

For general release

REPORT TO:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub- Committee 28 November 2017
SUBJECT:	Croydon Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2016/17
LEAD OFFICER:	Jo Negrini Chief Executive Officer
CABINET MEMBER:	Alisa Flemming Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning
PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:	Di Smith Interim Independent Chair of Croydon Safeguarding Children Board

ORIGIN OF ITEM:	This item is included in the work programme for this sub-committee.
BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:	To examine the work of the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB) including changes following the Ofsted inspection of children's services in June-July 2017

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents the Annual Report of the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board 2016/17 together with an outline of recent changes arising from the findings of the Ofsted inspection of local authority services for children in need of early help and protection; children looked after and care leavers and the review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- 1.2 The Annual Report of the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB) is an evaluation of the progress made by partners against the CSCB Business Plan 2016/17 and sets out the priorities for 2017 onwards. The Annual Report was prepared in May of 2017.
- 1.3 On 4th September 2017, Ofsted published its report providing an overall judgment that Children's Services are inadequate. The Local Safeguarding Children Board was also judged as inadequate as inspectors found that it had not established effective arrangements to discharge its statutory functions. The Ofsted report also commented that the annual report and business plan are overly optimistic about progress, lack rigour and are not evidence based.

- 1.4 This evaluation by Ofsted calls into question the credibility of the Annual Report 2016/17 and therefore this report focusses mainly on the findings of Ofsted and the actions being taken to address key areas of weakness and secure improvement in the CSCB.
- 1.5 The actions to improve the CSCB are included in Croydon Children's Improvement Plan and progress is monitored through the Children's Improvement Board which meets monthly. The Interim Independent Chair of CSCB is a member of the Children's Improvement Board.
- 1.6 In addition to securing improvement the CSCB has begun to consider the implications of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the proposed revisions to 'Working Together' guidance.

2. OFSTED INSPECTION

- 2.1 Ofsted's review of the effectiveness of Croydon's Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB) evaluated the extent to which CSCB complies with its statutory responsibilities in accordance with the Children Act 2004 and Working Together regulations. It considered evidence relating to its coordination of the work of statutory partners in helping, protecting and caring for children in the local area and the mechanisms in place to monitor the effectiveness of those local arrangements.
- 2.2 The overall judgement from Ofsted is that the CSCB is inadequate, as it has not fully established effective arrangements to discharge its statutory functions. In particular it does not understand the experiences of children and young people locally and has failed to sufficiently monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of frontline practice.
- 2.3 Several weaknesses were highlighted in the Ofsted report including the CSCB's lack of direction and purpose. The Annual Report 2016/17 was reviewed by Ofsted and judged to be overly optimistic and lacking in rigour. It was found not to be evidence based particularly since it does not accurately reflect the failures to safeguard children and young people in Croydon.
- 2.4 The main areas for improvement relating to the overall effectiveness of the CSCB identified in the recommendations of the Ofsted report include:
 - discharge of statutory functions and responsibilities;
 - understanding of the experiences of children and young people;
 - monitoring and evaluating frontline practice;
 - Early Help Strategy;
 - thresholds;
 - embedding learning from serious case reviews;
 - use of procedures around CSE and Missing among practitioners.

3. STATUTORY ROLE OF THE LSCB AND INDEPENDENT CHAIR

- 3.1 The statutory roles, objectives and functions of LSCBs are set out in Section 14 of the Children Act 2004. An LSCB must be established for each local authority area. The LSCB has a range of roles and statutory functions including the

developing of local safeguarding policy and procedures and scrutinising local arrangements.

3.2 The statutory objectives of LSCBs are;

- to coordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area;
- to ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for that purpose.

3.3 The functions are as follows:

- developing policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area of the local authority;
- communicating to persons and bodies in the area of the authority the need to safeguard and protect the welfare of children, raising awareness of how this can best be done and encouraging them to do so;
- monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of what is done by the authority and their Board partners individually and collectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and advising them on ways to improve;
- participating in the planning of services for children in the area of the authority; and
- undertaking reviews of serious cases and advising the authority and Board partners on lessons to be learned.

3.4 In order to provide effective scrutiny, the LSCB should be independent. It should not be subordinate to, or subsumed within, other local structures. Every LSCB should have an independent chair who can call all agencies to account.

3.5 It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive to appoint or remove the LSCB Chair with the agreement of partners. The LSCB Chair should work closely with all LSCB partners and particularly with the Director of Children's Services.

3.6 The Chair must publish an annual report on the effectiveness of child safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the local area.

4. IMPROVING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE CSCB

4.1 In September 2017, a new Interim Independent Chair of CSCB was appointed with a specific brief to secure improvement in all areas identified by Ofsted and to contribute to the development, monitoring and implementation of the Children's Improvement Plan. The Children's Improvement Plan is the single plan across the Council and partners to drive improvement.

4.2 One section of the plan relates to improving the effectiveness of the CSCB and strengthening partnership working. It outlines the key actions to be taken to address each of the main areas for improvement. The Independent Chair of the CSCB provides a report to each meeting of the Children's Improvement Board outlining progress made in improving the effectiveness of the CSCB.

4.3 Securing effective arrangements to ensure the discharge of statutory functions of the CSCB has been a priority over the last two months. A CSCB

Development Day on 4th October focused on the findings of the Ofsted inspection and the changes that would be required for the CSCB to become effective.

4.4 The Independent Chair has found it encouraging that partners within the CSCB acknowledge that the 'Inadequate' judgement relates to the whole partnership (CSCB) and not one agency. The Development Day was characterised by a genuine desire to improve and there was no evidence of defensiveness or denial.

4.5 Partners identified four main areas for improvement:

- effective challenge;
- scrutiny, monitoring and evaluating frontline practice;
- focus on outcomes and making a difference for children;
- and ensuring direction and purpose.

They also committed to improvements in board culture with priority to be given to the development of:

- challenge;
- focus;
- and prioritisation.

4.6 An executive group of the CSCB has been formed of the three strategic safeguarding partners (local authority, CCG and police).

The role of the executive group is to:

- oversee the implementation of the CSCB section of the Children's Improvement Plan;
- lead the review of the membership, remit and priorities of the board to ensure effective processes to monitor and evaluate actions for their impact on outcomes for children;
- review and rationalise the subgroups and clarify their remits to ensure alignment with CSCB priorities;

4.7 A significant area of challenge for the CSCB is the large number of Serious Case Reviews and Learning Reviews in Croydon as these place considerable time pressure on all partners and the board management team. An unintended consequence of the large volume of SCRs is that commissioning, management and monitoring of the SCR process can appear to take precedence over the learning.

4.8 The CSCB intends to identify opportunities to align learning from SCRs with the Croydon Children's Improvement Plan. The focus will be shifted to ensure that learning is disseminated more effectively across the partnership so that it promotes and supports improvement and becomes embedded in frontline practice. This proposal was discussed at a meeting with Ofsted inspectors earlier this month and they were supportive of this approach.

4.9 A composite log of learning across all SCRs and learning reviews is being developed and updated and will be used to analyse and respond proactively to emerging themes.

5. RESPONDING TO CHANGES IN LEGISLATION AND STATUTORY GUIDANCE

- 5.1 The implementation of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the proposed revisions to Working Together will have implications for the safeguarding arrangements in all local areas. The executive group will lead on behalf of the CSCB in considering the implications of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the revised 'Working Together' guidance including:
- the replacement of Local Children Safeguarding Boards (LCSBs) with local safeguarding partners (local authority, CCG and police)
 - the establishment of a new national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel
 - the transfer of responsibility for child death reviews from Local Safeguarding Children Boards to new Child Death Review Partners
- 5.2 By February 2018 the executive group will have developed proposals about how the safeguarding partners will work together, and with other agencies, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Croydon in line with revised guidance 'Working Together – 2018'.

Appendices

Croydon Safeguarding Children Board – Annual Report 2016/17

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Children Act 2004;

'Working together to safeguard children' – 2015, DfE statutory guidance;

Children and Social Work Act 2017;

'Working together to safeguard children' October 2017, DfE proposed revisions to statutory guidance.