

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

12 January 2016

**Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB)
Annual Report 2014-15**

1. Summary Statement

- 1.1 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 (the statutory guidance to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of Children), requires the chairs of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) to publish an annual report on the effectiveness of child safeguarding in the geographical area served by the LSCB. The attached report outlines details of the Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board's (SSCB) activities but, more importantly, it provides an overview of the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in Sandwell.
- 1.2 The annual report is the responsibility of the SSCB and is a summary and assessment of the work of all partners in meeting the safeguarding agenda in the Borough. This annual report (which covers the period April 2014 – March 2015) is for information only and the actions contained within the SSCB Action Plan will have their own Equality Impact Assessment as required.
- 1.3 The Annual Report concludes that, in spite of important progress in the period up to March 2015, substantial challenges remain for the local authority, individual partner organisations, and for the overall effectiveness of safeguarding in Sandwell. In terms of improving the effectiveness of local arrangements, there are four key issues of substance to be tackled as a partnership in the next twelve months:
- To ensure that there is shared understanding and consistent application of the SSCB thresholds so that children's needs and risks are responded to in a timely way and at the right level;
 - To continue to improve the response to Child Sexual Exploitation;
 - To ensure that all partners contribute to systematic and effective early help arrangements, with professionals from across partner agencies accepting the lead professional role and completing early help assessments;
 - To promote a culture of shared learning from case reviews and multi-agency audits.

- 1.4 There is a substantial challenge for the SSCB itself to ensure that it meets its statutory responsibilities and makes a difference to the outcomes for children, young people and families.
- 1.5 The SSCB Independent Chair, John Harris, will make a short presentation about the Annual Report and will provide an update on current progress in 2015-16 to address the key issues of substance identified in the 2014-15 Annual Report.

2. **Recommendation**

- 2.1 That the Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2014-15, as set out in Appendix 1, be received.

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3. **Strategic Resource Implications**

- 3.1 The formulation of the annual report was met from existing resources.
- 3.2 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

3.3 **Risk Implications of the Proposal**

Based on the information provided, it is the officers' opinion that for the significant risks that have been identified, arrangements are in place to manage and mitigate these effectively. This assessment has identified there are no current "red" risks that need to be reported.

The Annual Report enhances the challenge role of Overview and Scrutiny by allowing Cabinet Members to question and comment on the work undertaken by the Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board during the previous year and ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding in Sandwell.

4. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 (guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of Children), requires the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to publish an Annual Report on the effectiveness of child safeguarding in the area served by the Board.

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

5. **Implications for the Council's Scorecard Priorities**

The Overview and Scrutiny function has the potential to impact upon all of the Council's key objectives by holding decision makers to account, reviewing performance and developing policy. This is achieved through making robust recommendations, monitoring performance of Council with external partners and reviewing issues outside the remit of the Council that have an impact on the residents of the borough.

6 **Background Details**

- 6.1 The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has a responsibility to ensure that all agencies work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It coordinates and quality assures the activities of member agencies.
- 6.2 With respect to the role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board in monitoring and evaluating the local impact of safeguarding arrangements, each Local Safeguarding Children Board is required to produce and publish an Annual Report on the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area. Section 14A of the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009) requires that at least once in every 12-month period, a Local Safeguarding Children Board must prepare and publish a report about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in its local area.
- 6.3 In accordance with Working Together 2015, the report should:
 - provide a rigorous and transparent assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services
 - identify areas of weakness, the causes of those weaknesses and the action being taken to address them as well as other proposals for action
 - include lessons from serious case reviews, child death reviews and any other relevant reviews undertaken within the reporting period

- report on the outcome of assessments undertaken on the effectiveness of Board partners' responses to child sexual exploitation
- include an analysis of how the LSCB partners have used their data to promote service improvement for vulnerable children and families, including in respect of sexual abuse
- include appropriate data on children missing from care, and how the LSCB is addressing the issue.
- list the contributions made to the LSCB by partner agencies and details of LSCB expenditures, including on Child Death Reviews, Serious Case Reviews and other specific expenditure such as learning or training events.

- 6.4 The SSCB Annual Report 2014-15 was approved on 24 September 2015. It is the responsibility of the Board's members to present the SSCB Annual Report to their individual Boards and Governing Bodies.
- 6.5 The Annual Report has been submitted to the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, as accountability for the safety and welfare of children must start with the most senior strategic local leaders. It was considered at a meeting of the Cabinet on 11th November 2015.
- 6.6 The report has also been sent to the local Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the Sandwell Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 6.7 In spite of important progress in the past twelve months substantial challenges remain for the local authority, individual partner organisations, and for the overall effectiveness of safeguarding in Sandwell. In terms of improving the effectiveness of local arrangements, there are four key issues of substance to be tackled as a partnership in the next twelve months:-
- To ensure that there is shared understanding and consistent application of the SSCB thresholds so that children's needs and risks are responded to in a timely way and at the right level;
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 - To ensure that all partners contribute to systematic and effective early help arrangements, with professionals from across partner agencies accepting the lead professional role and completing early help assessments;
 - To promote a culture of shared learning from case reviews and multi-agency audits.
- 6.8 There is a substantial challenge for the SSCB itself to ensure that it meets its statutory responsibilities and makes a difference to the outcomes for children, young people and families.