

SUNDERLAND SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD (SSCB)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Strategic Priority 4: Learning City

**Corporate Improvement Priority: Delivering Customer Focused Services,
Improving Partnership Working to Delivery 'One City'**

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1** To inform Children's Services Review Committee of the work of Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB).

2. Background

- 2.1** Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) was established in October 2004 and it is the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how organisations in Sunderland will cooperate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Sunderland and for ensuring the effectiveness of that work.

3. Current Position

- 3.1** Jan van Wagendonk took up the post of Independent Chair of SSCB in October 2008. Jan has 39 years experience of working in Children's Services. He has worked both in the voluntary and statutory sector, the last 11 years as a senior manager in local authorities with responsibility for Safeguarding children. Jan has also been a part time lecturer in family therapy and co director of a post qualification course in Child Protection in Dundee. Jan has presented a number of workshops at national and international conferences on safeguarding issues. He retired from his post as Director of Special Needs and Community Support in Northumberland at the end of March 2008. In that post he had responsibility for social care case management, special educational needs services, child health, youth justice and substance misuse services for young people.
- 3.2** The role of independent chair of the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board is to make certain that the Board operates effectively and secures an independent voice for the Board. The chair has to have sufficient standing and expertise to command the respect and support of all partners. The chair should act objectively. The chair is currently accountable to the Director of Children's Services. At this early stage it has been identified that the initial estimate of 2 days per month for the Independent Chair needs to be increased to 4 days per month. This is due to the volume of work for the Independent Chair to progress.
- 3.2** To fully support the work of the SSCB, a dedicated business unit is being established. Lynne Thomas was appointed as Business Manager to SSCB and has taken up post in January 2009. Lynne has 18 years experience of working in

Children's Services. She has worked as a social worker and manager in Sunderland and was SSCB Development Officer before being appointed to her current post.

- 3.3** The post of Training and Development Officer is being re-advertised following unsuccessful interviews in November.
- 3.4** Permanent arrangements for administration support will be decided in April 2009 as the current post holder is seconded.
- 3.5** The SSCB has been responding to the outcomes of the death of Baby P (Haringey), which includes new government guidance regarding serious case reviews, the serious case review in respect of Baby P and the Haringey Joint Area Review 2008. A working group has been set up to consider the findings from the Baby P serious case review and the Haringey JAR in respect of safeguarding work in Sunderland. The Independent Chair of the Board is leading on this work and it is clear that agencies in Sunderland are already reviewing their safeguarding practice in light of the death of Baby P.
- 3.6** SSCB has contributed to the current national stock take of LSCB progress through the Independent Chair completing a survey and by providing information regarding the Board's structure.
- 3.7** The financial platform needed to support the work of SSCB is not secured for 2010 – 1011. Further work is to be done to consider how the additional income can be obtained to ensure the Board is able to meet its objectives.

4. Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2007 - 2008

- 4.1** SSCB is required to produce an Annual Report which reports on a number of issues including progress against statutory responsibilities, new national requirements, key partnership relationships and partner's annual reports about their agencies role in safeguarding children.
- 4.2** SSCB will begin working towards the Annual Report 2009 – 2010 following a review of the Business Plan 2008 – 2009 in January 2009.

5. SSCB Business Plan 2008 - 2009

- 5.1** The Business Plan continues to be progressed through the work of the Board, the Business Planning Group and the sub groups, that is, Case Review, Legal and Procedures, Quality Assurance and Communication and Workforce Development.
- 5.2** SSCB is currently undertaking a Serious Case Review in respect of a child who suffered significant head injuries. As a result of new guidance from Government, the Independent Chair of SSCB has taken on responsibility of coordinating this process.

- 5.3** Durham LSCB published an executive summary in December 2008 in respect of a child who initially lived in Sunderland and subsequently moved to Durham. Sunderland SSCB and its partner agencies co-operated fully with the cross boundary Serious Case Review that was led by Durham LSCB.
- 5.4** Sunderland SSCB and partner agencies are progressing the action plans developed from the Serious Case Review report recommendations.
- 5.5** New Government guidance regarding Serious Case Reviews identified that the arrangements for chairing the Serious Case Review panel in Sunderland, as for many other areas, are not sufficiently independent. The guidance requires the chair of the panel to be independent of the Board and not an employee of a Board partner. Sunderland SSCB is working with regional partners to develop alternative ways of chairing the Serious Case Reviews panel that satisfy the guidance.
- 5.6** There have been 12 child deaths in Sunderland since 01.04.08. 5 of the 12 were neonatal deaths. 3 of the children were not residents of Sunderland but died here and they will be reviewed by the responsible area. The reviews of children from Sunderland are ongoing. The sub regional arrangements between Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead for the Child Death Overview Panel are in place and are being coordinated by the Child Death Coordinator.
- 5.8** The SSCB Training Strategy for 2008 – 2010 has been agreed and is available on the website at www.sunderlandchildrenstrust.org.uk/profs-safeguardboard-training.asp. The training programme has continued to develop and demand for places is always high. Approximately 800 multi agency staff from statutory and voluntary agencies attended SSCB safeguarding procedure familiarisation sessions in 2008. Post course evaluations are usually very positive. The Board is considering the need for a charging policy for non-attendance without adequate notice and is also in the process of purchasing an E learning package that would support agencies to ensure their staff have basic safeguarding training prior to attending the SSCB multi agency training. The Board would offer the training for free for the first year and then charge for future years to meet the ongoing cost for the package.
- 5.9** SSCB is currently supporting partner agencies to assess their compliance with Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 (duty to safeguard children) through the use of a self assessment tool.
- 5.10** The Business Plan will be reviewed in January 2009 and a 3 year Business Plan for 2009 – 2012 will be developed which will be reviewed on an annual basis. The Board has set 3 days with an external consultant to support further development and planning which will include the use of the LSCB Challenge and Improvement Toolkit and the development of a Joint Risk Register for the partnership.

6 Recommendation

- 6.1 Children's Services Review Committee is asked to agree to note the content of this report.
-

Contact	Jan Van Wagtendonk Independent Chair of SSCB 0191 285 3197 Email: jvanwagtendonk@live.com
Contact officer	Lynne Thomas Business Manager of SSCB Tel: 0191 566 1625 Email: lynne.thomas@sunderland.gov.uk