

Title of paper:	Report of the Chair of the Nottingham Safeguarding Children Board to the Children's Partnership Board	
Report to:	Children's Partnership Board	
Date:	19 th May 2010	
Director(s)/Corporate Director(s):	Ian Curryer, Corporate Director, Children and Families	Wards affected: All
Contact Officer(s) and contact details:	Margaret McGlade Independent Chair of the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board Tel: 0115 962 0359	
Other officers who have provided input:	N/A	

Relevant Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) objectives(s):

Provide early, effective support and protection to children, young people and families	X
Nurture and support strong, healthy families	X
Increase children and young people's emotional resilience and the maturity of their decision-making	X
Ensure that all our children, young people and families are provided with a sound foundation for lifelong learning and progression into skilled economic activity	X
Reduce deprivation and its impact on children and young people	X

Summary of issues (including benefits to customers/service users):

There are a number of areas where action is needed to ensure that the Board is able to provide the necessary co ordination of work to safeguard children.

The independent reviewing service, which provides the independent chairing of child protection conferences, strategy meetings and reviews where children are considered to be at risk of significant harm, and of reviews of looked after children's plans is not currently staffed to enable it to carry out its function adequately. Vacancies and sickness absence in this small team of 9 means that agency staff are providing the majority of this function. Recruitment difficulties have been ongoing for two years and will apparently continue at least until November 2010 when wider issues concerned with single status are resolved. The recruitment of agency staff is a management response to this, but it is not satisfactory given the length of time this problem has continued. This means that a key part of the case management process which should be providing robust quality assurance to the LSCB and its participating agencies is not functioning as it should be. This presents a significant risk to safeguarding activity in Nottingham. Targets in the performance report showing red are related to the problems of staffing this service

Although we have established robust relationships between the CP Board and the LSCB, we do not have a formal written protocol between the two bodies setting out how a range of functions in relation to vulnerable children are to be carried out and how they are accountable. This requires work to be undertaken both by the CPB and LSCB

The Board also does not have a clear strategy for how it ensures the participation of Children, young people parents and carers in its work. However we may be close to resolving this by ensuring that it is incorporated in the participation strategy for the Children's Trust

Recommendations:	
1	Considerable progress has been made in relation to the Boards functions. However the issues set out in paragraph 5 of the report need to be resolved. The issue of the Independent reviewing service is particularly urgent. The Children's Partnership is asked to seek an urgent resolution of this through the employing agency, the City Council.
2	Trust Board and LSCB staff progress the matter of a formal protocol between the two Boards and the matter of supporting the participation of children and carers in the work of the LSCB as a matter of urgency

Report of the Chair of the Nottingham Safeguarding Children Board to the Children's Partnership Board 19 May 2010

1. Introduction

1.1 This is the report of the Independent Chair of the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board to the Children's Partnership Board. This report builds on the first report to the Board on 19 September 2009, which included the functions and membership of the Board and its relationship to the Trust Board. These are that

- The Board has 2 functions to:
 - coordinate multiagency arrangements to protect children
 - ensure the effectiveness of what is done to protect children in Nottingham
 The Safeguarding Children Board consists of senior representatives of all the statutory agencies with a responsibility to protect children meeting with specialist advisers and representatives from professional groups and third sector organisations.
- Whilst the Board coordinates and ensures it is not operationally responsible for safeguarding services. That remains the responsibility of the Chief Executives of the participating agencies.

2. Summary of LSCB Activity since September 09

2.1 The Board has met 3 times since September 09 and is well represented at an appropriately senior level by partner agencies. Structural change and new appointments in partner agencies means that there has been significant change in key membership. Maintaining continuity of purpose through change needs focus, as relationships play an important part in interagency leadership and need time to develop

2.2. The Board has been strengthened by the appointment of a performance management officer who has recently arrived and will develop the quality of the Board's work to ensure effectiveness. Other unavoidable staffing changes in a very small team slow the speed of progress.

2.3 The Board has implemented the outcome of its review of its governance arrangements and now has well functioning subgroups undertaking the detailed work in relation to the Board functions. The Public Information and Communication sub group needs further development having experienced a change of both officer support and chair since September. A number of Task and Delivery Groups dealing with specific areas of the boards business need to be recommissioned.

2.4 The Department of Children Schools and Families has issued revised guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children, and the constitution and work of the Board will need to be reviewed. Membership now needs to include two independent members and increase representation from the school sector. The current constitution is already compliant with two recommended changes; that the lead member for Children should attend as an observer, and that the DCS should be a member.

3 Summary of work to coordinate multiagency arrangements to protect children and to ensure the effectiveness of what is done to protect children in Nottingham

3.1 The overarching policy and procedure which is prepared jointly with the County LSCB has been revised but will need further revision in the light of the new Working Together guidance. Guidance relating to the protection of unborn babies who may need to be removed at birth has been completed and child Sexual Abuse Guidance re almost complete. The Board has contributed to the development of the 2010 refresh of the Joint Strategic needs assessment and the new Children and Young People's strategic plan, and developed its training programme.

3.2. Agencies have completed their internal audit of their compliance with their 2004 Children Act section 11 duty to cooperate to safeguard children; the Board has developed a risk register as part of its internal governance; and arrangements are in hand to produce a programme of multiagency case audit of interagency work to protect children. Arrangements are also in hand to produce the annual report on effectiveness required by the revised Working Together.

3.3 One Serious case review has been completed and published since the last report. The Executive summary is to be found on the Safeguarding Children Board website. The two key messages from this review are the need for workers within adult services to be sufficiently child focused and alert to safeguarding children of the household especially when dealing with drug, alcohol, mental health or domestic violence issues especially in combination and for effective management support and supervision. Secondly the continuing need for focus within agencies on operating to agreed procedures especially in relation to interagency communication

3.4 The Child Death Overview Panel has reported to the Board, and at a future meeting the Chair of this panel, the Designated Doctor for Child Protection would appreciate the opportunity to present her report to the Board. It would therefore be appropriate to invite her to join me at the October meeting when I present the LCSB annual report to the CYB.

4 Agency performance in relation to safeguarding.

4.1 This will be the subject of the new annual report, currently being prepared. Some current issues are as follows.

4.2 Children's services have had a positive unannounced inspection by Ofsted of its reception and assessment service, and have received an overall good rating in its annual performance rating exercise. This is commendable progress. However staffing pressures from the ongoing shortage of qualified social workers means this progress cannot be taken for granted and a key risk for safeguarding in Nottingham remains the challenge to maintain a full complement of permanent qualified and well trained social work staff. The performance report routinely presented to this Board show a number of areas of significant concern where targets are not being met. Child protection activity in social care locally as nationally has remained substantially above the 2008 pre Baby Peter levels.

4.3 All of the local Health Trusts were able to declare compliance with the CQC standards in Child protection as part of the new registration process for Health Service providers. As with social workers a national shortage of health visitors is a concern to health trust managers. The reorganisation of Community Health Services, known as Transforming Community Services has potential to impact on these services in future

4.4. Whilst not directly affecting Safeguarding services, issues of the Police service performance recently receiving publicity locally needs to be noted for its potential to impact on police performance in child protection.

5 Issues of immediate concern

5.1 There are a number of areas where action is needed to ensure that the Board is able to provide the necessary co ordination of work to safeguard children.

5.2. The independent reviewing service, which provides the independent chairing of child protection conferences, strategy meetings and reviews where children are considered to be at risk of significant harm, and of reviews of looked after children's plans is not currently staffed to enable it to carry out its function adequately. Vacancies and sickness absence in this small team of 9 means that agency staff are providing the majority of this function. Recruitment difficulties have been ongoing for two years and will apparently continue at least until November 2010 when wider issues concerned with single status are resolved. The recruitment of agency staff is a management response to this, but it is not satisfactory given the length of time this problem has continued. This means that a key part of the case management process which should be providing robust quality assurance to the LSCB and its participating agencies is not functioning as it should be. This presents a significant risk to safeguarding activity in Nottingham. Targets in the performance report showing red are related to the problems of staffing this service

5.3 Although we have established robust relationships between the CP Board and the LSCB, we do not have a formal written protocol between the two bodies setting out how a range of functions in relation to vulnerable children are to be carried out and how they are accountable. This requires work to be undertaken both by the CPB and LSCB

5.4 The Board also does not have a clear strategy for how it ensures the participation of Children, young people parents and carers in its work. However we may be close to resolving this by ensuring that it is incorporated in the participation strategy for the Children's Trust

6 Conclusion and recommendation

6.1 Considerable progress has been made in relation to the Boards functions. However the issues set out in paragraph 5 need to be resolved. The issue of the Independent reviewing service is particularly urgent.

It is recommended that

1. The CPB is asked to seek an urgent resolution of this through the employing agency, the City Council.
2. Trust Board and LSCB staff progress the matter of a formal protocol between the two Boards and the matter of supporting the participation of children and carers in the work of the LSCB as a matter of urgency

Margaret McGlade

Independent Chair of the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board

26 April 2010