

Agenda Item: 9

Meeting: Executive

Date: 14 April 2009

Subject: Central Bedfordshire Local Safeguarding Children Board

Report of: Portfolio holder for Children, Families and Learning

Summary: The purpose of this report is to ask Members to agree to the arrangements made to ensure a safe and effective disaggregation of the Bedfordshire County Council Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) in order to meet the needs and requirements of the new authority of Central Bedfordshire.

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Children, Families & Learning

Contact Officer: As above

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Executive

Key Decision Yes

**Reason for urgency/
Exemption from call-in
(if appropriate)** N/A

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. that the Executive agrees the arrangements to establish a Central Bedfordshire LSCB as set out in the report now submitted.**
- 2. that an update report on progress and functioning of the Central Bedfordshire LSCB be presented to the Executive annually and that the arrangements made by the Director of Children, Families & Learning to secure the operation of this Board are reconfirmed on an annual basis.**
- 3. that the proposed actions outlined in Appendix 1 in response to the Lord Laming Report 2009 are noted.**

Reason for Recommendations: Safeguarding children is possibly the most complex, important and sensitive responsibility of the Council and its partners. The Executive will wish to be regularly informed of progress in the establishment of effective multi agency safeguarding arrangements. In regulation the LSCB reports in accountability terms to the Children's Trust.

Introduction

1. Central Bedfordshire, as with every local authority in England, will be required to establish and maintain a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The overall purpose of the LSCB is to oversee the arrangements for the protection and safeguarding of children in the area of the authority. It is a multi disciplinary partnership, bringing together all the relevant agencies, and will be integrated into and report to the Children's Trust and Children's Partnership arrangements.
2. Statutory guidance regarding the operation of the LSCB is as follows:-

The DCS should ensure that all appropriate local authority services engage effectively with the LSCB.

Through the Chief Executive, the Lead Member will hold the DCS to account for the work of the LSCB, which coordinates and ensures the effectiveness of what is done by the Board partners to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The way that safeguarding boards operate is subject to regular review and guidance and an annual conference. The original regulations setting out the operation of safeguarding boards was published in 2006, a review in 2007 and a stock take in 2008/2009.

The Laming Report – “The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report” 2009 made specific recommendations on LSCB's boards which are set out below with a comment in italics (Note: the numbers below refer to the relevant recommendation number in the Laming Report).

- 22 The Department for Children, Schools and Families should establish statutory representation on Local Safeguarding Children Boards from schools, adult mental health and adult drug and alcohol services.

Although this is not yet established in statute the LSCB will address this requirement at its first meeting

- 51 The Children's Trust and the Local Safeguarding Children Board should not be chaired by the same person. The Local Safeguarding Children Board chair should be selected with the agreement of a group of multi-agency partners and should have access to training to support them in their role.

This report refers to the need to recruit an independent Chair. As the Director will Chair the Trust Board, this requirement is met. See Appendix 2. The structure chart of the Children's Trust as agreed by the Council in November 2008.

- 52 Local Safeguarding Children Boards should include membership from the senior decision makers from all safeguarding partners, who should attend regularly and be fully involved as equal partners in Local Safeguarding Children Board decision-making.

Attendance will be monitored. The Director has already discussed the need for a nominated G.P. with the professional Executive Committee coordinated by the Primary Care Trust and a nomination will follow shortly. At Director's briefings for Schools the Director will reinforce the need for consistent Head Teacher representation. All other partners have been regular attendees at the Bedfordshire LSCB and this representation will continue.

- 53 Local Safeguarding Children Boards should report to the Children's Trust Board and publish an annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area. This report will be referenced in an annual report to the Executive regarding the Director's accountability to establish the Board. Local Safeguarding Children Boards should provide robust challenge to the work of the Children's Trust and its partners in order to ensure that the right systems and quality of services and practice are in place so that children are properly safeguarded.

At the first meeting of the Children's Trust the need for regular reporting will be factored into the forward plan and the Director will report to Executive annually on her accountabilities in this regard.

The rest of the recommendations made by Lord Laming will be subject to an audit of practice and will be the subject of reports in various forums as appropriate e.g. Corporate Parenting, Scrutiny etc. A list of the recommendations is attached at Appendix 1 with a comment on the proposed action.

3. Bedfordshire County Council has an established LSCB, some of the functions and activities of which are directly transferable to the two new authorities. There is broad and pragmatic agreement, that, as a general principle, wherever possible effective current arrangement will continue or form the basis of future arrangements.
4. The creation of two LSCB's will inevitably require a greater ongoing commitment of resources from officers and partner agencies. Although in some areas of function this may be an inevitable consequence of the creation of the new authorities, every effort will and is being made to ensure efficiency of process and avoidance of duplication. It is likely that some functions can be effectively shared in the longer term, and any arrangement to share learning and good practice will be beneficial.

Transitional Arrangements

5. It is anticipated that the initial disaggregation of the Bedfordshire County Council LSCB will take six months from April 1st, with a further six-month period required to fully bed in the new arrangements.

6. Following a risk assessment it has been agreed by partners that for at least the initial six-month period, the LSCB will continue meeting in the current pattern, but that a number of discrete actions are undertaken to ensure that key disaggregation milestones are met in a smooth transition process. It is proposed the current Chair of the Bedfordshire LSCB continue in that role for both the new authorities for this period. It is anticipated that the current Chair will then offer services to Bedford Borough.
7. Critical to the process will therefore be the appointment of a Chair of the Central Bedfordshire LSCB, to become fully functional at the end of the initial six months period. The Director will prepare a role description and model contract so that the recruitment process for a Chair may begin in April 2009. It is intended that the incoming Chair will take up their responsibilities at the earliest opportunity, but initially shadow the current joint Chair and familiarise themselves with Central Bedfordshire, so securing a smooth transition when the Board separates. Guidance requires that partners are involved in the process of recruitment.
8. Disaggregation of some of the function and activity of the LSCB is on going. Both new authorities will need, for example, data and information sets specific to their responsibilities. The audit and quality functions and requirements however, along with the Serious Case Review Requirements, will differ as the provisions of the 2 authorities develop. Arrangements for the Child Death Overview Panel will begin together and develop independently in the same way. It is likely that differences will become more apparent in the longer term hence planning for the separation of the function of the LSCB is underway.
9. Functions likely to continue to be shared include, at least in the medium term, development of policy and procedure. It is anticipated, however, that the training functions may be delivered in partnership in the longer term.

Strategic Management

10. The strategic positioning of the LSCB is critical. It is important to state the importance of safeguarding function and activity, to children and to their families as well as to the local authority and partner agencies and organisations. For that reason, it is proposed that during the transition period, a high level strategic LSCB Executive be established, led on behalf of Central Bedfordshire by the Director of Children's Services, to work alongside the other major partnerships and to ensure:
 - (a) that the accountability of the Chair of the LSCB to the Director of Children, Families and Learning for Central Bedfordshire is clear and that the Director of Children's Services in Bedford can contribute and meet his own statutory requirements;
 - (b) that the joint arrangements, led by Central Bedfordshire are reviewed on a regular basis; and
 - (c) that the LSCB actions link securely with the Central Bedfordshire's Children's Trust and the Bedford Children's Trust.

Next Steps

11. As indicated above, the key next steps include the appointment of a Chair. Critical, however, will be consultation with partners. While some aspects of the arrangements may be prescribed, wherever possible it is intended to talk with and listen to colleagues in all agencies during the disaggregation in order to ensure that the most effective possible arrangement are made.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The recommendations are a key contribution to the Council's priority to educate, protect and provide opportunities for children and young people.

Financial:

A shared service arrangement (subject to review) has been set up with Bedford Borough in order to ensure that costs are shared between the two authorities.

Legal:

The establishment of a Central Bedfordshire LSCB is a statutory requirement.

Risk Management:

There would be a high risk if the Council did not fully address its statutory requirement to establish a LSCB.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None

Equalities/Human Rights:

Good safeguarding protects the human rights of every child.

Community Development/Safety:

The LSCB constitutes a key partnership overseeing single and multi agency arrangements made to ensure that the children of Central Bedfordshire are properly safeguarded.

Sustainability:

None.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Summary of Actions in the Laming Report

Appendix 2A – Diagram – Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust

Appendix 2B – Diagram – Resource Sharing between Unitary Based Children's Trusts

Background Papers (open to public inspection):

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands

The Local Safeguarding Board Regulations 2006

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006 – a guide to the inter-agency work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

The Lord Laming Report March 2009: The Protection of Children in England: A progress Report

Statutory Guidance on the roles of the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member 2008