviting to the reader. The Communications team should be enlisted in the re-design process.**

R3. **In addition to the Social Care Bulletin, the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children's Board (WSCB) should coordinate a multi-agency**

safeguarding bulletin, produced co-operatively by the relevant local agencies, to communicate and promote the ongoing changes to safeguarding in Wiltshire. Wiltshire Council's Communications team should be enlisted in making this an accessible and inviting document to read.

Safeguarding and Adoptions Improvement Board and Plan

35. On two occasions during its review, the Task Group were asked by the Improvement Board to scrutinise evidence for the achievement of the improvement milestones set out in the Improvement Plan. The Task Group then reported back to the Improvement Board on where members felt there was, and was not, sufficient evidence that milestones had been reached.

36. The Task Group feel that some of the milestones within the Improvement Plan are too non-specific to be useful, measurable targets, and this makes it difficult to assess whether improvements are being achieved or not. Members particularly note the use of the word 'some' within certain milestones (as in 'some evidence…', 'some good feedback…') as not being specific enough to represent useful targets. (It is noted, however, that the use of the term was taken from Ofsted's own inspection framework).

37. The current Improvement Plan also puts the onus on those scrutinising it to decide what evidence sources or outcomes might demonstrate the delivery of each milestone. This makes undertaking robust 'check-and-challenge' more difficult, which represents a potential threat to effective oversight – something that was identified by Ofsted as needing significant improvement.

38. The Improvement Plan is the key document setting out all of the necessary improvements to safeguarding, plus the actions that underlie them. It is therefore crucial that it is designed in such a way that enables the effective monitoring and scrutiny of the improvements it contains.

    Recommendations:

    R4. All milestones within the Safeguarding and Adoptions Improvement Plan should be SMART, i.e. Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

    R5. Each milestone within the Safeguarding and Adoptions Improvement Plan should be accompanied by a list of those indicators that illustrate whether it has been achieved or not.

R6. Any groups scrutinising the delivery of the Safeguarding and Adoptions Improvement Plan should be provided with a 'RAG-rated' exception report highlighting which milestones are slipping (i.e. red or amber milestones).

R7. A 'SMART' approach needs to be taken to *all* reports illustrating the delivery of safeguarding improvements, especially when the Safeguarding and Adoptions Improvement Board is disbanded.

Safeguarding Peer Liaison post

39.	During this review, the Task Group met professionals who were unsure about the options and next steps available when they have concerns about a child or young person's welfare. When concerned about a child's immediate safety professionals know to contact the Council's child protection team (a tier 3 service). However, there is more confusion around the tier 2 services, which are appropriate when level of concern is lower. It may be, for example, that all that is required is some liaison between the relevant agencies or gaining some support for the child or their family (such as parenting support). This situation causes anxiety, may inhibit professionals from seeking support and could potentially delay a child or family from receiving important services.

40.	The Task Group notes that, in its report, Ofsted stated that, "Schools and health partners…comment favourably on the advice, guidance and information they can access when seeking clarification as to whether a concern should be a referral." (para 40) However, this does not match the Task Group's experience during its evidence-gathering.

41.	The Task Group also received evidence that when professionals contact Referral and Assessment regarding cases, they sometimes receive only a "yes" or "no" response regarding whether the case requires a tier 3 service. While this may lead to the appropriate service being accessed, a fuller dialogue that includes why the case did or did not reach the tier 3 threshold would lead to greater learning.

42.	The Task Group believe that professionals across Wiltshire would benefit from having access to an officer whose dedicated role is to provide advice and guidance on all of the support services available and how they can be accessed. It is noted that the Portfolio Holder for Safeguarding and the Corporate Director with responsibility for Children's Services have indicated a possible move towards a 'triage-based' multi-agency contact and referral service; the Task Group feel that it would be appropriate for the proposed 'Safeguarding Peer Liaison' post to sit within either this team or with the CAF Coordinators' team.

43.   It is recognised that any new post represents an additional financial cost to the Council. However, the improved communication of safeguarding services and thresholds that would result should lead to a reduction in referrals to children's social care as well as more efficient working in general, which would mitigate any immediate additional cost.

Recommendation:

R8.   Wiltshire Council should create a new, permanent 'Safeguarding Peer Liaison' post to give professionals around Wiltshire advice and guidance on the appropriate courses of action and tiers of services for potential child in need or child protection cases.

Multi-Agency Forums (MAFs)

44.   Wiltshire now has a Multi-Agency Forum (MAFs) in nearly all community areas, with 16 MAFs in place. MAFs are a forum where frontline practitioners share issues, information, expertise to help address the difficulties of individual local children, young people and families. Their purpose is to promote and deliver early intervention for vulnerable children and young people aged 0-19 in their communities through integrated working between all children's services practitioners at a local level.

45.   Ofsted commented favourably on Wiltshire's MAFs as "proving to be effective in delivering early interventions. Although in varying stages of maturity, where they have been working the longest, multi-agency interventions are effective in providing a 'team around the child' (TAC) approach." (para 41)

46.   Having attended MAF meetings in several areas, the Task Group found there to be some inconsistency in MAFs' operation, particularly in regards to attendance from all of the appropriate teams and agencies. Given the nature of the issues being discussed at MAF meetings, it is particularly important that each one is attended by a professional who can give advice and guidance on child protection matters. This could be the Peer Liaison Post proposed under **Recommendation 8** or a social worker with the appropriate skills and knowledge. Historically, social workers have not consistently attended Multi Agency Forums (MAF) and this has been detrimental to some MAFs' ability to make informed decisions. This may ultimately have led to a greater number of referrals being made to the Referral and Assessment team which could have been resolved at an earlier stage.

Recommendations:

R9. **It should be ensured that all Multi Agency Forums (MAFs) are attended by the Peer Liaison Post proposed under Recommendation 8 (or a social worker with the appropriate skills and knowledge) as a matter of course. Future Scrutiny of safeguarding should include the monitoring of attendance at MAFs.**

R10. **Future scrutiny to include considering how the Council currently quality-assures the operation of Multi Agency Forums, including if and how appropriate attendance is ensured.**

Referral and Assessment – Children's Social Care

47.   The Task Group received evidence that social workers do not consistently communicate with youth workers about cases that they had referred to the Referral and Assessment team (the gateway to tier 3 services). Youth workers reported that their telephone calls were sometimes not returned and that social workers were often unable to answer questions about their colleagues' cases. The Ofsted report states that "[Schools and health partners] report feedback is not routinely given on referrals they make and where it is the quality is reported as variable but improving." (para 40)

48.   Youth workers also reported that once they had referred cases to Referral and Assessment they sometimes played no further role in the process. When conducting the initial assessment, social workers did not always liaise with the youth worker regarding the young person or their background. The youth workers commented that because the social worker is often a stranger to the young person, the young person is less likely to engage fully with the assessment process. Youth workers are often seen by young people and their families as their main point of contact with the Council. The failure to involve them may therefore lead to the social worker having a less informed sense of the case, and to the young person feeling less supported.

Recommendation:

R11. **Whenever possible and appropriate, youth workers must be involved up to and including the initial assessment stage when they have made the referral to the children's social care team, in order to**

   a. Harness the youth worker's knowledge of the young person and their situation; and

b. Maintain the youth worker as a supportive presence in the young person's life during the assessment process.

They should also receive feedback on the outcome of the initial assessment.

49. The Task Group were pleased to note that, following concerns expressed by members, youth workers have now been given access rights to Care First – the case management system used by social care. This has improved youth workers ability to monitor any ongoing cases they had referred 'upwards' to Referral and Assessment.

Children's Social Care Workforce

50. Throughout this review, professionals have emphasised to the Task Group the value of having established working relationships with specific individuals in other teams and agencies. This was also emphasised by officers from Swindon Borough Council during the Task Group's visit. The use of agency workers, which tend to be more short-term than permanent appointments, inhibits the development of close working relationships. Also, when an agency social worker leaves it means a full caseload must be reallocated across the team, which can be disruptive for staff and for the members of the public involved. A young person's social worker can sometimes be their only stable and reliable relationship, so it is important that they are kept as consistent as possible. Changing a young person's social worker can also force them to re-tell their story more than is necessary.

51. Unfortunately, Wiltshire Council currently uses agency social workers to a greater extent than many other local authorities, particularly in the Referral and Assessment team, although this situation has improved since the Ofsted inspection:

Table 1 – Children's Social Care – Staff Ratios (end of October 2012)

Team	SWs in post	Agency	Vacant	% Permanent	% Agency
Referral and Assessment team					
(county-wide)	36	24	8	33%	67%
Community Safeguarding teams					
North	9	1	0	89%	11%
South	9	0	1	100%	0%
East	11	3	2	72%	28%
West	14	3	3	79%	21%

52. The need to decrease the use of agency staff with children's social care has been acknowledged by the Council and a new Children's Social Care Workforce Strategy (currently out for consultation) aims to reduce the numbers of agency staff, retain a higher percentage of experienced staff and clarify the recruitment policy in the short and long term. The draft Strategy also includes a proposal to create the Council's own bank of social care staff, joining the model already in-place in adult social care services.

53. The Task Group also received evidence that social workers, particularly those that are newly qualified (NQSWs) were sometimes given too high a workload to cope with. Very high caseloads (which were reported immediately following the Ofsted inspection) could mean that there is only time for 'fire-fighting'. This is a particular concern for NQSWs, some of whom were reported to have left after just one year of practice due to the strain of such a high caseload. For comparison, Swindon Borough Council reported Referral and Assessment as having average caseloads of approximately 20 cases.

54. The Task Group acknowledges that work has already been done to reduce the size of social worker caseloads, and the results of this are illustrated in the table below. It is also noted that one reason for the large caseloads experienced previously was social workers and team managers failing to close cases down, which led to a great number of cases remaining in the system. However, these cases were not simply numbers on a spreadsheet that did not require any attention from officers: Statutory guidelines require that any cases not formally closed down must be reviewed at regular intervals. The failure to close cases down promptly when appropriate was therefore leading to a great deal of extra work.

Table 2 – Caseloads in the Referral and Assessment team

Date	Cases	Average caseload per FTE
11 July	1,740	51
14 August	1,497	45
14 September	1,124	33
8 November	1,065	34
18 December	884	32
11 February 2013	999	36

55. The Task Group believe that the development and implementation of the Children's Social Care Workforce Strategy is an important area of future focus by Scrutiny.

Recommendations:

R12. Future scrutiny of safeguarding should include a focus on:

  a. the implementation of the new Social Care Workforce Strategy, with particular regard to the use of agency workers, interim appointments and the management of caseloads for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs);

  b. the turnover of children's social care within each team

  c. the make-up of children's social care teams in terms of the proportions of temporary/agency and newly qualified staff

  d. performance indicators showing children's social care caseloads;

  e. performance indicators showing the 'throughput' of cases (because the Ofsted inspection identified that cases were being held open for longer than was necessary);

R13. These performance indicators should all be included in the master set of KPI data recommended under Recommendation 1.

56. The Task Group learned that several years ago the post of Child Protection Chair was downgraded. Child Protection Chairs lead child protection conferences, at which professionals from relevant agencies discuss what measures are necessary to protect a child's welfare. The downgrading of this role was not accompanied by a reduced salary, but Child Protection Chairs

who met the Task Group did report that the reduction in their status did give them less authority with managers in other teams and agencies. The Task Group was therefore pleased to hear that the post has now been returned to its previous grading.

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Locality working

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Co-location and hot-desking

57.   As stated above, throughout this review professionals have emphasised the value of established working relationships with specific individuals in other teams and agencies. The development of such relationships can be enhanced through co-location arrangements and Wiltshire has already taken some steps towards this through the co-location of social care officers and the Police. Some other local authorities, such as Devon County Council, have taken this a step further by establishing Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH); here, a number of services and agencies are located together in order to provide a faster, more effective assessment service for child protection cases.

58.   It has been reported that the different teams based in County Hall, Trowbridge and Bourne Hill, Salisbury Council offices are, by definition, co-located and therefore integrated. However, the Task Group believes the matter of leaving true integration to chance in this manner is not sufficient and more determined steps should be taken to ensuring the relevant professionals work together consistently.

Recommendations:

R14. The Council exploits all opportunities to co-locate and integrate different safeguarding teams and agencies in order to maximise the development of close working relationships between individuals. NB. The Task Group does not consider teams being located in the same Council hub, with the ability to hot-desk near each other, to be sufficient as it is does not guarantee regular contact between individuals, nor the development of close working relationships.

R15. Community Operations Boards are encouraged to include hot-desking provision for social workers – which must accommodate confidential conversations – in community campus projects.

59.   In 2010, the Council adopted a countywide service model for the Referral and Assessment element of children's social care. The rationale for this was that

the former patch-based referral and assessment service, under which social workers covered discrete areas of the county, was not cost effective or efficient, there was variable performance between teams, and assessments were not consistently completed within statutory timeframes.

60. Social workers from the Referral & Assessment team, as well as a range of other professionals, have reported that the countywide Referral and Assessment structure has inhibited the development of close working relationships between individuals and caused a reduction in their local knowledge. It has been reported that working with a smaller patch means that relationships with individuals from other local agencies have more opportunity to develop. Some social workers have also reported that working across the county has led to them spending a greater proportion of their time travelling, which has decreased the amount of time they can spend working. This presumably also to an increase in travel costs and carbon emissions.

61. The Portfolio Holder for Safeguarding and the Corporate Director with responsibility for Children's Services have indicated that a future model for the Referral and Assessment service might include

    i)   the referral service (the initial contact point for referrers of child protection concerns) remaining a countywide service, but adopting a more multi-agency, 'triage-based' approach; and

    ii)   the assessment service (the next step, where social care investigates concerns) reverting to a patch-based model, where social workers cover discrete areas of the county. Please see Appendix 6 for a table showing the pros and cons of each configuration, which was provided by the Portfolio Holder and Corporate Director.

62. The Task Group supports this as a future service model.

    Recommendations:

    R16. **That the Referral element of the Council's Referral & Assessment social care service is maintained as a countywide service, but incorporates a more multi-agency approach, possibly through co-location projects such as the development of a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).**

    R17. **That the Assessment element of the Council's Referral & Assessment social care service reverts to operating as a patch-based service where social workers cover discrete areas of the county in order to harness the knowledge of local professionals.**

R18. That if this service model is not adopted, future scrutiny includes the consideration of the benefits realised from the adoption of the countywide Referral & Assessment team structure, including an analysis of the time officers spend travelling, the associated cost and the environmental impact.

R19. Future scrutiny to include consideration of the Referral and Assessment service.

Service clusters

63. Currently a number of bodies and services in Wiltshire are grouped into geographical clusters e.g. schools, children's centres, youth work, area boards, which do not align with each other. The Task Group are concerned that this misalignment could pose a potential safeguarding risk.

    Recommendation:

    R20. That Cabinet makes plans to review and optimise the alignment of the various geographical clusters, where possible and appropriate.

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Members and safeguarding

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Member awareness and training

64. Protecting the welfare of children and young people effects every area of Council business and is the whole Council's responsibility. It is vital, therefore, that all members understand their own safeguarding responsibilities, whether as cabinet member, scrutiny member or an elected or co-opted member of the Council. There may be many members who do not, and research suggests that this picture is reflected at many other local authorities. The Centre for Public Scrutiny states that "There appears to be a degree of uncertainty in many areas about how elected members can best contribute to the process" (Safeguarding Children Scrutiny Guide, 2009). However, if the welfare of children and young people in Wiltshire is to be protected steps need to be taken to change this situation. In their inspection report Ofsted made it clear that elected members had failed in their task of identifying the significant failings in child protection services (para 40).

65. The local elections taking place in Wiltshire in May 2013 represent a golden opportunity to raise member awareness of safeguarding matters at the

commencement of a new Council. The Task Group is therefore making a number of recommendations in this area:

Recommendations:

(NB. In the recommendations below, 'safeguarding' refers to safeguarding children <u>and </u>vulnerable adults.)

R21. Each service section of the Councillors' Handbook 2013 (which will be a web-based resource) should include guidance on what safeguarding considerations might be relevant to that area of Council business.

R22. Following the 2013 elections, all elected members should be required to sign a statement confirming their legal duties in respect of safeguarding. This was agreed by Full Council on 26 February 2013.

R23. Following the 2013 elections, all members (including co-opted members) should undertake both corporate parenting and safeguarding training and this element of the induction should be given the highest possible profile. NB. The Task Group notes how the training provided for the Task Group by the NSPCC focused on the specific safeguarding roles and responsibilities of members. It therefore strongly recommends that this is repeated for all members within the 2013 member induction process.

R24. Following the 2013 councillor induction, the Councillor Development Group should

a. implement an ongoing programme of safeguarding training specifically aimed at members who did not attend safeguarding training during the induction programme and at members elected following by-elections; and

b. work with Group Leaders to maximise the number of members who complete this training.

R25. Following the 2013 elections, all members should receive an 'easy-reference' guide to safeguarding. This should explain in plain terms the roles and responsibilities of the various bodies and individuals involved, elected member' specific responsibilities, plus key contact details.

R26. Following the 2013 elections, all elected and co-opted members of the Children's Select Committee should undertake further child safeguarding training, designed to enable them to perform their scrutiny role. Committee members should also undertake an ongoing programme of refresher training in order to keep up with new legislation and the outcomes of serious case reviews etc.

R27. All members of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel (which is proposed under Recommendation 35) should undertake further safeguarding training, designed to enable them to perform their additional Panel role (just as members of the Corporate Parenting Panel undertake two days of 'Total Respect' training).

Scrutiny of safeguarding

66.   Historically, Overview and Scrutiny at Wiltshire Council has not focused on the issue of safeguarding. Safeguarding work undertaken by the Children's Select Committee's (and its predecessor committees) has been limited to receiving the Annual Report and Business Plan of the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children's Board (WSCB). Due to the size of this document and perhaps members' lack of familiarity with the subject, receiving this report may well have had negligible impact on practice or outcomes. Analysis of the Committee's resolutions shows that in most cases the WSCB Annual Reports and Business cases were simply noted (see Table 3 below).

Table 3 – Scrutiny of the LSCB Annual reports and business plans

LSCB Annual Report & Business Plan	Children's Select Committee's resolution
2007/8	Noted and further information requested
2008/9	Noted
2009/10	Noted
2010/11	Noted (though this was received by the Task Group and other detailed scrutiny was now underway)

67.   Once again, there is little evidence of more focused or innovative approaches being taken to scrutinising safeguarding arrangements at other local authorities. This is despite the fact that the Centre for Public Scrutiny state that, "Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) have a potentially crucial role in influencing the ways in which safeguarding arrangements are framed and developed and making sure that barriers to effective safeguarding arrangements are identified, tackled and removed. OSCs need to ensure that

every scrutiny activity relating to children's services includes a focus on safeguarding."

68.   It should also be noted that inspections undertaken by Ofsted prior to March 2012 did not find significant failings in Wiltshire's safeguarding arrangements. Unannounced inspections of the Council's contact, referral and assessment arrangements in 2010 and in 2011 reported a balance of strengths with areas for improvement, but did not raise alarm at children being at risk as a result of any weaknesses identified. This emphasises that the Council should not to rely solely on occasional, external monitoring, but must have robust internal scrutiny arrangements in place as well.

69.   The Safeguarding and Adoptions Improvement Board will continue to exist until the DfE is satisfied that the required improvements have been completed and lifts Wiltshire's Improvement Notice. The Notice requires that the Council aims achieve this by **December 2013**. However, even if this timescale is achieved, the Task Group believes that there will still be a significant job to be done in terms of instilling a culture of robust challenge, maximising cross-team and cross-agency working, and ensuring that safeguarding permeates every area of Council business. In addition, when the Improvement Board disbands, the WSCB will re-acquire many of the coordinating and monitoring responsibilities that the Improvement Board has been undertaking since its formation; this alone will be an important transition that deserves close member scrutiny. The Task Group therefore recommends that a scrutiny task group should continue to focus on safeguarding for at least 18 months after the Improvement Board has been disbanded.

70.   Although a safeguarding task group is still required, its role will be different to the one performed by this task group over the last ten months. For this review, Ofsted's findings have require an intense, investigative approach, with a busy schedule of meetings and other evidence-gathering activities. Realistically, this cannot be sustained in the long term. Additionally, the necessary emphasis on safeguarding has meant that the Task Group has not scrutinised services for LAC – this cannot continue either.

71.   In November, the Children's Select Committee asked the Task Group to add adoption services to its remit, but again, there has not been time to tackle this area of work in addition to safeguarding. At the time of writing, the Council's adoption service is being inspected by Ofsted and any findings and subsequent action plans will be published in the coming weeks. The Task Group recommends that this and any other ad hoc scrutiny activities should be undertaken through rapid scrutiny exercises established when appropriate by the Children's Select Committee.

72.   The Task Group have recommended closer future engagement between Scrutiny and the WSCB. As the key coordinating body for safeguarding children and young people in Wiltshire, it is important that elected members are aware of the WSCB's activities and monitor its effectiveness, including whether the objectives set out in its annual business plan are addressed in practice.

73.   The Task Group have also recommended that a programme of Scrutiny member engagement with safeguarding services is introduced. The Task Group's experience has been that officers have welcomed and valued elected members taking a direct interest in their safeguarding work, and in future this should include members visiting the relevant teams and experiencing their work firsthand where appropriate. In addition, elected members also learn a great deal though face-to-face meetings with these frontline officers – something that cannot be replicated by receiving reports.

Recommendations:

R28.   The Children's Select Committee and the WSCB should agree a memorandum of understanding to clarify their future working arrangements.

R29.   Future scrutiny of safeguarding should include consideration of a mid-term *and* annual report from the WSCB, including figures showing WSCB member attendance.

R30.   Future scrutiny of safeguarding should include comparisons between the WSCB's Business Plan and the minutes of its meetings in order to ensure that its agreed objectives are being addressed.

R31.   A programme of Scrutiny member engagement with safeguarding services (at a range of locations) should be developed, including member visits to safeguarding teams and attendance at officer safeguarding training.

R32.   The Children's Select Committee to re-establish the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group with the following terms of reference:

    1. To monitor the implementation of any recommendations made by the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group that are endorsed by the Children's Select Committee and accepted by the executive.

2. **To scrutinise Wiltshire Council's delivery of improvements to safeguarding children and young people as set out in the Safeguarding and Adoptions Improvement Plan.**

3. **To receive a twice-annual report from the Council's Lead Member for Safeguarding Children and Young People providing details of their safeguarding activity.**

4. **To continue/conduct ongoing scrutiny of services for Looked After Children (LAC).**

5. **To work in collaboration with the Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel to clarify future joint-working arrangements [the establishment of which is proposed under Recommendation 35]**

R33. The Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group should

a. **continue its work for at least 18 months after the Safeguarding Improvement Board has been disbanded;**

b. **receive an update on the work of the Safeguarding Improvement Board (SIB), or from the WSCB upon the SIB's demise, at each meeting;**

R34. The Children's Select Committee to establish rapid scrutiny exercises when appropriate to undertake related additional tasks, such as considering the outcomes of the recent Ofsted inspection of the Council's adoptions service and the monitoring of any required improvements.

Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel

74. In considering how to ensure effective future scrutiny of safeguarding, the Task Group has been mindful of the good work done in regards to services for Looked After Children (LAC) by the Placements for LAC Task Group and the Corporate Parenting Panel, both of which were praised in Ofsted's inspection report. These two bodies have played different but complementary roles in improving these services: The Task Group conducted traditional scrutiny of budget management and performance, holding the executive to account for its decisions. Meanwhile the Corporate Parenting Panel (which is chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Safeguarding and whose membership includes both members and officers) played a more collaborative role, engaging with the

relevant teams, agencies and service users to prioritise and promote the needs of LAC and their carers.

75. Given this experience, the Task Group recommends that a similar dual body arrangement is adopted for scrutinising, developing and promoting the safeguarding of all children and young people in Wiltshire. Mindful of the additional member commitment that the proposed Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel will entail, the Task Group also recommends that the Council considers reducing the elected membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Recommendations:

R35. The Council to establish a Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel. This should be <u>in addition to</u> robust scrutiny of safeguarding, undertaken by the Children's Select Committee or a task group. The advantages of such a 'dual body' arrangement have already been witnessed with the former Placements for LAC Task Group and the Corporate Parenting Panel, with the former conducting scrutiny of budget management and performance and the latter focusing on developing the best care arrangements for looked after children.

   The Panel should be run in a similar manner to the Corporate Parenting Panel, in the following ways:

   - **membership to include both members and officers**
   - **close liaison with the broad range of teams and local agencies**
   - **involving parents, children and young people (when appropriate) to develop policy**
   - **a clearly defined and mutually agreed distinction between the Panel's liaising role and the monitoring and scrutinising role of Scrutiny.**

R36. In light of the additional commitment from members required by the formation of a Safeguarding Children Panel, the Council to consider reducing the elected membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Council governance of safeguarding

76. The division of responsibilities for safeguarding is potentially confusing as there are many different bodies involved with overlapping duties and

memberships. Wiltshire's structure is unusual so there may be even more potential for confusion:

- The statutory role of Lead Member for Children's Services is now technically held by the Leader of the Council. However, the Leader only performs the safeguarding element of this role and she therefore has the title of 'Lead Member for Safeguarding'. The other areas of children's services (education etc) are overseen by the Lead Member for Children's Services, although this member does not actually hold the statutory post (it is held by the Leader of the Council).

- The Lead Member for Safeguarding is supported by the Portfolio Holder for Safeguarding.

- The Safeguarding and Adoptions Improvement Board is a temporary body, set up following the Ofsted inspection to oversee the necessary improvements. It is therefore undertaking duties that would normally be the responsibility of the WSCB. The WSCB itself is ongoing and is undertaking a review of its structures and processes. Once the Improvement Board is disbanded, the WSCB will reacquire its full role of coordinating and monitoring safeguarding activity across the county.

- Because Wiltshire Council does not have a Chief Executive, the Corporate Director with responsibility for children's services is ultimately held to account for the Council's safeguarding arrangements by the Leader of the Council.

77. Any confusion around safeguarding roles and responsibilities poses a threat to the necessary improvements being achieved. The Task Group therefore recommends that a clear and user-friendly document is created and circulated which clarifies this picture (**Recommendation 37**).

78. The Task Group has recommended that all members of the Council undertake relevant safeguarding training, plus specific additional training for members of the Children's Select Committee and the proposed Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel. Due to the ongoing programme of improvements, the Lead Member and Portfolio Holder for Safeguarding have already undertaken relevant training as well as receiving peer support from other local authorities. However, the Task Group believe that a set, rolling programme of safeguarding training for the relevant executive members should be introduced. This will ensure that whoever holds these positions in the future will have the necessary expertise (**Recommendation 38**).

79. In 2011 the Cabinet of Wiltshire Council approved a new senior management structure that removed the post of Chief Executive. This meant that Corporate Directors now held the most senior officer posts and reported directly to the Leader. The new structure meant that each of the corporate directors, including the corporate director with responsibility for children's services, took on additional corporate responsibilities, such as legal, human resources or finance.

80. The Task Group considered the 'Statutory Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services', produced by the Department for Education. The 2012 version of the guidance includes the following paragraph[1]:

> "It is legally permissible for the DCS and LMCS roles to be combined with other operational and political functions of the local authority. However, given the breadth and importance of children's services functions that the DCS and LMCS cover, local authorities should give due consideration to protecting the discrete roles and responsibilities of the DCS and LMCS before allocating any additional functions to individuals performing these roles. In particular, local authorities should undertake a **local test of assurance** so that the focus on outcomes for children and young people will not be weakened or diluted as a result of adding such other responsibilities (see paras 13-16 below). Given the demanding nature of the DCS and LMCS roles, local authorities should consider *all* aspects of any combined posts…" (para 10)

81. Given this guidance, the Task Group considered the steps the Council had taken prior to restructuring its senior management to ensure that the proposed changes would be legal and that the Council's arrangements for safeguarding would remain robust and effective. These steps included taking internal and external legal advice, consulting other local authorities and the chairman of the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children's Board, and putting in place external review arrangements. The Task Group also received a 'Test of assurance' report carried out on behalf of the Council by an independent reviewer. The report concluded that there was no suggestion or evidence that the additional roles of the Corporate Director who holds the statutory role of Director for Children's Services, compromises or impacts on their ability to fulfil these responsibilities. The report did recommend that a further assessment should be undertaken and the overall capacity of the corporate directors should be reviewed again once the necessary improvements in safeguarding had been established.

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[1] The 2009 guidance, which was in place at the time of the restructuring, contains a similar paragraph.

82. The Task Group recommends that an ongoing programme of tests of assurance should be implemented to ensure that the statutory safeguarding responsibilities of both the director for children's services and the Lead Member for Children's Services are being met.

83. The Task Group believe that putting safeguarding at the centre of all Council business should be a priority for the future. A simple and effective way of encouraging this would be to include a 'Safeguarding considerations' section in **all reports** to Wiltshire Council committees, including Cabinet.

R37. A clear and user-friendly document is created and circulated setting out the differing safeguarding roles and responsibilities of the Safeguarding Improvement Board (SIB), the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children's Board (WSCB), the Children's Trust, the Portfolio Holder and Lead Member for Safeguarding, Children and Young People and Children's Select Committee. This document should be complete in time for the May 2013 elections and should be reviewed prior to the Safeguarding Improvement Board being disbanded.

R38. An ongoing programme of safeguarding training is implemented for the lead executive members for safeguarding. This should be designed to reflect executive member's statutory duties as set out in legislation and in the Monroe and Laming reports and including refresher training on new legislation, serious case reviews etc.

R39. That a job specification for the lead executive members for safeguarding, reflecting their statutory duties, should be adopted.

R40. An ongoing programme of tests of assurance should be implemented to ensure that the statutory safeguarding responsibilities of the director for children's services and the Lead Member for Children's Services are being met.

R41. All reports to Wiltshire Council committees, including Cabinet, should include a dedicated 'Safeguarding considerations' section (like the 'Environmental considerations' section). This will encourage report authors, directors and members to consider how any proposals, no matter what the service area, might impact upon the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults, and what could be done to mitigate any risks. This puts safeguarding at the centre of everything the Council does.

Cllr Jon Hubbard, Chairman of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group

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Appendices

Appendix 1   DfE Improvement Notice – Wiltshire
Appendix 2   Task Group report to the Safeguarding Improvement Board – Nov 2012
Appendix 3   Task Group report to the Safeguarding Improvement Board – Jan 2013
Appendix 4   Shropshire Council – Safeguarding KPIs
Appendix 5   Social Care Bulletin example (26 November 2012)
Appendix 6   Countywide vs. patch-based Referral and Assessment service – table of pros and cons provided by the Portfolio Holder for Safeguarding and the Corporate Director with responsibility for children's services

Background documents

1. Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services – Wiltshire, April 2012 (external link)
2. Safeguarding Children Scrutiny Guide – Centre for Public Scrutiny, 2009 (external link)
3. Statutory Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services – 2009 and 2012 (external links)
4. Report to Wiltshire Council Cabinet – 'Proposal for Senior Management Restructure' – 6 October 2011
5. Test of Assurance undertaken on behalf of Wiltshire Council regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services