

Somerset Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB), Annual Report 2016/17

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1. Summary

- 1.1.** The SSCB Independent Chair must publish an Annual Report on the effectiveness of child safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the local area; this is a statutory requirement under section 14A of the Children Act 2004.

The purpose of this annual report is to provide a transparent assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services, identifying where improvements are required.

Progress against the Board's four priorities (Early Help, multi-agency safeguarding, neglect, child sexual exploitation and children missing) is detailed.

The report summarises key learning points from serious case reviews and other learning and quality assurance activity undertaken by the Board.

The report concludes that overall, the way the SSCB and its partners have worked together to keep children safe in Somerset has improved over the past year. Many children and families are receiving more effective services, often at an earlier stage than previously. The Board is better sighted on the quality and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. However, there is still work to do to improve the quality and consistency of services, to strengthen early help arrangements, and to promote improvement in key areas such as neglect and the exploitation of children.

- 1.2.** In line with the Somerset Working Together Protocol for the Strategic Partnership Boards in Somerset, the sharing of this Annual Report by the SSCB with the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) aims to support effective joint working across the Somerset partnerships.

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1.** That the committee is asked to consider and comment on the SSCB ambition to promote learning from reviews across agencies and the wider community.

3. Background

3.1. What the SSCB Annual Report covers

The report provides information on the governance, structure and activities of the Board and an overview of progress against the Board's business priorities for 2016/17:

- Early Help;
- Multi-agency safeguarding;
- Neglect;
- Child Sexual Exploitation/Children Missing.

The report is structured in such a way to highlight progress against the priorities and to demonstrate impact of this work. It describes:

- What was done;
- What the impact was;
- Next steps to be taken.

The report also provides an overview of statutory Board activities and functions, including:

- Management of allegations of abuse made against people who work with children;
- Communicating and raising awareness of how all parties can best safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Somerset;
- Developing and supporting the workforce through training, development of safeguarding policies, procedures and other guidance;
- Monitoring and evaluating the work of partners and local services;
- Reviewing serious cases where children have been seriously harmed.

3.2.

Key themes and lessons learnt this year

One Serious Case Review was published in 2016/17. This concerned *two* children, '**Child J and Child L**', who suffered serious harm as a result of non-accidental injury.

The annual report also:

- details the progress of two further Serious Case Reviews during 16/17: '**Child Sam**' suffered serious harm as a result of non-accidental injury; and '**Operation Fenestra**,' focuses upon a number of children who suffered serious harm as a result of being sexually exploited;
- outlines how the Board has conducted a number of **multi-agency practitioner learning events** in response serious incident notifications where clear opportunities for improving multi-agency practice were identified, particularly in cases where **hidden harm** were a key feature.

These reviews have helped the Board to highlight good practice and to identify where improvements were required, including:

- increasing workforce understanding of the vulnerability of unborn and new born babies;
- identifying and responding to risk to children in the wider family context, especially where families experience multiple vulnerabilities;
- sharing information with and across agencies more effectively to safeguard children.

In addition, the annual report outlines how learning identified from the Serious Case Review (SCR) '**Fenestra**', is beginning to assist the Board in strengthening its response to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Somerset. Many of the key lessons identified will require all partners to:

- Support the workforce in their knowledge and understanding around issues of sexual consent and adolescent sexual activity;

- Help the workforce develop skills for working with parents around issues or risk 'outside' of the family;
- Develop education provision around relationships and raise awareness of CSE for both children, their families and the wider community;
- Understand the need for children who may be at risk from or experiencing CSE to have sufficient and experienced support for their emotional and mental health problems;
- Recognise that this is a complex area of work and strong multi-agency collaboration across all partners is essential.

4. Consultations undertaken

4.1. N/A

5. Implications

5.1. N/A

6. Background papers

6.1. *SOMERSET SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17*

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author