



ANNUAL

REPORT

2016/17

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Contents

| Section | Title | Page |
|-------------------|---|-------------|
| 1. | Foreword by the Independent Chair | 3 |
| 2. | Executive Summary | 5 |
| 3. | About the SSCB Annual Report for 2016/17 | 9 |
| 4. | Children in Somerset – The Local Context | 10 |
| 5. | The Board | 14 |
| 6. | Assessing the effectiveness of child safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in Somerset | 20 |
| 7. | Child Death Overview Panel | 35 |
| 8. | Serious Case Reviews | 37 |
| 9. | Other learning reviews in 2016/17 | 42 |
| 10. | Progress against SSCB Priorities | 44 |
| 11. | Other activities and functions of the SSCB | 54 |
| | 11.1 LADO Allegations Management | |
| | 11.2 SSCB Multi-Agency Training | |
| | 11.3 Private fostering | |
| | 11.4 Communications | |
| | 11.5 Developing policies and procedure | |
| | 11.6 Community members | |
| | 11.7 Voice of the child | |
| | 11.8 Safeguarding Leads Consultation Line | |
| | 11.9 Safeguarding Support to Schools | |
| 12. | Key Priorities for the SSCB 2017/18 | 68 |
| 13. | Commentary on effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in Somerset | 70 |
| Appendices | | |
| A. | SSCB membership | 75 |
| B. | SSCB Structure Chart | 76 |
| C. | Voice of the Child in Section 11 Audits | 77 |
| D. | Single Agency Assurance Reports | 82 |
| E. | SSCB Multi-Agency Training Attendance | 90 |

1. Foreword by the Independent Chair

I am pleased to introduce this annual report for Somerset Safeguarding Children Board, covering the year 2016-17. This is a public report which sets out the work of the Board and its view of the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements across the county. The report aims to give everyone who lives and works in Somerset a sense of how well local services and people in the community are working together to keep children safe. The report is also intended to inform the decisions made by those responsible for leading, commissioning and funding local services.

Throughout the year, work has continued to address the shortcomings highlighted by Ofsted in early 2015, when it found that arrangements in place to evaluate the effectiveness of what is done by the authority and Board partners to safeguard and promote the welfare of children were inadequate. At the same time, Somerset County Council's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers were also judged to be inadequate. The Council's improvement partner, Essex County Council, has provided significant support and assistance during this period, with oversight from the Department for Education. My attendance at the quarterly performance review meetings has provided additional opportunity to assess progress with improving the quality and effectiveness of the Council's social care services for children.

Throughout the year, agencies have continued to demonstrate their commitment to safeguarding children through contributing to the multi-agency work of the Board, taking part in multi-agency auditing and challenge activities, and sharing their own data and self-assessments. The Board has also worked in support of the vision of the Children's Trust, focusing attention on areas which present the greatest risk to Somerset's children - child sexual exploitation and going missing, neglect and domestic abuse – and working more closely with other multi-agency partnerships to ensure that the most vulnerable individuals and families are identified, supported and safeguarded. The Board has also worked with organisations in the voluntary, faith and sports sectors, in order to promote understanding of safeguarding responsibilities and improve the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.

As in previous years, many of the organisations which contribute to the Board's work have continued to face significant financial pressures, which have entailed difficult decisions about allocation of resources. Where it was felt to be necessary, the Board has challenged decisions made by agencies at both strategic and operational levels. Despite the pressures, the Board's partners have maintained a focus on developing arrangements and services which enable a quicker, earlier response to children and families who may need additional help. The way that Somerset's schools have

embraced this agenda is particularly encouraging. This is an area that will continue to be promoted in the year to come, with the aim of supporting families more effectively at an early stage and reducing the need for statutory intervention as difficulties become more entrenched.

This work will continue during 2017-18, as will efforts to ensure that every child receives a consistently high quality response, whatever the level of need. The year will also see attention paid to putting in place future arrangements for safeguarding children in response to the changed legislative context that has been introduced by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which gives greater flexibility locally whilst increasing accountability for NHS and police partners alongside the local authority.

The Board has published one serious case review (SCR) during the year covered by this report, which focused on significant harm to a very young infant. Previous SCRs had had a similar focus and the Board was keen to ensure that the right lessons were being identified and properly implemented by all agencies. The review brought increased focus on the need for workers to maintain 'healthy scepticism' at all times, maintaining a clear focus on the child. In addition, individual cases and groups of cases have been reviewed to identify both good practice and areas for improvement. The Board will continue to monitor the impact of the learning from these cases on the quality of local practice.

I would like to thank Board partners for their hard work and commitment in support of the Board over the past year, and their willingness to challenge and be challenged to achieve ever higher standards. In particular, the two community (lay) members have been essential in holding the Board to account from the perspective of Somerset's communities, enabling the Board to stay in touch with local realities and offering a critical friend perspective on all safeguarding issues.

Finally, as ever, there are staff and volunteers who day to day demonstrate their commitment to children and families through their work and dedication. We thank them all for everything they do to safeguard children and promote their wellbeing.

Sally Halls

2. Executive Summary

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

During the course of the year, the Board has listened to children and young people, their families, and the practitioners that work with them and provide services for them.

The report describes the work of the Board and how it has examined individual cases and reviews of practice in circumstances where children have been seriously harmed including through non accidental injury, child sexual exploitation, neglect, and sexual abuse. These reviews were significant in helping the Board to understand where improvements are required and to highlight good practice.

From examining some cases in more depth through multi-agency audits and learning reviews, the Board learnt that more work needs to be done to support practitioners in their use of escalation and resolving professional differences guidance, applying pre-birth guidance, and improving the quality and consistency of sharing information with and between agencies.

The Board received reports and updates on how effective Early Help services are in ensuring that children and their families receive timely and effective help, and has monitored how supporting guidance for multi-agency practitioners has continued to be embedded throughout the year. The report highlights positive progress with this priority and outlines the further work needed to achieve greater consistency of application and understanding by practitioners across the partnership. The Board is aware that further work needs to be done to improve its understanding of the impact of Early Help on outcomes for children, and this will be a key focus for next year.

The Board was pleased to learn that Early Help Assessments had helped practitioners to recognise domestic abuse and its impact upon children, although domestic abuse has continued to feature in reviews of cases where children suffered harm. We will therefore focus work in the coming year on helping agencies to identify and respond to the risks and vulnerabilities within families where domestic abuse is a concern.

Neglect has been the focus of development work this year, and will continue to be a priority during 2017-18, with a focus on equipping practitioners with the guidance and tools to improve their ability to identify neglect and respond to it more effectively.

Referrals to Children's Social Care have decreased over the year and the corresponding upward trend in the numbers of Early Help cases suggests that the Effective Support for Children and Families guidance is helping to improve understanding and familiarity around thresholds.

The number of children subject to a child protection (CP) plan remained stable for most of 2016/17. In addition, the SSCB saw a decrease in the number of repeat CP plans and the proportion of long-term CP plans [2 years or more] gradually reduced. The Board was pleased to learn that the timeliness of the Child Protection (CP) planning conference system including reviews continues to outperform statistical neighbours and the national average in England.

Auditing highlighted positive practice and specific areas requiring improvement. The Board learnt through learning reviews, a MAPPA review and an HMIC Police inspection report that particular attention needs to be paid to the management and assessment of risks posed by registered sex offenders to children they might have access to, sometimes within their own families.

'Think Family' continues to be a key practice approach for the Board and we will continue to work closely with the Somerset Safeguarding Adult Board (SSAB) and other partners to develop 'Think Family' practice across the workforce in 2017/18.

We have looked in depth at Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Somerset through the Serious Case Review (SCR) Operation Fenestra. Although not yet finalised for publication at the time of writing this report, the findings are already assisting the Board in developing improved multi-agency collaboration to progress this critical area of safeguarding work and to drive the CSE strategy and action plan further forward.

The Board has welcomed partners' very positive engagement with the 'Section 11' self-assessment process and plans for further section 11 peer review workshops. This has helped the Board to monitor the effectiveness of organisations in meeting their duties under Section 11 of the Children Act. The new online self-assessment tools have proved helpful to partners in undertaking their own quality assurance with regard to safeguarding and child protection arrangements and practice. Schools, in particular, found the audit tool helpful and the results from the partners' assessments have helped the Board to understand where specific improvements need to be made.

A series of peer challenge workshops will provide extra scrutiny and build upon the positive challenge and support culture developing within the partnership. We will continue to work with agencies to scrutinise their own practice so that they can improve their safeguarding services for children, through use of the Section 11 peer review workshops and building upon the constructive challenge culture that has developed over this last year.

Work with the voluntary, community and faith sectors has continued to be strengthened; strategic engagement through the Somerset Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Strategic Forum planned for 2017/18 will also help to increase engagement with the sector as we move forward.

Information about how 'Prevent' has progressed since its implementation in 2015 indicates that a good start has been made to embed 'Prevent' in Somerset with a good response from Somerset agencies, particularly schools.

The Board has examined cases of children who have died; reviews of these cases have led to clear identification of improvements which needed to be made. The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) which oversees these reviews shared key lessons and made recommendations around asthma deaths. Its review of a small number of sudden infant deaths led to the promotion of a safer sleeping campaign across Somerset. The panel raised concerns with organisations around the sale of nebulisers in supermarkets, and also wrote to the Coroner about post-mortem examinations.

The Board received a report about allegations of abuse made against people who work with children which demonstrated a greater awareness of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and the notification procedure which has led to a substantial increase in notifications in comparison to last year. Engagement in a new multi-agency forum to risk manage adults who are identified as posing a potential risk to children has been a positive development this year aimed at enhancing the safeguarding system to keep children safe. In the coming year the Board will be interested to understand about the progress and impact of this forum.

Targeted work with schools and communications to raise awareness has led to an increase in the numbers of notifications of private fostering arrangements this year. This is welcome, and needs to be improved upon and expanded. A knowledge gap relating to private fostering was identified as part of the school's Section 175/157 self-assessments and the Board will continue to build on the work of agencies to address this and further raise awareness in Somerset.

The Board welcomed clear progress made in multi-agency training with strong participation from all agencies across the partnership and the development of a fully traded training unit. The Board will continue to improve methods that capture evidence of impact upon practice and improve assessment of the effectiveness of single agency training.

Clear progress has been made by the Board with communications; resources include an improved website, newsletters and a new learning bulletin, together with the use of social media to get important messages and learning out to both practitioners and the wider community.

Dedicated pages on the website for safeguarding leads and the implementation of a safeguarding leads consultation line in 2016 has helped to improve practitioners understanding of thresholds for intervention and the application of the Effective Support for Children and Families guidance. Practitioners have welcomed these developments, and the Board will take action in the coming year to understand and

help improve competence and confidence so that understanding around thresholds continues to increase and thresholds are consistently applied in Somerset.

We have acknowledged the enormous contribution made to the work of the Board by two community lay members who have challenged and enabled the Board to stay in touch with local realities and offering a critical friend perspective on all safeguarding issues. The two members will continue to be supported in 2017/18 and encouraged to make links with others both locally and nationally to build upon their growing expertise and good practice.

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 across the partnership 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.

3. About the SSCB Annual Report for 2016/17

The SSCB annual report for 2016/17 provides a transparent assessment on the effectiveness of safeguarding and the promotion of child welfare across Somerset and the Board's effectiveness in carrying out its statutory functions throughout 2016/17.

The report provides:

- information about the structures in place that support the SSCB to do its work effectively;
- a clear context for safeguarding children and young people in Somerset, highlighting progress made by the partnership over the last year and the challenges moving forward;
- an overview of the lessons that the SSCB have identified through the Learning and Improvement Framework and the actions taken to improve child safeguarding and welfare as a result of this activity;
- a summary of the actions taken to improve child safeguarding and welfare as a result of learning and improvement and QA activity;
- an insight into the range and activity of the multi-agency safeguarding training delivered and co-ordinated by the SSCB and a brief account of the single agency training delivered by partners;
- the priorities going forward and the key messages from the Independent Chair of the SSCB to key people involved in the safeguarding of children and young people.

The report this year will aim to address three specific questions:

1. What we did
2. How well we did it
3. The difference it has made

In line with statutory requirements, the SSCB annual report for 2016/17 has been sent to the following:

- Cabinet Member for Children and Families
- The Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner
- The Chair of the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board
- Somerset County Council's Director of Children's Services
- The Chair of the Safer Somerset Partnership

A copy of the SSCB annual report has also been shared in advance for consultation with Board and Subgroup members.

4. Children in Somerset – The Local Context

In Somerset there are 109,200 children aged 0 to 17 years old, with a third of the population living in the main urban areas centered on the towns of Taunton, Bridgwater, Frome, Glastonbury and Yeovil (Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015; *(ONS 2015 mid-year population estimates)*).

4.1 Levels of Poverty

Somerset remains a relatively affluent county and experiences lower than national average in terms of overall levels of deprivation (Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015).

However the county has a range of contrast with areas recognised nationally as being in the 25 most highly deprived neighbourhoods (IMD 2015), this number has increased from 14 since 2010 and with 38,000 residents living in neighbourhoods categorised as being within the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in England. In 2014 there were estimated to be 15.3% of children living in poverty in Somerset. This equates to one in every seven children aged under 16. The national average for England is 20.1% (IMD 2015).

The highest levels of deprivation are found within the county's larger urban areas (IMD 2015), with the most deprived areas of Somerset being the Lambrook and Halcon areas of Taunton and the Sydenham and Hamp areas in Sedgemoor.

West Somerset communities are the most rurally isolated in the county and rank amongst the 15% most deprived local authorities nationally. In a report published by the Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission (January 2016), West Somerset was ranked 1 out of 324 local authorities for social mobility.

4.2 Children with Child Protection plans

There has been an increase in the number of children who have been made the subject of a child protection plan. At the end of March 2017, there were 413 (279 children in the previous year) children with child protection plans from 204 families (143 in previous year) living in the county. This is approximately 37.9 (25.6 in the previous year) per 10,000, which is lower than the 43.1 national average in England 2015/16. During 2016/17, there were 38 children (47 in previous year) with a child protection plan from 26 families (31 in previous year), who were temporarily living in Somerset during the year.

Within the reporting period, 2.0% (9/447 plans) of child protection plans lasted for two years or more, a reduction from 4.8% in the previous year and lower than the

national average in England of 3.8% for 2015/16. 22.4% (110 plans) lasted between 1 and 2 years with most lasting between six and twelve months (42%-188/447).

At the end of March 2017, in Somerset, children were subject of a child protection plan for the following reasons:

- Emotional abuse 89 plans 21.5% (31.2% in 2015/16)
- Neglect 288 plans 69.7% (57.7% in 2015/16)
- Physical abuse 7 plans 1.7% (4.7% in 2015/16)
- Sexual abuse 6 plans 1.4% (0.4% in 2015/16)
- Multiple factors 23 plans 5.6% (6.1% in 2015/16)

4.3 Children Looked after

At the end of March 2017, there were 479 children in care, compared with 503 in 2016; this equates to 43.8 per 10,000 children for 2016/17 compared to 60.3 per 10,000 in 2016.

Of Somerset's children looked after, there were 192 fostering or residential placements (involving 148 individual children) in 2016-2017, which were commissioned from providers other than the local authority (e.g. other local authorities, other public provision, private provision or voluntary/ third sector provision). Of these 192 placements, 94 were within the borders of Somerset and 98 were outside the county boundary.

During 2016/17, 34 (50, in the previous reporting year) children were secured permanence through adoption and a further 30 (13) left care as a result of Special Guardianship Orders.

The number of children looked after under the age of 18 placed in Somerset by other local authorities stood at 199 on the 31st March 2017, (179).

The number of residential providers in Somerset during 2016/17 was 41.

Of those operating during 2016/17, Ofsted rating them as follows:

- 16 'Outstanding' or 'good'
- 4 'requires improvement'
- 2 as 'inadequate'
- 2 'awaiting' outcomes at the end of March 2017

There are 16 fostering providers, Ofsted rated these as:

- 2 'Outstanding' with 14 'good'

- zero inadequate (or awaiting confirmation)

Ofsted rating for homes outside Somerset, where a Somerset child was placed during 2016/17 were as follows:

- 10 rated as 'Outstanding' or 'good'
- 1 rated 'requires improvement'
- 1 rated 'Inadequate'
- zero 'awaiting outcomes' at the end of March 2017

4.4 Somerset Safeguarding Snapshot 2016-17 figures

- 109,657 Children aged under 18 [2016 year population estimates]
- 20% of the Somerset population
- 15.3% of children living in poverty – [2014 data, latest available]
- 10.6% of primary school Somerset children are in receipt of free school meals, the national average is England: 14.1% (Based on January 2017 school census)
- 1959 open EHA assessments (as at 31/3/17)
- 1731 referrals/EHA's to the Early Help hub
- 92 TAC meetings were held in the 2016/17 academic year
- 44 children identified as being at risk of CSE (with CSE banner) as at 31/3/17
- 71 of Somerset children identified as going missing from care
- 992 incidents of children and young people missing from home
- 468 Return Home Interviews were conducted (47.1%)
- 30,120 contacts to Somerset Direct across 2016/17
- 5,001 referrals to CSC, 1,040 re-referrals [20.8%] took place
- 5,185 C&F statutory social work assessments started 2016/17
- 4,920 C&F assessments completed in 2016/17 at an average of 29 days
- 645 ICPCs completed in 2016/17
- 413 children on a CP plan as of end of March 2017 (279 in previous year)
- 1,738 CIN cases as at end of March 2017
- 10,845 in receipt of SEN Support as at 31/3/2017,
- 875 in receipt of Education Health and Care Plans [EHCP], as at 31/3/2017,
- 729 with a Statement of Special Educational Needs as at 31/3/2017,
- 479 children and young people were looked after as in 2016/17
- 612 HIGH RISK domestic abuse notifications made to the police during 2016/17
- 755 children were associated with these incidents
- 25% repeat incidents of HIGH RISK domestic abuse during 2016/17
- 478 notifications of allegations of abuse made against staff working with children
- 3 private fostering arrangements as of March 2017
- 1,108 professionals attended SSCB multi-agency training

