

Safeguarding

Risk and Assurance Services

“Providing assurance on the management of risks”

Report status	Final
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*Working for
Warwickshire*

PROTECT - INTERNAL

Introduction

Local Authorities were required to establish a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) by 1 April 2006 after the Children Act 2004 introduced it as the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how partner agencies will co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and ensuring the effectiveness of local safeguarding children arrangements in the local area.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board has a range of statutory functions which include the following:

- Developing thresholds, policies and procedures for responding to safeguarding and welfare concerns about individual children
- Communicating and raising awareness of safeguarding children issues
- Quality assuring practice through audits, scrutiny and evaluation
- Producing and publishing an annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area
- Assessing the effectiveness of Early Help arrangements
- Assessing whether partners are fulfilling statutory obligations and encouraging effective working relationships
- Making recommendations for commissioning bodies and participating in local planning/commissioning of services for children
- Collecting and analysing information about the deaths of all children and putting in place procedures for responding to the unexpected death of a child

- Undertaking Serious Case Reviews and ensuring implementation and monitoring of action plans
- Improving local ways of working in light of learning from local and national experience
- Seeking assurance about accessibility and quality of safeguarding children training

The Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2014-2015 states “The Board assesses that it complied with its statutory and legal requirements throughout the year and continues to work to improve its ability to assess the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements”.

The objective of the audit was to provide an opinion on whether Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board had an effective control and performance framework in place to adequately monitor its effectiveness in meeting statutory obligation and business plan objectives.

Scope of Audit

The scope of the audit included, but was not limited to the following areas:

- The Board’s arrangements for monitoring and measuring how it meets its statutory and legal requirements;
- The mechanisms for Business Plan objectives to be delivered and the outcomes measured;
- The processes to assess the effectiveness of partnership working is evaluated and where necessary weakness addressed;
- The process by which lessons are learnt, and action plans developed and delivered, to further develop the service effectiveness.

Key Findings

Our key concerns are as follows:

- No formal action plans have been developed to drive through the improvements identified from the annual self-assessment exercise.

Areas of Good Practice

Areas of good practice identified are as follows:

- Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) has a defined Constitution outlining its purpose and objectives, as set out in Section 14 (1) of the Children Act 2004.
- The composition of WSCB is in line with that stated in the Children's Act 2004, with all required partners appropriately represented.
- WSCB is part of the West Mercia Consortium, an Inter-Agency Child Protection Consortium for Safeguarding Children. Policies and procedures are developed by the Consortium based on the Government's 'Working together to safeguard children - A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children'.
- Roles and responsibilities of Board members are clearly defined in the Constitution and there is a clear line of accountability defining governance and reporting arrangements to the Board.
- Formal WSCB meetings are held on a quarterly basis for which minutes are distributed to all partners and agencies and also made available on the WSCB website.
- WSCB has a rolling three year Strategic Plan 2015-2018 and a risk register has been drawn up to underpin this strategic business plan. Three strategic priorities have

been identified and annual Business Plans aid the delivery of these priorities.

- WSCB has a requirement to assess its effectiveness on an annual basis, with the most recent being reported in January 2016.

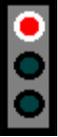
Assurance Opinion and Conclusion

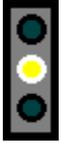
Control Framework	Weak				Limited
	Adequate			Moderate	
	Good		Substantial		
	Strong	Full			
		Strong	Good	Adequate	Weak
Operation of controls					
Professional judgement is exercised by the Auditor when determining the opinion rating.					

Overall, the opinion is that controls provide **Substantial Assurance** that risks are being managed.

Appendix A – Findings & Action Plan

Explanation of Priority ratings:

Priority	Explanation
	<p>Fundamental:</p> <p>Action that is considered imperative to ensure that the organisation is not exposed to high risks. Major adverse impact on achievement of organisation's objectives if not adequately addressed.</p>
	<p>Significant:</p> <p>Action that is considered necessary to avoid exposing the organisation to significant risks.</p>
	<p>Merits Attention:</p> <p>Action that is considered desirable and should result in enhanced control or better value for money. Minimal adverse impact on achievement of the organisation's objectives if not adequately addressed.</p>
<p>These definitions are illustrative only and professional judgment is exercised when determining the priority rating of recommendations</p>	

	Risks and Implications	Finding	Recommended Action	Priority	Management Action
The processes to assess the effectiveness of partnership working is evaluated and where necessary weakness addressed.					
01	<p>Risk: Weaknesses and areas for improvement that have been identified will not be addressed.</p> <p>Implication Without an action plan it is not possible to ensure weakness and areas for improvement have been addressed and that actions taken are monitored.</p>	<p>It was established that the self-assessment exercise is a standard self-assessment against the inspection framework, i.e. against statutory functions. The last one was undertaken in December 2015 and reported in January 2016. This measured the Board's performance against 10 functions, detailing Strengths, Weaknesses and Evidence to support the statements for each one. In addition, there is also an analysis of the overall findings and areas for development arising from the weaknesses identified.</p> <p>At the date of this review no formal action plan had been developed to drive through the improvements to address the weakness identified.</p>	<p>The Board review the areas for development identified from the annual self-assessment and develop formal action plans to ensure the improvements are made. Progress should then be monitored and reported to the Board accordingly.</p>		<p>Recommendation Agreed: Action plan to be drafted</p> <p>Target Date: Action plan to be drafted by July 2016</p>

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