Wiltshire Council

Children’s Select Committee

26 January 2016

Interim report of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group

Purpose

1. To present the work undertaken by the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group (thereafter called the Task Group) and the work it proposes to undertake before the Task Group is disbanded.

Background

2. A Task Group was originally established 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.

3. 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.

4. The Task Group met on 16 occasions in addition to undertaking many other evidence-gathering activities and presented its final report, containing 41 recommendations, to the Children’s Select Committee on 28 March 2013 (link to the agenda) with an executive response given on 6 June 2013 (link to the agenda).

5. Recommendation 32 was that the Children’s Select Committee re-established the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group with new terms of reference.

6. In June 2013 the Committee re-established this Task Group and agreed it should continue working for at least 18 months.
Membership

7. The Task Group comprises the following membership:

Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman)
Mr Ken Brough (appointed by Children’s Select Committee on 3 December 2013)
Cllr Andrew Davis
Rev Alice Kemp
Cllr Bill Moss
Cllr Bridget Wayman

Terms of Reference

8. The following terms of reference, proposed in the Task Group’s final report, were endorsed by the Children’s Select Committee on 28 March 2013:

a. 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.

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

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

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

e. To work in collaboration with the Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel to clarify future joint-working arrangements.

Work to date

9. The re-established Task Group first met on 8 August 2013 and has met on 14 occasions since then (its latest meeting being on 21 January 2016) as well as additional activities such as attending Multi Agency Forum meetings.

10. The Task Group agreed to undertake ‘deep-dive’ meetings looking at particular topics in-depth, in addition to the data-focused meetings.

11. The work undertaken by the Task Group since August 2013 is highlighted in Appendix A.

12. The Task Group regularly received updates on the implementation of the 41 recommendations it had made and this was last considered on 9 September 2015.

13. The Task Group concluded that the monitoring of the implementation of the few remaining recommendations would now more appropriately be undertaken by the Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel.
14. The Task Group’s chair met with the chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel on 25 November 2015 and the areas of monitoring to be undertaken by the Children and Young People Panel were agreed as shown in Appendix B.

15. The findings of the Children and Young People Panel would be regularly presented to, and reviewed by, the Children’s Select Committee.

16. Following an inspection between 22 June and 16 July 2015 OFSTED published its report regarding the “Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers” and “Review of the effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board” on 1 September 2015 (thereafter called the OFSTED inspection / report).

17. The Task Group scrutinised the outcome of the OFSTED inspection and concluded that, although achieving “requires improvement”, it clearly evidenced progress being made compared to the previous inspection.

18. Reviewing its work to date, the latest update on the implementation of the 41 recommendations and the relatively positive outcome of the OFSTED inspection led the Task Group to question how it could best add value in its future work.

19. The Task Group concluded that it may be coming to a point where it had achieved its terms of reference as set, yet there were some specific issues it wished to scrutinise further (as listed in paragraph 25).

Key Findings

20. At its meeting on 2 December 2015 the Task Group held a deep-dive meeting focused on MAFs (Multi Agency Forum). Based on the information received at the meeting and the issues they had become aware of when attending MAF meetings, but bearing in mind that the council’s role was to facilitate, not direct, the MAFs, the task group members made six recommendations which are detailed in paragraph 32.

21. At its meeting on 21 January 2016 the Task Group reviewed the data on Missing Children as presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel. The Task Group wished to acknowledge the progress accomplished with regards to Missing Children and was pleased that issues previously identified by the Task Group had been taken into account when producing the new format for reports.

Future work

22. At the time the report was written the Task Group had two further deep-dives meeting scheduled:
   a. To review the way in which the information about Missing Young People is presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel (21 January 2016);
b. To review the internal case file audit process and the format and contents of the internal case file audit reports (8 March 2016), with a view to recommending that the Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel then undertakes the monitoring of the internal case file audit in future.

23. The Task Group invited the officers, Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holder who had engaged with the Task Group’s work, to consider the areas of work where they felt the Task Group could add value.

24. The following were highlighted by officers and the Cabinet Member as areas they had already identified for further improvement and where they would welcome some input from Overview and Scrutiny:
   a. Achieving permanency in placement for children and young people and permanence planning, although this was recognised as part of a wider issue;
   b. Early Help;
   c. Recruitment and retention of the required number of staff with the right skills and experience;
   d. The work planned to achieve at least “Good” from OFSTED, and to raise standards beyond the OFSTED framework.

25. At previous meetings the Task Group identified the following areas as potential for future work:
   a. To identify comparable Local Authorities, who achieved good at the OFSTED inspection and investigate the differences in processes with the potential to gather examples of good practice;
   b. The delays in identifying the lead professional for CAFs, investigate if any other Local Authorities have been able to effectively engage with their partners regarding CAFs;
   c. Better capturing details of reflective supervisions – efficiency of recording (easy process) and risk (where to record the information);
   d. Independent Reviewing Officers – how to make them more pro-active and ensure there is engagement between reviews (and it is recorded).

26. As shown in Appendix B the Task Group will also need to undertake further work with the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board once the newly appointed chairman of the board is in post (Recommendations 3, 28, 29 and 30 in Appendix B).

Conclusion

27. The Task Group felt that, although the following areas of work were worthwhile, they were not within the Task Group’s remit and the Task Group suggests that they be undertaken as listed below:
   a. Achieving permanency in placement for children and young people and permanence planning – to be undertaken by the Corporate Parenting Panel or the Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel;
   b. Early Help – for Children’s Select Committee to consider whether a task group should be established to focus on Early Help;
c. Recruitment and retention of the required number of staff with the right skills and experience – for Children’s Select to receive regular updates from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services.

28. The Task Group therefore proposes to undertake the following work before it is disbanded:
   a. To review the internal case file audit process and the format and contents of the internal case file audit reports (8 March 2016) – which would include better capturing details of reflective supervisions – efficiency of recording (easy process) and risk (where to record the information);
   b. Meeting with the WSCB Chair to agree the way in which recommendations 3, 28, 29 and 30, as shown in Appendix B, will be implemented and for the task group to establish how the monitoring of the implementation of these recommendations will be undertaken;
   c. “Getting to Good” – to review the work planned to achieve at least “Good” from OFSTED, and to raise standards beyond the OFSTED framework. To identify comparable Local Authorities, who achieved good at the OFSTED inspection and investigate the differences in processes with the potential to gather examples of good practice. This would include investigating if any other Local Authorities have been able to effectively engage with their partners regarding CAFs (to avoid delays in identifying the lead professional);
   d. Independent Reviewing Officers – how to make them more pro-active and ensure there is engagement between reviews (and it is recorded). Although this may be addressed when reviewing good practice as per c. above.

Recommendations

That the Children’s Select Committee

29. Notes the work undertaken by the Task Group so far;

30. Endorses the future work for the Task Group (as listed in paragraph 28);

31. Considers the establishment of a task group focused on Early Help;

32. Endorses the following recommendations from the Task Group regarding MAFs and refers them to the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services for response at the Committee’s next meeting:
   a. That the council should clearly state what it sees as the current purpose of the MAF which would then inform the terms of reference for the MAFs.
   b. That the council should work on the standardisation of the Terms of Reference for the MAFs to include the following as a requisite:
      • Regular discussion of cases
      • Meetings timings to allow for schools to attend
      • Expectation that all schools would attend (head teacher, SENCO or any other appropriate representative)
c. That the Council should produce template description of the job role for the MAF chair.
d. That the Council should undertake comprehensive quantitative and qualitative reporting to monitor the effectiveness of MAFs which would be regularly reported to and monitored by the Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel.
e. That there should be a clear line of responsibility for MAFs through head of service to associate director level within the council.
f. That the figures used to report on MAFs should include:
   • CAFs number “against” the child population for that community area (e.g. x per 1000);
   • More accurate way of reporting attendance of MAF (especially for schools).

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

Report author: Marie Gondlach, Senior Scrutiny Officer
01225 713 597      marie.gondlach@wiltshire.gov.uk

Appendices
Appendix A – agenda items / work to date
Appendix B – 41 recommendations update

Background documents
None