

12 February 2019		ITEM: 8
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Update on Recommendations from Social Care Services Review		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director Children's Services		
Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of Children and Families		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report updates Members on the outcome of the recommendations arising from the independent investigation into Whistleblowing allegations in 2018 and reports progress against the actions. An anonymous Whistleblowing letter was received in September 2018 and investigated by an independent safeguarding barrister. The outcome of the investigation was that none of the allegations were substantiated. Ofsted was informed of the letter, the review and findings of the independent safeguarding barrister and confirmed to the council that they were comfortable with the approach taken and had closed down the case. There were however a number of recommendations arising from the review which were made by the independent safeguarding barrister and these are detailed below. Learning outcomes are expected in every case review of this nature.

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the progress made in implementing the recommendations from Whistleblowing Review.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Recommendation 1.

Liaise with the LSCB regarding the terms of reference for the Serious Case Review to ensure these include consideration of the 2 points of closure identified.

This recommendation was considered by the LSCB Executive and the terms of reference for the Serious Case Review now include the period referred to in the report. This work will be overseen by the Serious Case Review Sub-Group which has an independent chair and independent report author. The action associated with this recommendation has now been implemented.

2.2 **Recommendation 2.**

Consider any issues that may arise from the ongoing Court Proceedings regarding the child's accommodation. In any event to consider whether additional training or guidance for staff would be appropriate.

The child is in care proceedings where issues about the child's accommodation by the local authority have been addressed. Further training is being provided to social workers to ensure they are clear about the appropriate use of accommodation under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. This will take place on a rolling basis this year through supervision and as part of the service's regular practice workshops. Quality of practice is monitored through our regular case auditing process. Implementation of this recommendation will be reported to the next committee.

2.3 **Recommendation 3.**

Explore whether the nature of the communications between staff are effective in promoting good outcomes for children or whether there are any concerns about how professionals interact with each other which may impact on the Council's ability to fulfil its duties under Sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004.

Working Together 2018 has established new safeguarding arrangements and this has addressed concerns about how professionals work together by ensuring there is a clear dispute resolution process. A programme of multi-agency training is in place to ensure services continue to work together effectively. All staff are being reminded of the dispute resolution procedures and the effectiveness of this will be monitored through the new safeguarding arrangements. Progress will be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2.4 **Recommendation 4.**

Explore whether there is clarity within the current processes, and those to be implemented, to capture and disseminate learning both on a single agency and multi-agency basis.

The process for disseminating learning has been reviewed as part of the move to new safeguarding arrangements in Thurrock. These include regular learning events across all agencies. This recommendation has now been implemented. Further details on this is provided under recommendation 5 below.

2.5 Recommendation 5.

Ensure that the criteria for a Serious Case Review or a Local Safeguarding Practice Review are widely understood.

Under new safeguarding arrangements, safeguarding partners must make arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases which, in their view, raise issues of importance in relation to their area. They must commission and oversee the review of those cases, where they consider it appropriate for a review to be undertaken. Clear criteria has been published for undertaking such reviews which are designed to draw the learning from serious safeguarding incidents involving a child. This information is being distributed to all safeguarding partners to be disseminated more widely to the partnership.

There is a two part process for Local and national reviews which will continue under the new arrangements.

- a) The NSPCC sends the Business Team a monthly alert of the latest published national reviews for that month. They assess them for local relevance and cascade anything of note that would apply to any authority area. We also have sent the link to the NSPCC SCR website page to our partner agencies so they can also get the updates direct and I know health, for example, check them as well for any internal learning.
- b) For each of the multi-agency reviews the Board has action plan for each review, split as generic actions for all agencies and then individual action plans for the relevant agencies. This is then followed up by the SCR sub-group for completion and then the Board conducts an annual audit through the Audit Group to assess impact. This is enhanced with two face to face multi agency learning events each year (next one in February) where the learning from our local reviews and anything of national interest is also shared. Where the Board publishes an anonymous review, it makes reference to a similar national review findings. The Board also sends out a mini booklet of the reviews with just a summary of the case, which is designed in this way for front line staff, who do not have the time and capacity to read a full review.

This recommendation is implemented.

2.6 Recommendation 6

Explore whether the procedures and processes for record keeping are operating effectively in relation to access to records, timeliness of updating and inputting information in LCS.

Additional resources have been provided to ensure that LCS is regularly upgraded. Workflow has been arranged to ensure information on the files is updated in a timely manner. This is monitored through our quality assurance framework. This recommendation has now been implemented.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested an update of findings from the investigation into the Whistleblowing allegations in Children's Services. This reports details the recommendations and action taken by the department and partners.

4. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 4.1 Senior Members in the Council have been briefed on the allegations and outcomes. Overview and Scrutiny Committee will oversee implementation of the recommendations.

5. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 5.1 The council with its partners has a statutory duty to have a multi-agency Safeguarding Board to oversee the arrangements for safeguarding children in the local area. It is critical that partners work effectively together to ensure that children in Thurrock are effectively safeguarded.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Michelle Hall**
Management Accountant

There are no financial implications arising from the report.

6.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Legal

There are no legal implications arising from the report. However any costs associated with this report need to be met from existing resources.

6.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**

Community Development and Equalities Manager

There are no diversity and equality implications arising from the report.

- 6.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

N/A

7. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

N/A

8. **Appendices to the report**

N/A

Report Author:

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