

Proposals to implement the new Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership arrangements

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Cabinet Member: Frances Nicholson

Division and Local Member: All (county-wide implications)

1. Summary

- 1.1.** The three Somerset Safeguarding Partners (police, CCG and County Council) are required to publish new safeguarding children arrangements by 29 June 2019 that become operational by 30 September 2019, replacing the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board. It is proposed to use the measures within the new Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the existing flexibility of the Children's Trust requirements to integrate the Somerset Children's Trust with the new Safeguarding Partnership arrangements.

Cabinet has approved the three partners amalgamating the Children's Trust Board Executive & Board with the current Somerset Safeguarding Board governance group and wider Board from October 2019 to create efficiencies both for the Council and partners in terms of the resources available and senior leadership availability.

It is proposed to enter into contractual arrangements for the performance of appropriate safeguarding activity with partners in a regional Safeguarding Partnership, based on the Avon & Somerset Constabulary boundaries, in consultation with local Safeguarding Partners. Initial discussions have taken place with regional partners on the practice and financial benefits of sharing activities and combining capacity at a regional level. Areas under discussion include: contextual safeguarding, practice guidance and quality assurance arrangements.

1.2. Links to County Plan

1.2.1 The merger of the Children's Trust Board Executive & Board with the current Somerset Safeguarding Board governance group and wider Board is a strategic partnership development which builds on Somerset Children's Trust arrangements as well as partnership safeguarding arrangements (See appendix). It links them to the County Vision of partnership working for the benefit of children and families, with a focus on those most in need of safeguarding to promote the best possible outcomes for children.

1.2.2. The merged group will take ownership of the revised Children and Young People's Plan and strengthen links to other relevant strategic partnerships that have a role in safeguarding children and young people.

1.2.3. The proposal supports better integration with health partners in line with the Somerset Four Year Efficiency Plan (Partnership and Integration) and promotes stronger communities by taking an overarching strategic approach to working with children and families (Think Family).

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1.** Cabinet has endorsed the proposal to implement new Safeguarding Partnership arrangements alongside changes to the Children's Trust arrangements

The Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider and comment on:

2.2.2. Consultation with the wider partnership on the proposed new integrated arrangements to meet the Council's and other local agencies' duties to children under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Children Act 2004.

2.3.3. That the Director of Children Services and the Head of Legal services undertake further discussions with local Safeguarding Partners with a view to agreeing contractual arrangements whereby certain safeguarding duties and tasks will be undertaken by identified members of the regional Safeguarding Partnership.

2.3.4. Delegation to the Director of Children's Services of final approval of the Somerset Safeguarding Partnership arrangements to be published by 29 June 2019

3. Background

- 3.1.** The Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the statutory guidance Working Together 2018 remove the requirement for a Local Children's Safeguarding Board. Instead of the local authority being the lead agency the new Act apportions equal responsibility for making multi-agency safeguarding arrangements between three 'Safeguarding Partners' who have a shared and equal duty to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area.

The Government carried out a review of local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs) in 2016 and concluded that for multi-agency working to be strong and effective it needs to be responsive and involve the right people. A new system is required that will guarantee accountability. The review found that overall LSCBs, including their independent chairs were remote from front-line practice, with the board arrangements overly bureaucratic and not providing the accountability grip on multi-agency working.

Under the new legislation, the three Safeguarding Partners (local authorities, chief officers of police, and clinical commissioning groups) must make arrangements to work together with relevant agencies (as they consider appropriate) to safeguard and protect the welfare of children in the

area. New safeguarding arrangements must be published by 29 June 2019 and become operational by 30 September 2019.

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1.** The Somerset Safeguarding Children's Board has been presented with the proposal agreed by Cabinet and by governance arrangements for the CCG and the police. Further discussions with partners are to take place in relation to ensuring that arrangements are developed to secure sufficient challenge and independence in the new Safeguarding Partnership. It is currently not planned to have an independent chair as current thinking is that a different arrangement may be more effective.

5. Implications

- 5.1.** 5.1.2. The Police and the CCG have agreed to retain the current budget for this first year and the County Council is recommended to do the same. Together the Safeguarding Partners will identify efficiencies for 2020/21 to allow a reduced budget to be set for this area.

5.1.3. Working Together 2018 sets out the requirements for the Safeguarding Partnership. The lead representatives for the Safeguarding Partners are the local authority chief executive, the accountable officer of the clinical commissioning group, and the chief officer of police.

5.1.4. All three Safeguarding Partners have equal and joint responsibility for local safeguarding arrangements. In policy situations that require a clear, single point of leadership all three Safeguarding Partners should decide who will take the lead on issues that arise.

5.1.5. Everyone working with children and families, including those who work with parents / carers, understands the role they should play and the role of other practitioners. They should be aware of, and comply with, the published arrangements set out by the local Safeguarding Partners.

5.1.6. For the time being it is proposed that arrangements between the partners remain informal in legal terms. The Safeguarding Partners have agreed to establish a non-binding memorandum of understanding between themselves, the terms of which have yet to be agreed, while they explore opportunities for further and closer joint working. This joint working could include the possibility of some delegation of functions to a jointly established body where appropriate as well as the implementation of cost-saving measures where synergies have been identified. Until a joint committee between the Safeguarding Partners has been formally constituted (which would require a delegation from the Council) any function undertaken by one Safeguarding Partner on behalf of another must be underpinned by contractual arrangements which protect the body responsible for the function against liabilities arising from its performance. These arrangements are to be strongly promoted at a local level through

the commitment of chief officers in all organisations and agencies, in particular those representing the Safeguarding Partners.

6. Background papers

6.1. The Board has been presented with the attached slides for consideration.

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