

# Worcestershire Health and Well-being Board



## Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board Annual report 2013/14

### Agenda Item 14

Date	July 22nd 2014
Author	Diana Fulbrook, Independent Chair of Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board.
Recommendation	<p>1. <b>The Health and Well-being Board is asked to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) <b>Receive the 2013/14 WSCB Annual report;</b></li><li>b) <b>Note the progress of the work of the board;</b></li><li>c) <b>Request that the 2014/15 WSCB annual report is presented to the Health and Well-being Board in July 2015 prior to going to the Cabinet and then to full Council</b></li></ul>
Background Information	<p>2. The Independent Chair of Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board is responsible for publishing an annual report that gives a public assessment of the effectiveness of child safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children in Worcestershire, and both recognises its achievements and is realistic about the challenges that remain. The report is made publicly available through publication on the Board's website, and is also formally submitted to the Chief Executive and Leader of the County Council as the most senior strategic local leaders. It is sent to Worcestershire's Police and Crime Commissioner and to the Chair of the Health and Well Being Board as well as being reported to the Children's Trust Executive Board.</p> <p>3. 2013/14 saw a major Service Redesign implemented by Children's Social Care (CSC), intended to strengthen the front line and introduce a new practice model to ensure a robust and valued service to vulnerable children and families. The extension of the Early Help Strategy across Worcestershire is also designed to improve services for children. During the transition period, social worker recruitment was problematic and some areas of performance declined. The practice changes therefore</p>

proved slower to implement than anticipated and the Board has been concerned at the slow pace of change. Other agencies, notably Health and Police, also made major changes, mainly due to financial reductions, and these all impacted on performance. Practice was therefore variable during the year but with more recent signs of improvement, and the Board has recognised the importance of the longer term aims for the CSC Service Redesign.

4. During this past year, the Board implemented its new structure and continued to develop its performance framework including the increasing use of multi-agency data centred on the journey of the child. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 was implemented, and there were significant achievements including producing suicide prevention guidance, child sexual exploitation processes, a Learning and Improvement Framework, a user feedback strategy plus continuous training and development of front line staff. The wider safeguarding environment in Worcestershire continued to be challenging and the Board was responsive to new demands. An Ofsted Inspection is anticipated, using new criteria

## Key Issues

5. The key issues for the Safeguarding Board in 2013/14 included:

- The pace of change particularly linked to the implementation and impact of the Children's Social Care change programme
- Implementation and impact of the Early Help strategy
- Recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced social workers
- Inconsistent practice
- Management and supervision of staff
- Repeat issues arising from serious case reviews and unexpected child deaths including vulnerability of young babies and adolescents, the significance of effective and timely communication within and between agencies, ensuring a "Think Family" approach, GP engagement, and the need for robust risk assessments
- Recurring themes of domestic abuse, parental mental ill health and substance abuse
- Lack of a multi-agency electronic chronology system
- Developing a multi-agency performance framework
- Impact and cumulative effect of financial cuts on safeguarding
- Lack of systematic user feedback

## Conclusion

6. The Board has been able to make a stronger assurance statement for 2013/14 than last year, based on achievements and more robust information, although challenges remain in being able to demonstrate safeguarding arrangements are effective. The Board concluded that there is a good body of evidence from data, audits, reports and learning that demonstrate safeguarding arrangements are in place and that

children are generally safe in Worcestershire. Good progress has been made from last year and performance has improved although organisational changes in a number of agencies did contribute to this declining for a period. Outcomes and measuring effectiveness are still challenging, and there continue to be multi-agency areas for improvement around consistent practice, communication/sharing information and “Think Family”. The Peer Review undertaken at the end of the year confirmed the Board’s strengths, but identified that the Board could not adequately evidence a clear and shared view about the vulnerable population and be able to measure the impact of its actions. Improvements will be taken forward into 2014/15.