

OXFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

Implementation of the recommendations from Lord Laming's Report: The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report

Summary of key Issues:

- Members are asked to note implementation by OSCB, and the progress made in relation the Laming report recommendations.
- Members are asked to note that there are recommendations in the Laming report in relation to the CYPTB and these will be required to be incorporated into the work programme of the Trust to ensure that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place.
- Members are asked to support the developments and to be aware that the OSCB will be faced with increased costs in enhancing the scrutiny and challenge roles of the OSCB.
- Members are asked to address the distinction in roles and responsibilities between the OSCB and the CYPTB by agreeing to the development of a working protocol.

Background

Lord Laming published his report, The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report in March 2009. Following this, the Government accepted all 58 recommendations and published a detailed response which sets out an action plan addressing safeguarding policy, social care workforce issues, and clarification and strengthening of the key role of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB). Further, a national safeguarding delivery unit has been set up to ensure a co-ordinated approach across government to support and challenge Children Trusts and Local Authorities to drive up standards and the quality of practice.

Two key findings:

- The LSCB failed to provide sufficient challenge to its member agencies;

- There was too much reliance on quantitative data to measure social care, health, and police performance without sufficient robust analysis of the underlying quality of service provision and practice.

Laming confirms the responsibilities of the OSCB to ensure that multi-agency partners are co-operating to safeguard and promote the welfare of children effectively and to report findings to the CYPTB.

OSCB Response

The OSCB discussed and received the report and Government response at its May board meeting. Although many of the recommendations will be addressed in the revised regulations and revision of 'Working Together Guidance' due to be published in December, an immediate response to the relevant recommendations was agreed. The following four recommendations are directly related to LSCBs.

Recommendation 44 Boards should ensure all Serious Case Review panel chairs and Serious Case Review overview authors are independent of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and all services involved in the case and that arrangements for the Serious Case Review offer sufficient scrutiny and challenge.

OSCB Action. This is now practice and a written Serious Case Review Protocol has been produced and agreed by the board. In addition, it has set up monitoring arrangements to ensure that all recommendations and actions from serious cases are implemented. It has also programmed training events and full dissemination of findings.

Recommendation 52 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 LSCB decision making.

OSCB Action. This requirement was written into the OSCB Governance Arrangements, signed by all partner chief officers. It was published last year when the board was re launched.

In the government response, the Minister added a requirement for the lead member of children's services to be a member of the board. He will also required statutory representation from schools, adult mental health, and adult drug and alcohol services. The

lead member has been invited to join the board and it has secured improved representation from schools. The board is dealing with additional representation from adult mental health and drug and alcohol services.

Further, the new guidance will require that lay membership is brought onto the OSCB to ensure public accountability. This will be addressed when the new directions and guidance are published.

Recommendation 53 Boards should report to the Children Trust Board and publish an annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area. 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. The Government has brought forward amendments to the ASCL Bill to require LSCBs to produce annual reports.

OSCB Action. The OSCB is to produce an annual report in September. Preparations for this are in hand and an extraordinary board meeting will be held in July to review the business plan. Necessary mechanisms in the work programme will be aimed at fulfilling the scrutiny and challenge role.

Recommendation 51 This relates to separate chairing arrangements for the LSCB and CYPTB which are already in place.

Working arrangements between CYPTB and OSCB

The key issue for both boards is to be clear about the distinction between the roles and responsibilities to ensure appropriate challenge, scrutiny and impartiality. The Trust is responsible for the delivery of better outcomes for children, being specifically accountable to oversee the delivery of the Children and Young People Plan. The OSCB must challenge every Trust member through the board to be successful in ensuring that children and young people are kept safe.

The OSCB is expected to report to the CYPTB on the effectiveness of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and to publish a report on improving outcomes for children. In addition, a regular dialogue between the two boards should demonstrate that all the functions of both boards are being effectively discharged, in particular that the monitoring and evaluation of front line practice and service is undertaken.

To secure the information necessary to be sure that front-line services are providing safe services, the OSCB has commissioned an independent review of existing audit arrangements by all member organisations. This will assist in ensuring that there are robust scrutiny arrangements, both within individual agencies and on a multi-agency basis, and that the OSCB is reassured regarding the quality of front-line work. A set of minimum standards and a toolkit for Safeguarding across all agencies will be developed to ensure that continued high quality audit processes remain in place. However, this activity will carry cost and capacity implications for the OSCB.

The challenge and scrutiny role of the OSCB is in need of further development to meet the Laming recommendations. The next annual budget is likely to ask for increased contributions from member agencies and it is hoped that Trust members in supporting this work will respond appropriately.

Laming makes a number of recommendations specifically aimed at Trusts to ensure that the workforce is adequately equipped to support children and their families, in particular in relationship to assessment processes.

The OSCB will take particular interest in how these recommendations are implemented. The Trust's review of the Children Plan is of vital importance in securing the right strategic direction. Consultation with the OSCB is taking place. Careful consideration will be given by the OSCB to ensure that the plan is robust and meets the requirement for all agencies to demonstrate that they have appropriate arrangements in place to keep children safe.

Recommendation

It is recommended that a working protocol is drawn up to ensure the appropriate working arrangements between the CYPTB and the OSCB are put in place.

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