

SLOUGH LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD - Meeting held on Tuesday, 22nd September, 2009 at Connexions, High Street, Slough.



Present:-

Name	Representing
Clair Pyper	Strategic Director of Education and Children's Services, SBC (Chair)
Elaine Coleridge Smith	Independent Chair Designate
Bill Alexander	Assistant Director, Raising Achievement, SBC
Karen Chalcraft	Team Manager, Education & Children's Services, SBC
Robin Crofts	Assistant Director, Inclusion, SBC
Clarisser Cupid	Berkshire East Community Health Service
Jesal Dhokia	Slough Council for Voluntary Service
Cilla Dorman	Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals Trust
Janine Edwards	Homestart Slough/SCVS
Kate Ford	Thames Valley Police
Theresa Jordaan	Berkshire East PCT Named GP
Shelley LaRose	Slough Youth Offending Team
Pat LeRoy	Reviewing Service Manager, SBC
Jessi Loftus	Connexions Berkshire
Charlotte McAuley	Wexham Park Hospital
Jatinder Matharu	Training Officer, SBC
Jaipal Mondae	Business Information Analyst, SBC
Councillor Natasa Pantelic	Commissioner for Education and Children's Services, SBC
James Priestman	Head of Drugs and Community Safety, SBC
Jeff Richardson	Slough Secondary Heads
Flick Schofield	Interim Assistant Director, Children's Services, SBC
Mary Shannon	LSCB/CT Business Manager
Sandra Storey	Performance and Projects Manager, SBC
Louise Watson	Berkshire East Community Health Service
Sophie Wing-King	SBC/Thames Valley Police Domestic Violence
John Worgan	ICT Manager, Schools, SBC

Apologies for Absence:- Debbie Daly (Berkshire East PCT), Christine Etheridge (NHS South Central), Juliet Holloway (East Berkshire College), Rebecca Lacey (Berkshire East PCT Community Health Service), Jo Matthews (Slough Primary Heads), Judeline Nicholas (SBC Training), Karen Proctor (Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals Trust), Hazel Rumsey (CAMHS) and Susanne Yeoman (Acting Locality Manager, SBC).

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12. Welcomes and Apologies

Clair Pyper (CP) welcomed Elaine Coleridge Smith, the newly appointed Independent Chair of the LSCB to the meeting. However, as Elaine was waiting for her contract to be finalised,

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	CP would be chairing this meeting. She also welcomed to their first meetings Councillor Natasa Pantelic, Jeff Richardson and Flick Schofield.	
	CP expressed concern at the number of apologies submitted to the meeting and would raise the issue with health representatives in particular.	Clair Pyper
	She reminded all members of the requirement for them to report back to their organisations on the Board's discussions.	All partners to action
13. LSCB Key Issues		
	<u>Feedback from LSCB Executive Board – 10th September</u>	
	The minutes of the Executive held on 10 th September were noted.	
	<u>Business Plan – Review of Update</u>	
	MS gave an update on the LSCB Business Plan 2008-2011. It had been structured into three key objective areas to link it more closely into Children's Trust Outcomes Plans. Board Members needed to comment on it by no later than Friday, 2 nd October. On completion, the document would be widely distributed amongst the agencies.	All members to comment by 2 nd October.
	<u>Unannounced Ofsted Inspection</u>	
	CP reported on the Ofsted unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in front line social work services which had taken place on 4 th and 5 th August. Board members considered the feedback letter, and CP stressed that the findings were not solely a matter for SBC but were of equal relevance to all partners involved in children's services. Ofsted's initial findings did not properly reflect the significant increase in the number of referrals and the rise in children with child protection plans. As a result of subsequent discussions with them, Ofsted had amended their view and had recognised the significant increase in their final letter.	
	One area for priority action had been identified - that in a significant number of cases seen, there was a delay in the completion of assessments and in the recording of key actions, such as, importantly, whether the child had been seen, and of the decision that had been made. This lack of evidence raised potential concerns for the welfare and safety of the children. CP informed LSCB Board members that an action plan was in place to address this, but increased caseloads had depleted the time available for social workers to carry out recording. The Council was already putting additional funding into recruiting	

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new social workers although this was against a background of a national shortage in social workers.

Five areas for development had been identified as follows:-

- Capacity within the service is not sufficient to ensure a responsive and robust assessment and support service for children in need. Caseloads are often excessive.
- Chronologies and genograms are not routinely maintained on files - this was an electronic recording problem which has been addressed.
- Some managers do not have access on the electronic recording system to the full range of information that they need in order to ensure that cases are being managed efficiently – this was addressed on the day that it was identified.
- Participation of children and young people in child protection conferences is low. Availability of social workers' reports for parents in advance for initial child protection conference has reduced, making it more difficult for families to contribute effectively when they attend.
- Supervision does not always occur regularly and evidence of management direction on case files is often not visible – an audit of this area had been undertaken in March and the issue was now being addressed.

Following the inspection, immediate action was taken on managers' access to the electronic recording system. CP was following up the comment on supervision with Ofsted who were unable to evidence their statement with specific details.

Action plans had been drawn up to address the issues identified in capacity and participation.

Reference was also made to the strengths identified in the inspection with the comments about good partnership working and services across the partnerships being particularly welcomed.

The new Ofsted regime also included announced inspections of safeguarding and looked after children. A small number of local authorities had already been inspected, and Slough would be at some point within the three year cycle. It was important that preparation work was done for the announced inspection so that the authority was fully prepared and had carried out any necessary self-assessment and improvement work. It would also be necessary to ensure that those areas identified in the unannounced inspection were fully followed up. A report would be submitted to the next Children's Trust Board meeting on the preparations for the announced inspection.

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FS commented that capacity was a problem in a number of areas but that Slough had a particular problem and this had been recognised in the Inspection. Whilst referrals had increased nationally, it was certainly the case that there were not enough social workers to deal with the increased workload.

ECS commented that she was impressed with the way the Council had responded to the unannounced inspection. She sought clarification as to whether there were issues around electronic recording and sharing of information with partners and was advised that this was an issue for the Council as its IT systems could not currently cope with links with partner organisations. This meant that they had to forward content for inclusion in children's records via email, etc to the relevant social worker. This was recognised as a significant issue for the Council.

However, that the Child Protection Procedures were now fully accessible electronically.

CP commented that the key message arising from this inspection was that the Board had to make sure that all partner agencies were meeting the early intervention needs of children as appropriate so that action was taken at the right level and, where possible, referral was avoided to social care. If the high level of referrals continued, the danger was that pressure of work would mean that social workers may not have time to deal with child protection cases that do not meet the threshold.

Thresholds

KC and PLR presented a paper setting out the children's social care thresholds and the multi-agency needs/risk matrix. It was not proposed to raise the thresholds for Section 47/core assessments. They explained how the risk needs matrix had been drawn up based on four levels of need and the papers circulated gave details of the features of four levels with examples. The thinking behind the matrix was to inform decision making about who should provide and receive services and with what level of priority so that inappropriate referrals were less likely. The matrix prioritised the department's response by taking into account the level of risk and need. Partners would need to use the eCAF to assess children's needs and look at services available to meet these.

There was improved use of eCAF although some key partners were still not using it. It was agreed to report back to the LSCB and CT with an analysis of the use of eCAF.

Clair Pyper/
Sally
Grimstone/
Mary Shannon

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	Information about the number of inappropriate referrals was requested. KC responded that they did still receive a few inappropriate referrals where the family did not have major issues. Some came from particular agencies and it was important that social care referred them back where necessary. KC urged any agencies who were unsure whether they should be referring a family to them to get in contact with her for advice.	All partners to note
	It was suggested that there may be a need for some additional training for lead people in various agencies as to when to refer across a particular case. This was addressed in the eCAF training. RC undertook to check with Sally Grimstone whether the Police were using the eCAF.	Robin Crofts
	CP urged all partners to report back to their organisations on this issue and the need to ensure that appropriate referrals were made to social care. In any case of doubt advice could be sought from social care staff.	All partners to action
	CP reminded the meeting that she had to report on the implications of the increase in the child protection referrals to the Local Strategic Partnership on 29 th September and, as at the Children's Trust earlier, she urged all partners to provide her with the required information. It was agreed that her report should be submitted to the LSCB at its next meeting.	All partners to action. Clair Pyper/ Mary Shannon
	ECS asked whether the LSCB had a risk register and it was confirmed that it did not. This would need to be carried out linked to the Business Plan.	Clair Pyper/ Mary Shannon to note

Serious Case Review

Confidential details were circulated of the first serious case review considered by the LSCB. Criminal proceedings were still under way in this case and it would not be possible to make the matter public until those were completed, possibly in late October. The review was chaired by Laura Eades and raised a number of issues and made recommendations, particularly in respect of the way in which health services were provided for newly arrived families in Slough. Details were presented of the recommendations and the action being taken to progress them. An action plan had been prepared which gave responsibility to named individuals and the role of the LSCB was to follow up those recommendations and ensure that they had been acted upon.

Whilst no individual agency had been at fault, there were a number of lessons that could be learnt from the episode.

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	<p>It was agreed to bring the issue back to the first meeting of the Board in 2010 to review progress.</p>	Mary Shannon
	<p><u>Performance</u></p>	
	<p>SS and JM updated the meeting on the latest performance statistics and these were noted.</p>	
14.	Reports from Sub-Groups	
	<p><u>Quality and Performance Sub-Group – Presentation on Admission to Wexham Park Hospital following Accidents</u></p>	
	<p>Charlotte McAuley joined the meeting to make a presentation on NI 70 outlining a number of significant difficulties and weaknesses with the data. She was thanked for the considerable work she had put into this area and was asked to provide an electronic copy so that it could be raised with the LSP.</p>	Charlotte McAuley
	<p>It was still unclear why Slough's figures under this indicator appeared so high and this needed to be examined as part of the next phase of the work. JM was asked to speak to the Government Office for the South-East about whether any other local authorities had done work on this indicator and what the position was in similar towns to Slough.</p>	Jaipal Mondae
	<p>It was also suggested that it would be useful for an accident prevention group to be established, led by Health, and it was agreed to discuss this at the next meeting.</p>	Clair Pyper/ Mary Shannon
	<p><u>Safer Staffing</u></p>	
	<p>BA reported that the meeting due to be held on 18th September had been cancelled due to the number of apologies given. He would be calling a further meeting before he left the authority at the end of October. The Board expressed its concern at the number of meetings that had been cancelled and it was agreed that the matter needed urgent attention because of the potentially serious situation that could arise. A decision was also required as to who took over the lead from BA.</p>	Clair Pyper
	<p><u>Training</u></p>	
	<p>JM reported that the training courses were full up until March 2010 and there were capacity issues in meeting demand. Many schools were asking for bespoke training – 8 had been undertaken but 6 were still outstanding. CP commented that a fuller discussion was required as to how the required training would be provided given that SBC did not have the capacity to provide any further funding and the training needed to be self-</p>	Jatinder Matharu/ Mary Shannon

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	<p>financing in the future. It was suggested that the Training Sub-Group be asked to put forward proposals to the next meeting. BA suggested that one option may be to bring in external trainers and to spread the cost over all of the courses. It was agreed that it would not be possible to take a decision on this issue at this meeting but that the matter would be considered by the Training Sub-Group and reported back to the November meeting with recommendations.</p>	
15. Other Issues		
	<u>LSCB Conference</u>	
	<p>The take-up of the LSCB conference due to take place on 20th October was disappointing to date. CP reminded the meeting that two earlier conferences had been cancelled due to poor attendance and it was difficult to understand why take-up was so low. JM commented that 50 attendees were required to make the event viable and urged all partners to ensure that they canvass support.</p>	All partners to action
	<p>It was noted that the paragraph in the application form requiring attendees to have level 2 training should be removed.</p>	Jatinder Matharu
	<u>Child Protection Procedures</u>	
	<p>These were now fully available on-line.</p>	All to note
	<u>Child Death Overview Steering Group and Panel</u>	
	<p>LW reported that a meeting of the Panel was taking place today and work was proceeding well. An advert had recently been placed for a CDOP Manager. LW undertook to take up the comment made on the CDOP annual report in July that there was no reference in the document to parents' views on a child's death.</p>	Louise Watson
	<u>Private Fostering</u>	
	<p>This issue had been discussed by the Board earlier in the year. There had been no further private fostering referrals as a result. All members were urged to bring this issue to the attention of their organisations.</p>	All partners to action
16. Next Meeting		
	<p>CP reported that she would not be present at the next meeting taking place on 24th November and that this would be chaired by Elaine Coleridge Smith.</p>	

(The meeting opened at 2.00 p.m. closed at 4.10 p.m.)