

Somerset County Council
Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee –
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Progress on the implementation 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 (Somerset County Council, Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group, and Avon and Somerset Constabulary) now constitute a tripartite Children's Safeguarding Partnership. New safeguarding arrangements were published on 26 June 2019 and took effect on 29 September 2019, having been assessed as compliant with the new legislation by the Department for Education. The arrangements replace the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board. In the interests of efficiency, it has also been possible to integrate the Somerset Children's Trust with the new Safeguarding Partnership arrangements. Delivery subgroups are currently under review with revised chairing and membership.

1.2 The three safeguarding partners have a shared and equal duty to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in the local area. Many local organisations and agencies also 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, and continue to be involved in the wider Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership.

1.3 Local and regional scrutiny arrangements are being developed, building on existing good practice across the Safeguarding Partnership. A key development is the intention of the three key safeguarding partners to appoint an Independent Scrutineer to undertake high-level assurance of safeguarding activity for children across Somerset.

1.4 The final annual report for the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board (2018-2019) has been published, detailing progress and outcomes against the four key priority areas: early help, multiagency safeguarding, child exploitation, and neglect.

Links to County Plan

1.5 The merger of the Children's Trust Board Executive and Board with the current Somerset Safeguarding Children 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.

1.6 The partnership now has ownership of the revised Children and Young People's Plan via the Partnership Business Group, which will meet in its new form at the end of November 2019, and which will be comprised of chairs of the SSCP subgroups, as well as the Corporate Parenting Board and Early Help Strategic Commissioning Board. The Partnership Business Group will also strengthen links to other relevant strategic partnerships that have a role in safeguarding children and young people, such as the Safer Somerset Partnership.

1.7 The new arrangements support better integration with health partners in line with the Somerset Four Year Efficiency Plan (Partnership and Integration) and strengthens the role of the Health Safeguarding Partnership subgroup. It also 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 endorsed the proposal for Somerset County Council to implement new Safeguarding Partnership arrangements alongside changes to the Children's Trust arrangements in March 2019.

2.2 The Scrutiny for Policies for Children and Families Committee is asked to note:

The progress towards new arrangements as set out in the attached paper (September 2019) and focus of future activity.

The developing scrutiny arrangements for safeguarding activity in so far as they have been agreed by the three key safeguarding partners as of October 2019.

Key areas in the final Somerset Safeguarding Children Board annual report (2018-2019).

3. Background

3.1 The Children and Social Work Act (2017) and the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) remove the requirement for a Local Safeguarding Children Board. Instead of the local authority taking the

lead, 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 new safeguarding children arrangements were agreed by Cabinet and by governance arrangements for the Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group and by Avon and Somerset Constabulary.

Through consultation on the Somerset Plan for Children, Young People and Families, children and young people indicated that they wished to hold partners to account for safeguarding in Somerset via an annual face-to-face meeting, which will be facilitated by Somerset County Council Participation Workers.

5. Implications

5.1. The current budget has been retained for the year 2019-2020. Together the three key safeguarding partners will identify efficiencies for 2020-2021 and set a budget by December 2019.

5.2. Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) sets out the requirements for the Safeguarding Partnership. The lead representatives for the safeguarding partners are Somerset County Council's Chief Executive, the accountable officer of the Somerset Clinical Commissioning group, and the Chief Officer of Avon and Somerset Constabulary, who have shared accountability. 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.

5.3 Regional arrangements: Regional arrangements between the partners remain informal in legal terms. A number of workstreams have been established, with representatives across the partnership, to explore opportunities for further and closer joint working and therefore create efficiencies across the region. These include Complex Safeguarding, Scrutiny arrangements, Data and Performance, and Training and Development. The SSCP takes the position that the local area partnership will retain responsibility for the development and implementation of the local Safeguarding Children Partnership strategic and operational plans, which will include alignment of resources, knowledge and expertise at a local level. At this point, there is no agreement to becoming part of a wider remit of the regional data and performance workstream, but Somerset partners will continue to work with

regional partners on the development of a regional performance data set. The Somerset new safeguarding arrangements will retain local responsibility for the self-funding training function within Somerset, overseen by a local Learning and Improvement function. Somerset safeguarding partners are open to the possibility of some regional work in relation to training, such as peer review of locality training e.g. programmes, quality of providers.

5.4 The SSCP is exploring regional scrutiny arrangements where they add value (e.g. a regional pool of independent reviewers for child safeguarding practice reviews or other independent scrutiny/reciprocal regional arrangements for peer reviews with clearly defined terms of reference). An initial scoping meeting was held across the force area on 1 October 2019, during which the following themes emerged as areas for consideration for peer scrutiny in Somerset, building on learning from serious case reviews and other learning activity:

- intrafamilial sexual abuse
- child exploitation
- children's emotional and mental health
- early help in the context of neglect.

5.5 At present, scrutiny arrangements will remain place-based within Somerset, with the possibility of future contractual arrangements for delegation at a regional level.

5.6 The tenure of the Independent Chair for the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board, required under the previous legislation, ended on 30 September 2019. In October 2019, the three key safeguarding partners agreed the appointment of an Independent Scrutineer to provide robust scrutiny of the effectiveness of Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership's multi-agency arrangements in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children in Somerset. This will include scrutiny of arrangements in place to identify and review Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews which replace Serious Case Reviews under the new legislation. The post has been advertised and an appointment is anticipated in late 2019.

5.7 In addition, a local framework is being refreshed which builds on existing scrutiny and quality assurance activity which includes, but is not limited to:

- multi-agency audits
- thematic and learning reviews
- Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- Section 11 audits as set out in the Children Act (2004) and associated multi-agency peer challenges to audit findings
- peer reviews within Somerset
- an annual face-to-face conversation with children and young people
- Section 157/175 audits of education providers as set out in the Education Act (2002)
- a twelve-monthly report in line with Working Together to Safeguard

Children (2018) guidance.

5.8 Overarching structures for the new Safeguarding Partnership arrangements are shown in the attached appendix as a pictorial representation, which also shows the subgroups that will deliver on key areas of work for the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership. In addition, a framework for seeking the views of children and young people within the new safeguarding arrangements is under development, building on existing good practice from the Children's Trust.

5.9 Responsibility for Child Death Reviews now falls under the Department of Health as opposed to the Department for Education, and therefore outside local safeguarding arrangements. Somerset Child Death Overview Panel has merged with the Pan-Dorset Child Death Panel to increase the number of cases reviewed from which to draw learning. As from 1 April 2019, administrative support for child death arrangements will be provided by Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group, as opposed to Somerset County Council, but strong links will be retained with the Safeguarding Partnership to ensure continued learning from child deaths.

5.10 The Scrutiny for Policies for Children and Families Committee is asked to note the final report of the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board for 2018-2019. During the year, SSCB has focused on four priority areas:

- 1) Early Help
- 2) Multi-agency Safeguarding
- 3) Neglect
- 4) Child Exploitation/Children Missing

5.11 Serious case reviews: Two serious case reviews were undertaken in the period 2018 to 2019: one was published in autumn 2018 (Family A), and one will be published in early 2020 (Family B). Two thematic reviews were also undertaken: one regarding suicides of young people in Somerset, which showed no rising trend and no factors which would make Somerset an outlier; and another reviewing the management of sex offenders against children. The learning continues to be embedded across the partnership in terms of the identification and intervention where there is long-term neglect, and the protection of unborn and very young children, and the importance of information-sharing.

6. Background papers

6.1 The Children and Families Scrutiny Committee has been presented with the attached papers for consideration.

- **Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership arrangements – September 2019**

- <https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Details-of-new-safeguarding-arrangements.pdf>
- **Somerset Safeguarding Children structure chart**
<https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Safeguarding-arrangements-structure-chart.pdf>
- **Independent Scrutineer post advertisement**
- <https://dasjobs.co.uk/job/independent-scrutineer-somerset-safeguarding-children-partnership/>
- **Annual report 2018-2019**
- <https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SSCB-Annual-Report-2018-2019.pdf>

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