

Somerset County Council  
Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families  
Committee – 14 June 2019

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## **Proposals to implement the new Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership arrangements – Scrutiny 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 (Avon & Somerset Constabulary, 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. The measures within the new Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the existing flexibility of the Children's Trust requirements lend themselves to integration of the Somerset Children's Trust with the new Safeguarding Partnership arrangements.

Many local organisations and agencies have a duty under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to ensure that they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their functions. The responsibility for this join-up locally rests with the 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 new tri-partite safeguarding arrangements must be published by 29 June 2019 and take effect as of 1 October 2019.

### **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. 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. The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the attached draft document: **Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership Scrutiny Arrangements – May 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.

## **4. Consultations undertaken**

- 4.1. The Somerset Safeguarding Children Board has been presented with the proposal agreed by Cabinet and by governance arrangements for the CCG and the police. A direction of travel for scrutiny arrangements for independent scrutiny, as well as local scrutiny and scrutiny at a regional level, is under development. Further discussions with partners are taking place to ensure that scrutiny arrangements will secure sufficient challenge and independence in the new Safeguarding Partnership.
- 4.2. Members of the existing Somerset Safeguarding Children Board and the Children's Trust Board have been consulted on the changes to the new safeguarding arrangements. There is broad agreement to having a Partnership Forum for the engagement of relevant agencies at the level below the Executive, to strengthening the voice of children and young people in safeguarding arrangements, to developing stronger links with education, and to developing more rigour in reporting to the three safeguarding partners. These aspects are already under development, led by the three key safeguarding partners.

## **5. Implications**

### **5.1.**

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

5.1.2. 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.

5.1.3. 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.

5.1.4. **Regional arrangements:** For the time being it is proposed that arrangements between the partners remain informal in legal terms at a regional level. The regional 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 to create efficiencies across the region. At present, scrutiny arrangements will remain place-based within Somerset, with the possibility of future contractual arrangements for delegation at a regional level.

## **6. Background papers**

6.1. The reports for the last Committee meeting.

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